

השופר haShofar

of DeKalb and Sycamore

Congregation Beth Shalom
820 Russell Road
DeKalb, IL 60115



Calendar

Friday, May 19	Shabbat Potluck (dairy)	6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, May 30	<i>Erev Shavuot</i>	
.	Congregational Annual Meeting	7:00 p.m.
.	Followed by a Shavuot Study Session	8:00 p.m.
Friday, June 9	Shabbat Potluck (meat)	6:30 p.m.
Friday, June 23	Shabbat Service	7:30 p.m.

May-June 2017 Iyar-Sivan-Tammuz 5777

Carol Zar, editor

From the President:

To Congregation Beth Shalom:

I write to you in the hope that the turning of the season finds you and yours enjoying good health, fortune, and the coming spring. As the season turns from cold to warmth, I find the happy need to express gratitude on behalf of the congregation.

I want to offer special thanks to Harvey Blau and Koleynu for the music that accompanied our Shabbat service on April 24. As a member of the choir from 2004, I have always found it a wonderful way to stay involved with the congregation and a wonderful addition to worship. If you would like to express yourself in song with us, we are always looking for new talent!

For many years, our congregation has been very fortunate to enjoy the efforts of Louis Schoenburg in producing the meal for our community Seder. This year matters prevented Louis from making the meal, so I want to give special thanks to the Hecht family, Jeff and Leslie, and their helpers, who stepped in to serve a wonderful Seder meal. Thanks also to Rabbi Barb for leading the Seder and selecting the wonderful new Haggadot that were used. In this way, we are grateful for joys of the past and for the new traditions we forge year by year.

I also want to thank Rabbi Barb and Stephanie Marshall for all their work with our religious school this year, including organizing our participation at the Israeli Independence Day event at McHenry County Jewish Congregation (MCJC) in Woodstock. It was wonderful to participate with many other families and for our students to see others from our fellow congregations in the Prairie Jewish Coalition. (See photos on the next page.)

And I would also like thank Avi and Elizabeth Bass for generously inviting the congregation into their home for the Lox and Bagel Bruch. I hope all had a fun and hearty meal!

As the season of Purim and Passover yields slowly to the summer months, I invite you all to join us for several upcoming services and events:

May 19 Shabbat Potluck (dairy) 6:30

May 30 Annual Meeting 7:00, followed by Shavuot Study Session. **All are invited to attend!!!**

June 9 Shabbat Potluck (meat) 6:30

June 23 Shabbat Service 7:30

As always, feel free to contact me with questions or comments.

Shalom,

Rob Feldacker

815-762-0204

rfeldacker1@gmail.com

Celebrating Purim and Israel Independence Day with the Religious School



Celebrating Purim with our congregation



Celebrating Israel Independence Day with the Prairie Jewish Coalition

From the Rabbi:

THE VALUE OF SHAVUOT

Shavuot, which begins the evening of May 30th, is one of the most underrated, yet most valuable, of our three pilgrimage festivals. In fact, it is the most valuable holiday of all!

Why is it given short shrift? Unlike the other two pilgrimage festivals, *Sukkot* and *Pesach*, which last seven or eight days, *Shavuot* is only two days long. To add to its woes, it lacks entertaining home rituals like eating in a *sukkah* or participating in a *Seder*. Having a slice of cheesecake, which is merely a tasty custom and not a commandment, just doesn't seem to cut it.

Nevertheless, *Shavuot* shouldn't have an inferiority complex. Why? Because without the giving of the *Torah* on *Shavuot* ... there would be no holidays! No *Shalosh Regalim* (three pilgrimage festivals). No *Rosh HaShanah*. No *Yom Kippur*. So, *Shavuot* is the most important festival of all!

According to tradition, the *Torah* was given to the Israelites on the 6th day of the Jewish month of *Sivan*, in the summer of 1313 BCE, as we stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai. The word "*Torah*" comes from the Hebrew word *Hora'ah* which means "to teach" and "to instruct". We believe that God gave us the *Torah* as a means of teaching us the meaning and purpose of creation. Through the *mitzvot* of the *Torah*, God prepares and tutors us as to what our mission in life is to be. All of it serves to draw us closer to God. In our daily prayers, we say the following about the words of the *Torah*, "They are our life and the length of our days, and we will meditate in them day and night."

The sages teach that "*Torah* to a Jew is life, like water to a fish". The *Talmud* tells about a time when the Romans decreed that the study of *Torah* was forbidden. Yet, Rabbi Akiva continued to teach *Torah* in public.

Someone asked: "Akiva, are you not afraid of the government?" Rabbi Akiva replied: "I'll give you a parable. A fox was walking along a river and saw fish swimming back and forth. He said to the fish, 'Why are you in a panic?' They answered, 'We are running from the nets that the fishermen spread out.'"

The fox said to the fish: "Come out onto the dry land and we will live together in peace."

Replied the fish: "They say that you are the wisest of animals? You're not wise, but foolish! If, in water, which is our life, we have cause to fear, how much more so if we leave our environment ... we will surely die! *Torah* is our life. Leaving the *Torah*," said Rabbi Akiva, "is like departing from life."

