

Rabbi's Message



In the October issue of *The Truth* this year I suggested that this space could be a place to discuss questions that you have about Jews and Judaism. The question for this month is: Why are there Jewish denominations? Why couldn't all Jews just practice in the same way?

The Baha'i religion is one of the newest religions in the world, founded in the mid-1800s. By about 100 years later, it had already split into several factions. That is to say that human beings rarely can agree on religious or political issues for long. Jews have been around for more than 5,000 years, and going all the way back to the Bible Jews disagreed on how to do it right. It makes sense: There are so many ideas and so many opinions, and so much information. Values compete with each other, and different people give priority to different values. How much integration with the surrounding majority culture is okay, whether that culture is Greek, Roman, Muslim Spanish, Polish, German, or American? How are we to interpret the Bible and Jewish law? What is our relationship to Jewish law? These are just a few of the challenges that lead to splits in the Jewish world.

It's not easy, a lot of the time, to navigate these challenges and work out our disagreements. Tensions arise, feelings are hurt, people get angry. Wouldn't it be easier, we might think, if people could just agree on one way to be Jewish, if everything were clearer, if every choice were black and white? Because really, underneath the question of why we don't all just practice Judaism the same way is the question of why we don't always feel united. Yes, we say we're one people, but we read about and experience criticism and disrespect between groups of Jews who practice Judaism in different ways. Sometimes we experience this within our own group too.

I expect that all Jews will never be united by their practice of Judaism. But sameness of practice is not the only way to be unified. We could also be unified by respecting the authenticity of a range of Jewish choices. We could say that we are one people with different legitimate ways of observing Judaism within that people. We could argue over our differences without forgetting that, as the Talmud says, "Both these and these are the words of the living God," (Eruvin 13b). That means that when a decision has to be made, not everyone will be happy with the outcome, but everyone will be listened to with respect and their opinions recognized as valid and values-based. It could also be applied to respect for different choices people make about how they live their Judaism.

Perhaps a dream that everyone in the Jewish people would acknowledge the variety of Jewish practice as equally authentic, even though they don't share all of it, and even if they hate some of it, is just that—a dream only, something unachievable. I pray that it isn't. We can work toward that day when the dream is achieved. The first step is confidence that our own way of being Jewish is authentic. If we have that, we don't need to feel threatened by others who do it differently. Then we can take the step of recognizing the authenticity of others, without losing the sense of our own authenticity.

It isn't easy, especially when we're faced with an opinion piece or news article or an attitude that insists that only one way is the right way (and generally, we notice these when they are saying it's our way that is wrong). If we can react with respect even when it is not shown to us, we are on our way. If we can build relationships with people who do Judaism differently than we do, we are on our way.

As we read in the Talmud, "[Rabbi Tarfon] used to say, 'You are not obligated to complete the task, but you are not free to neglect it,' (Mishnah Pirkei Avot 2:21). The unity of the Jewish people, a unity of respect for the authenticity of different ways of observing Judaism, is a task worth working on, even if we are not able to complete it.

I look forward to seeing you at temple.

Sisterhood Lecture Series



Although most of those in attendance at the Temple's November 8th Sisterhood luncheon were familiar with the Broadway musical and film *Fiddler on the Roof*, the lecture presented by our fellow Congregant Jan Lisa Huttner expanded our appreciation of the rich background from which this show had been spawned.

The audience learned about the Yiddish author Sholem Naumovich Rabinovich, better known by his pen name Sholem Aleicham, who created the series of stories of *Teyve the Dairyman*. We heard of the significance of why Teyve was depicted as being a father eventually of seven daughters and how it related to Sholem Aleicham's life where he found himself responsible for five young women. Jan traced Teyve's family responsibilities to the biblical story of Zelophehad, descendent of Manasseh, son of Joseph. The five daughters of Zelophehad pleaded with Moses successfully to receive their rightful inheritance following their father's death.

We look forward to future lectures by Jan as we gain a greater understanding of the roots of Yiddish culture and Jewish religion in contemporary life.

Upcoming Sisterhood Lecture Series for December **Saturday, December 14, 2013**

Lecturer: Julie Subrin

The Sisterhood of Temple Beth Emeth will proudly present Julie Subrin, a Ditmas Park resident and the executive producer for audio of Tablet Magazine. Tablet Magazine is a daily on-line magazine of Jewish news, ideas, and culture. Julie's main role is to produce and edit Vox Tablet, a weekly podcast. Currently, recent Vox Tablet stories about religious Zionism, an interracial Jew's spiritual journey, and riding on the subway in Jerusalem with no pants are available on the Tablet website. Julie will be telling us about Tablet in general, describing her work, and sharing (and playing parts of) some of her favorite stories that she has worked on.

Brunch 10:00 am - Lecture 10:30 am
Shabbat Services to follow at 11:15 am

Temple and Sisterhood Members - \$10.00
Non-Temple Members - \$15.00

President's Message



Our Roof Restoration and Parapet Repair project is advancing quite well. We are being ably served by Walter Sedovic Architects and by the generous donation of time and expertise by the Board of Trustees and members of our Congregation. While work was not able to start in October as originally planned we have achieved some major milestones with construction now anticipated to begin in a few months.

First and foremost we obtained a mortgage loan from TD Bank in the amount of \$325,000. The bank should be commended for standing by us for nearly a year from the time we applied and received a committal for the loan at a most competitive initial interest rate of 3.99%. Our Treasurer **Robert Kaplan** maintained a strong professional relationship with bank representatives throughout the extensive review process, continually providing requested information about our Temple's finances. We closed the loan on November 14th at the bank's office in Downtown Brooklyn. At the closing we were represented by the Law Office of Michael J. Mondschein who provided legal services *pro bono*. We are especially appreciative of the diligent work of their associate and Temple member **Saul Radow** for his work in satisfying the demanding requirements not only of TD Bank but the rather stringent standards established by the State Attorney General Office's Charities Bureau, which had to be satisfied before the New York State Supreme Court would give us permission to accept the loan.

Walter Sedovic Architects issued requests for bids for both the roof repair and for the air conditioning/cooling segments of the work. The cost associated with the lowest qualified bid for the roof repair came in generally within expectations even considering the unanticipated expenses associated with the safe removal of roofing material that contains asbestos. The low bid for the air conditioning came in higher than expected, in excess of the project budget. As a result, with the assistance of Temple Trustee **Gordon Berlin** and the ongoing technical support of Temple member **Olgierd Bilanow**, we met with our architects and requested consideration of several new options. The option that currently appears most attractive is to rehabilitate rather than replace the existing roof top air conditioner. The existing unit would be recertified by the manufacturer, Carrier; its currently undesirable impacts on the integrity of the roof would be corrected. We are awaiting the completion of feasibility studies and new cost estimates associated with this option.

Our members have been most generous in supporting this project. Now as the preparatory work nears completion and construction is soon to start, I would like to remind all our members that payment of the \$350 semi-annual investment in our Building Fund is essential to repaying the mortgage loan and for making other critical capital improvements in our Temple in future years. Also, payments made before December 31st might be attractive on your 2013 tax return.

Gerard Soffian

Book Plates



Book plates are now available for placement in prayerbooks - either Shabbat or High Holy Days. Donation for each plate is \$18. Book plates could be for either "in memory of", "in celebration of", or "in honor of".
Contact the Temple Office for donating.

Celebrate Shabbat at our Monthly Potluck Dinner



Friday, December 20th at 6:30 PM
Meat- Bring a hearty soup or casserole, we provide wine, breads and salad.

Services follow at 8:00 PM

The Events Committee of the Board of Trustees invites you to:



EAT, PRAY, SHARE

Sponsor an Oneg after Shabbat services! Shabbat services offer a special opportunity to contribute to the life and community of Temple Beth Emeth. Sign up for a date that's significant to you; celebrate a simcha with the Temple by bringing food or contributing \$36 (or more) to sponsor a simcha.

Sign up by calling Alice at the Temple Office; write "Celebration/Oneg" in memo section of your check.