Pirke Avot (Sayings of the Fathers), the most accessible section of the *Talmud*, is traditionally studied each *Shabbat* afternoon between *Pesach* and *Shavuot*. The final chapter of *Pirkei Avot*, which we study the *Shabbat* before *Shavuot*, is all about the merit of studying the *Torah*.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said, "**Every day a heavenly voice goes forth from Mount Chorev (Mount Sinai), saying, 'Woe to the created beings for offending the Torah.'**"

When the *Torah* relates the story of *natan haTorah* (the giving of the *Torah*), it says that God's voice was, "**A great voice that v'lo yosaf (never stopped).**" God's voice continued even after the giving of the *Torah* and every day since, calls from Mount Sinai to every Jew to study and observe the *Torah*.

According to the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Hasidic movement, our soul, which is a spark from God and is constantly connected to God, hears this voice and at times it also reaches through to our consciousness. This is why, seemingly out of nowhere, we become inspired to study *Torah*, to do mitzvot, and to become God's partner in perfecting the world.

A Hasidic story brings a little levity to such a weighty task:

A man brings a very fine piece of material to the tailor to make him a pair of pants. He comes back two weeks later, but the pants are not ready. He waits another two weeks, still not ready. Finally, two months later the pants are ready. The man tries them on and they fit perfectly. Before paying, he couldn't resist giving the tailor a jibe. "You know, it took God only six days to create the world and it took you two months to make one pair of pants?"

"How can you compare," replied the tailor. "Look at this perfect pair of pants, and look at the world ...!"

Our sages say that God created the world unfinished and imperfect. In partnership with God, we can finish it and we can perfect it. This is what *Shavuot* is about. In the *Torah* we have the recipe for perfection. It is up to us to get cooking!

... And speaking of food, who doesn't love a "nice piece cheesecake"? Please join me for a slice of cheesecake and a *Shavuot* study session, "Standing at Sinai," following the Annual Meeting on May 30th. We will look at the sights & sounds, legends & lore, and the people who stood at the foot of a humble mountain for an event that would shape the world

Rabbi Barb Moskow



SAYING KADDISH IN THE SUMMER

If you would like to say Kaddish during the summer when we do not generally have services, contact Rabbi Barb Moskow at rabbibarb.moskow@gmail.com and we will arrange a service for you.

Standing at Sinai

Shavuot falls on Tuesday, May 30 this year on the secular calendar. Rabbi Moskow will lead us in a study session at 8:00 p.m., following our Annual Meeting. As has become custom, cheesecake will be served. Please join us!

Adult Ed Update: Cuba, Chicago, and New Ideas

When Rabbi Barb made her first trip to Cuba, it was at a time when she needed a license from the U.S. government to travel there with a Jewish delegation. She shared her experiences and pictures of that and a subsequent trip with us in March. She visited congregations smaller than ours and the large congregation in Havana. Her emphasis was on bringing Jewish educational materials, mostly from Israel, and in teaching workshops. The groups also brought everything from havdalah sets to medical supplies to the Cuban Jewish community. We learned that there is no history of anti-Semitism in Cuba and that the Jewish community is very open and liberal in defining who is a Jew.

Our book group finished the year with a late April discussion of *The Middlesteins* by Jami Attenburgh, which takes place in Chicago and its suburbs. We liked it less than many reviewers, in part because we found none of the protagonists to be sympathetic.

During the summer, I'll be working with the rabbi to set up adult ed. activities for the 2017-18 year. I'm always looking for topics for adult ed. discussions or classes, for book group titles, and for movies. Any time you come across something, please share it with me at ebass@niu.edu.

Elizabeth Bass, Adult ed. chair

New Traditions at the Annual Seder

With new food, a new rabbi, and new enthusiasm, we had a fabulous turnout (upwards of 54 people attended) for our annual second-night Seder. A big thank-you to Jeff Hecht for planning, organizing, cooking, and carrying out all the necessary preparations. Thank you also to Leslie Hecht and James and Lady Cohen for assisting. And, as always, thanks to our song leader Harvey Blau.

James Cohen, Ritual Chair

We Came, We Ate, We Schmoozed

Good food, friends, and cheer chased away the raindrops during our annual Lox and Bagel Brunch held Sunday, April 30. Thank you to Karen Sinason, Jackie Gorman, and Sandi Splansky for baking special treats, and a special thank-you to Avi and Elizabeth Bass for being gracious hosts.

As always, a pleasant time was had by all who attended.

Missy Garman, Social Programs Chair

Serving Our Community's Needs

Hope Haven continues to serve daily evening meals for approximately 50 people and depends upon our DeKalb community for help. Beth Shalom, along with area churches and other organizations, fill this need every month. Our designated day is the first Wednesday of each month. Many thanks to March volunteers Rob Feldacker and family, to April volunteers Jackie Gorman and Jane Lux, and to Rivka Baker and Marilyn Stromborg for providing the May meal.