A LASTING LEGACY

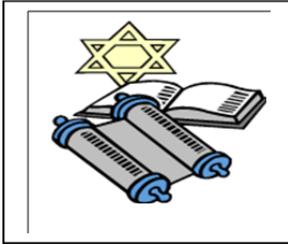
A thoughtful planned gift can minimize estate settlement costs and taxes, and ensure that your property is managed in the manner of your choosing.

Including Temple Beth Emeth v'Ohr Progressive Shaari Zedek in your will or living trust is a powerful way to leave a lasting legacy, provide long-term support for the Temple's vision and contribute to Jewish life for generations to come.

To learn more, call The Temple Office or email President Gerard Soffian at gerardsff@aol.com.

Gerard Soffian

Torah Study



Saturday Morning December 7th
 Friday Evening December 13th

10:00 AM
 7:00 PM

with Rabbi Heidi Hoover

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING



Wednesday evening,
 December 11th
 7:30 PM
 Temple Banquet Room

Secrets of Beth Emeth

This month we return to the bowels of the “new” building – The Rabbi Samuel J. Levinson Community Building - to the location of the current classrooms used by our Religious School and the Children’s Center in the space that was once called “The Main Hall”. In one of the Children’s Center teacher’s rooms, as seen in the photo below, is this closet door. Does anyone know/remember what this door led to?

Answer on page 7.



Editor’s note: Please call the Temple office if you don’t need a hard copy print of *The Truth*. You will continue to receive the on-line version via e-mail. Consider saving the temple some money, saving a tree, and going paperless!

Thanks, Bob.

Member of the Month



Diane Figueroa

Diane was born right here in Brooklyn at Kings County Hospital and was raised in the East New York section of the borough. She is a graduate of Thomas Jefferson High School (*bonus points for all of you "Orange Wave" fans: Who were David Kaminsky and Albert / Alexander Meister? ***) and went on to earn her BA at Brooklyn College.

Diane's religious background was formed at Temple Sinai on Arlington Avenue (near "Miller Hill" which ran from Jamaica Avenue to Highland Park) where she was a Bat Mitzvah and attended post-Bat Mitzvah classes. She participated in Talmud Torah as well as the Rabbi's Study Group.

As many of us already know, Diane is married to Mike. They met 42 years ago when "my job (she is retired from the New York City Housing Authority where her final position was Director of the Brooklyn Section 8 office) and his were trying to liaison for community services." At the time, he was the director of a local community outreach office and she was working at the Marcy Houses (home of "Jay-Z"). "That [project] didn't work out but WE did." Just to let everyone know, Mike has had a varied and interesting career himself. He was a counselor to drug abusers, helped set up a residential drug program which is still in existence, and, for his final 17 years of working, was a NYC Probation Officer. They have been married for 41 years and have a daughter, Amy, who is a social worker.

What most people don't know is the list of hobbies that Diane engages in. "I have always been handy doing sewing and decorative painting.

For the past 20 years, I have been making jewelry for pleasure and sale. I also take metalsmithing classes at the JCC in Manhattan." Awesome! When not engaged in crafts, Diane is a member of Quest, a life-long learning group for retired professionals that is affiliated with CCNY.

Originally members of Progressive Shaare Zedek, the Figueras came to Beth Emeth via all of the mergers. They did not have a synagogue that they called home for a large chunk of time but when several changes occurred at TBE, they signed up. Says Diane, "We were impressed with Rabbi Hoover." And now that we have her, she has become a regular at our Monday night Israeli Dance sessions as well as "other places around the city." Let's not forget that she is also a newly-elected member of our Board of Trustees.

When asked about travel, Diane says that she is not a person who likes to fly but she did travel across the United States on Amtrak and "saw the beautiful country. Parts of the trip, especially the ride west of Chicago, were spectacular. The Mississippi really is muddy. Riding in the observation car through the plains the view was completely flat. One can picture the buffalo roaming and the Indians chasing them. Past Denver, the Rockies rise right out of the plains. The rides through the Rockies and, later, the Sierra Nevada were a bit scary as the train tracks were close to the cliff edges but it was still breathtaking. The desert and Utah wastelands were also very interesting. We met people from all over the world and the US in the dining car. If one can spare the time (the trip took three days) it is very worthwhile."

In closing, Diane says, "After several mergers and years of synagogue homelessness, we have finally found a home here at Beth Emeth."

** Most people know that David Daniel Kaminsky is Danny Kaye. Al Meister is none other than "Grandpa Munster" Al Lewis. And you all thought that one of these names was the name Lenny Drucker tried to get away with using when he attended "Jeff". (Only kidding.)

Alan Zarrow

Secrets of Beth Emeth: (from page 5.) *The Main Hall/Gymnasium Storage Closets*

What we see in the photograph on the question page is actually one of two doors that led to storage closets located on the Marlborough Road side of the old Main Hall – the area of the Temple that was used for Religious School and Broadway-style shows, carnivals, recreation, and High Holy Day parallel services.

The closet on the left of the backboard in the old black and white photo that dates from the early 1970's (on this page) was the Temple Youth Group (TYG) storage area where the gym equipment, a ping-pong table, board games, files, and the infamous first aid kit were all kept ("infamous" to the Youth Group of the 1970's because all of us who were TYG members at the time were enrolled in some form of first aid class while in high school and we thought it would be a service to the Temple to put our collective heads together and create the ultimate "get well" box).

The closet on the right of the basketball backboard is, according to an e-mail received from Melissa Galt, a former TYG member and daughter of Temple Past President Clifford Greenspan, possibly the room used to store the equipment belonging to the Cub/Boy Scouts of America (Pack and Troop 97 New York City) who held their meetings and special events at TBE on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings respectively.

In the "Secrets" column about the Main Hall's stage that appeared in this space last year, it was mentioned that the Temple hosted occasional movie nights. If you look under the backboard you will see an opening in the wall. Could that have been where the movies were projected from? Did the opening have another purpose? There is no definitive answer but, if the projector room story is true, we must have owned one heck of a screen at the time. The opening was accessed via a couple of steps located inside one of the closets (I admit to not remembering which one!). In later years, the movie nights were moved up to the Banquet Hall.

For anyone who has ever tried to patch a hole in a wall, you know that sometimes the patch does not always take. The discoloration of the wall directly under the basket with the accompanying pile of plaster on the floor is the result of one too many basketballs hitting an often-times patched defect in that part of the Main Hall wall.

The basket and backboard combination was a gift to the Youth Group from the Sonfield family. It was a family which had its roots dating back to the founding of the Temple. Theresa and Joseph Sonfield were married at the Temple in 1913 by Rabbi Samuel Levinson – the man for whom the building is named. Temple Historian Ron Schweiger has more information on the family.

The Main Hall was not only used by the Youth Group as a gym/recreation area. As mentioned, it was used by the Boy Scouts. Also, on Thursday afternoons, it was open for use by the Hebrew School students who arrived at Temple early from whatever public school they were attending. A future physical education teacher and athletic director at Erasmus Hall High School was the "game room supervisor". I wonder who that could have been (hummmmm)?

There are many more stories about our basement room but those are for another time.

Teaser for January: In the past, I have raised the question as to where or if (since we have no photo) there was a water fountain in the Temple lobby. I also showed where there used to be a fountain in the Religious School area on the second floor of the Community Building. Again, no photo of the actual fountain. But there was, once, one more. And there is a photo. Where was it?

Alan Zarrow

(If there is anyone who might have any additions or corrections to this feature or if you have a question on someplace in the Temple building you would like to have investigated, please feel free to contact me via the Temple office or at Ehallzman@yahoo.com. A special thanks to Melissa Galt who took the time to write to Leslie Drucker about the Boy Scouts storage closet.)



Religious School News

This month the Religious School has been continuing to study the first chapters of Genesis, and to explore the stories of our patriarchs and matriarchs. We have also been learning about Chanukah. In Inbal's class, our youngest students have been studying the stories of Noah and Abraham. They each built arks and cut out animals to populate their floating fortresses. The class read stories about Abraham and learned how he came to believe in one God. They have studied Chanukah and made their own *chanukiyot* (menorahs) to use over the holiday.