Area residents in need of basic groceries are served by the Salvation Army Food Pantry. Beth Shalom volunteers assist shoppers through the pantry aisles on the third Thursday morning (9-noon) of the month. Many thanks to recent volunteers Carol Zar and Missy Garman.

Liz Blau, social action chair

Thank You

Many thanks for your cards, good wishes, and the beautiful floral arrangement following my recent surgery.

Liz Blau

Oneg Hosts

Thanks to recent oneg hosts Rabbi Barb and Carol Zar in April and Darryl Block, Steve Greenfield, and Karen Sinason in May. We all look forward to the goodies and the conviviality.

Chatter

Our congregants have received many awards and kudos from Northern Illinois University this spring. Mazel tov to all!

Alex Gelman and **Catherine Raymond** were named Presidential Engagement Professors. In the announcement of these awards NIU said, *Both of this year's Presidential Engagement Professors illustrate the power of art in nation-building, be it on stage, in a classroom, or at a museum gallery. Catherine Raymond and Alex Gelman have dedicated their careers to creating partnerships that allow art to speak truth and build bridges to people of all backgrounds.*

Valerie L. Garver, Associate Professor of History, has been awarded the 2017 Bonnie Wheeler Fellowship to assist her in finishing her book entitled *The Meanings and Uses of Clothing and Textiles in the Carolingian World*.

James Cohen, Associate Professor of ESL/Bilingual Education, was honored with the College of Education's Exceptional Contributions in Diversity/Social Justice Award.

Celebrating milestones at NIU were:

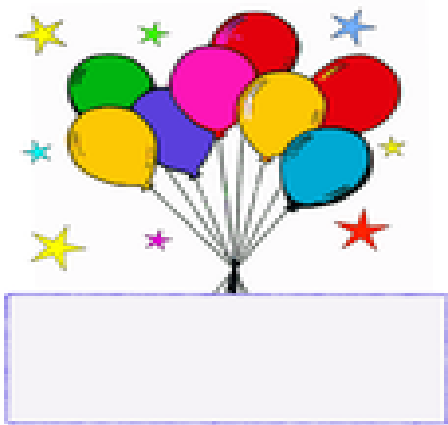
David Gorman, 25 years; **Dave Sinason**, 20 years; **Alex Gelman**, 15 years; and **Ilya Krishtal**, 10 years.

And congratulations also to:

Emma Cohen, who played cello along with her Huntley Middle School Chamber Orchestra in Crystal Lake at the Illinois Grade School Music Association (IGSMA) State Festival where the chamber orchestra earned a superior rating.

Darsha Primich, whose poem, *Mom's Blueberry Pie*, was one of the winners of the WNIJ Mother's Day Poetry Contest.

Charlie Kuchynka, Sandi Splansky's son, who finished a second bachelor's degree in August 2016, a B.S. in Accounting from the University of Phoenix (where he works – in Phoenix), graduating summa cum laude. Also, recently he launched a new business (with a friend and Sandi as partners): Shark SUPS USA – stand-up paddleboards.



Congregation Beth Shalom Annual Meeting

Tuesday, May 30

7:00 PM

All congregation members are invited to participate. Following are the reports of the nominating and bylaws committees. Reports of the budget committee are attachments to this e-mail. All will be voted on at the meeting.

Nominating Committee Report

The following are nominated, each for a two-year term:

Robert Feldacker, President

Elizabeth Bass, Adult Ed.

Karen Sinason, Social Action

Respectfully Submitted:

Nominating Committee:

Rob Feldacker

Jackie Gorman

Karen Sinason

Proposed Bylaws Changes For Consideration at May 30, 2017 Congregation Membership Meeting

These are changes in the Congregation Beth Shalom Bylaws, as proposed by the Board of Directors. Language to be deleted is crossed out, ~~like this~~; language to be added is underlined, like this.

These are changes in Bylaws Article V, Sections 2 and 3, whereby the total number of Board members is changed from eight to seven.

ARTICLE V BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 2. Composition. The Board of Directors shall consist of the three officers (the President, Secretary, and Treasurer), and ~~five~~ four additional directors elected by the membership for two-year terms. Any member in good standing shall be eligible to hold elected office.

Section 3. Election. The president and ~~three~~ two other directors shall be elected in odd-numbered years, and the secretary, treasurer, and two other directors shall be elected in even-numbered years, and shall be elected at each annual meeting by a majority vote of those members present and voting. Their terms will begin upon their election.

The Bylaws specify the amendment procedure as follows:

ARTICLE XI AMENDING THE BYLAWS

Section 1. These bylaws may be amended or repealed or new bylaws may be adopted at the annual meeting of members, or at any special meeting of members called for that purpose.

Section 2. Prior notification, in writing, of the text and reasons for any proposed bylaws change shall be given to members at least ten days in advance of a meeting.

Section 3. Adoption of any bylaws amendment requires a two-thirds vote of those members present and voting.

Section 4. Bylaws changes shall take effect immediately after passage.

Bylaws Committee:

Jerry Zar and Missy Garman