In Rabbi Lizz's class, the children have also been reading Torah stories. They concentrated on the story of Jacob tricking Isaac to get the blessing and, to experience what it might have felt like to be Isaac, Rabbi Lizz blindfolded all the kids and gave each of them a chance to try to identify their classmate based on their other senses. They were wary of being blindfolded at first, but really loved the game once they got into it. They also worked more on their studies about what happens in the Synagogue. To review, Rabbi Lizz told her class blatantly false facts related to the Synagogue, and they were eager to jump in and correct her. She was very impressed with how much they knew and remembered!

Ian's class has been focusing on the story of Abraham and Sarah - who they were, what made them important, how they bind Jews together with Christians and Muslims, and what we can learn from their lives. They learned about the concept of *Shalom Bayit*, or peace at home, a Jewish value that comes up in the stories of Hagar and Ishmael and Abraham with Lot. They talked about what makes Abraham and Sarah imperfect, and how the class can learn from their lapses in honesty and trust. This is all leading up to a class field trip to visit our neighbors at the Albanian-American Islamic Center, where the students will learn about Islam and Abraham's (or Ibrahim's) role in it. In the past week, they have also begun to prepare for the once-in-an-eon Jewish-American festival of Thanksgivukah, singing songs like "Ocho Kandelikas" and "Sevimon, Sov, Sov, Sov".

In my class the children have been looking at the Torah as well. We learned about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and talked about how Abraham's behavior reveals his character because he politely bargained with God rather than accept God's decision. We compared the way the Sodomites treated guests to the way Abraham and Lot welcomed visitors into their homes, and we read some midrashim about Lot's wife. We studied the very troubling story of *Akeidat Yitzchak* (the Binding of Isaac), and discussed how difficult it would have been for Abraham and what might have motivated him. We have also been studying Chanukah and looking at customs from around the world. We learned that Kurdish Jews sometimes use old eggshells, along with olive oil and wicks, to make a chanukiyah, and we filled some shells with olive oil to see how it worked. Unfortunately some of the eggshells began to burn so we quickly ended the experiment! Maybe we used too much oil? Finally, we looked at the Jewish calendar to understand how it is that Jewish holidays can fall at different times of the English calendar, so that Chanukah can come as early as it does this year.



Bryna Bilanow

Worship Services



December 6th & 7th

Chanukah Service

Friday Evening 7:00 PM
Latke Oneg Following Services

Saturday Morning 11:15 AM

December 13th & 14th

Friday Evening 8:00 PM
Oneg Following Services

Saturday Morning 11:15 AM

December 20th & 21st

Friday Evening 8:00 PM
Oneg Following Services

Saturday Morning No services

December 27th

Friday Evening
Shabbat Schmooze 7:30 PM

Services 8:00PM

Candlelighting



Friday, December 6th 4:11 PM

Friday, December 13th 4:11 PM

Friday, December 20th 4:13 PM

Friday, December 27th 4:17 PM



From our Thanksgivukah Fair:

SUFGANIOT RECIPE

- Active Dry Yeast (50 grams)
- Margarine (225 grams/2 quarters of package)
- 1 spoon Vanilla extract
- a bit of Lemon peel
- 2 eggs
- 1/3 cup of Sugar
- 1 3/4 cup of water
- 3/4 kilo (1.7 pounds) of regular flour

Mix all the ingredients and knead well. Put in the fridge for at least 2 hours.

Use relatively small cup to make the circles (the dough rises also while in the oil, so the circles should not be too big and the jam placed in the middle).

After the rounds with the jam inside are tightened together, cover with a cloth and let it rise for 1/2 hour more.

In deep oil (on middle fire), cover the pot and turn around when browning.

Deep in sugar powder.

Be'teavon!

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Yahrzeit Kaddish List

The names listed below are taken from the *Bronze Tablets* and the *Book of Life*. Names are read at the Sabbath service following the date of passing. For information about *Memorial Plaques* and perpetual Kaddish, please call the Temple Office.

December 6th & 7th

Moe Berkowitz
 Monte Maurice Bliss
 George Blixman
 Adolph Davis
 Samuel Dubin
 Gertrude Gerheim
 Ann Edith Goldberg
 Louis Grossman
 Lawrence Gutter
 Hilda Kuhn
 Flora Laskey
 Barney Miller
 David Rosenberg
 Dora Rosenberg
 Annie Rosenfield
 Anna Sacoder
 Beverly Schulmon
 Isaac "Yip" Schweiger
 Addie Shank
 Milton Soklow
 Sadie Suber
 Florrie Wolff

Gustave Rothapfel
 Charles Rubens
 Robert S. Rubenstein
 Sadie Schoendorf
 Max Simon
 Bruce Solomon
 Ruth Solomon
 Fiest Strauss
 Lillian Trager
 Louis Victor
 Sidney Wedeen
 Sophie Witze
 Louis Wolff

December 20th & 21st

Jeffrey Baer Edelson
 Samuel Berman
 Benno A. Bernstein
 Harold Chamack
 Becky Cohn
 Aleja Figueroa
 Hannah Fischgrund
 Francis Florsheim
 Birdie Gewant
 Joachim Ginzberg
 Abraham Goldfarb
 Sadie Gardner Goldman
 Louis Goldner
 Soni Greenberg
 Amalia Gumpert
 Leonard M. Harris
 Fannie Hecht
 Gisha Herwitz
 Adeline Herzog
 Lenore S. Jacobs
 Mary E. Kasper
 Michael Kohn
 Louis Kottick
 Amy Jill Lehrer
 Lazarus Lipschitz
 Joseph Loeffler
 Herman Mehrlust
 Camilla Minzesheimer
 Jacob Newman
 Minnie Petrie
 Edmund I Piesen
 Rosalie Piesen
 David S. Rabinowitz
 Max J. Schwalbe
 Leah R. Silverman
 Theophile Souweine
 Caroline Strauss
 Abraham Sustick
 Louis Tartikoff
 Amelia Hernstadt Tischler
 Edward Tobias
 Bernardine Weltman
 Rose Frye Winkel
 (Continued on page 11.)

December 13th & 14th

Joel S. Berks
 Helen Block
 Hyman Jacob Cohen
 Jesse Cohen
 Benjamin Dannenbert
 Phillip Dicker
 Rose Dratch
 Helen Jacobs Epstein
 David Freeman
 Mamie Goldstein
 Sybil Garner
 Hilda K. Girshick
 Max Girshick
 Fay Goldman
 Mamie Goldstein
 Murray Goodman
 Mollie Greenman
 Charles S. Halpern
 Harry Hechtman
 Harry Herzog
 Isadore Jacobs
 Samuel Janover
 Mandell Javer
 Solomon Joachim
 Yetta Kartell
 Anna H. Kestenbaum
 Fanny Lazarus
 Matthew G. Mendell
 Auguste L. Newman

Yahrzeit Kaddish List (Continued from page 10.)

December 27th & 28th

- John L. Allen
- Kate Appel
- Maud Berstein
- Delphine Block
- Rudolph Chess
- Elias Cohen
- Stanley A. Edwards
- Ruth Frost
- Arnold Gewirtz
- Daniel Goldman
- Jennie Golluber
- Ann Heffel
- Jacob Hirschberg
- Regina Kiss
- Fanny Kleiner
- Isabella Krupin
- Henry B. Laskey
- David Levine
- Edna Strich Lindauer
- Aaron Markman
- Juanita Miller
- Rae Nebenzahl
- Esther Tobia Newman
- Henrietta Norton
- Jean Stern
- Sophie Sternberg
- Carrie Strauss
- Rose Strich
- Julette L. Taplow
- President Harry S. Truman
- Stella Wolff

Toy Drive



Monday, November 25th thru
Wednesday, December 18th

New toys, wrapped and labeled
with suggested age and gender

New Book from Linda Silverman's brother

The Alphabet That Changed the World:
How Genesis Preserves a Science of
Consciousness in Geometry and Gesture

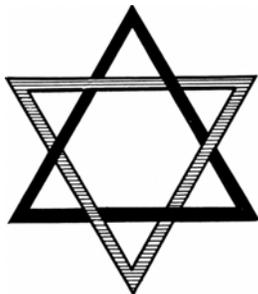
By Stan Tenen, Charles Stein, Ed.

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