

השופר haShofar

of DeKalb and Sycamore

Congregation Beth Shalom

820 Russell Road

DeKalb, IL 60115



CALENDAR

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| Friday, November 17 | Shabbat Service | 7:30 p.m. |
| Thursday, December 7 | Book Group, <i>Sipping from the Nile:</i> <i>My Exodus from Egypt</i> | 7:00 p.m. |
| Saturday, December 9 | Shabbat Service | 10:00 a.m. |
| Sunday, December 10 | Chanukah Shop Open | 1:00-3:00 p.m. |
| Sunday, December 17 | Chanukah Party & dairy potluck | 5:00 p.m. |
| Friday, December 22 | Shabbat Service | 7:30 p.m. |
| Friday, January 12 | Shabbat Service | 7:30 p.m. |
| Sunday, January 21 | Dinner & film <i>Denial</i> | TBA |
| Friday, January 26 | Shabbat Potluck (meat) | 6:30 p.m. |

November-December-January 2017/8 Cheshvan-Kislev-Tevet 5778

haShofar: Carol Zar, editor

From the President: Joining Together

Greetings from afar from your president,

I hope these tidings find you and yours in good health and enjoying the season as fall begins to turn towards winter. I hope everyone enjoyed an easy fast and a fun dinner in the Sukkah; which I really missed helping to set up for the first time in many years!

I miss you all very much! I look forward to returning home and singing with Koleynu, coming to services with you, and sitting with you for potluck dinners. I am meeting many lovely and interesting people out here, and there is even a sizable Israeli contingent here at the Institute for Advanced Studies, but there is no place like home, and no congregation like ours. I will dearly miss celebrating Hanukkah with you, and smelling and devouring the frying latkes!

I very much look forward to singing, sitting, talking, and praying with all of you upon my return in January. In my absence, I want to extend thanks to the CBS Board and especially David Gorman who has been tasked with administering the congregation until my return.

Until then I wanted to remind everyone of the following upcoming events:

We are still collecting money and volunteers for the Thanksgiving Salvation Army Food Drive. Please send your check to Adam Sinason at 1530 Crayton Circle W., DeKalb, IL 60115. Your tax-deductible gift should be payable to Cong. Beth Shalom.

On Friday, November 17, at 7:30 p.m. we will hold a Shabbat Service at which we will be honored to welcome Deborah Jungmi Kang, associate pastor at DeKalb First United Methodist Church, and a group of members from their youth education program.

On Saturday morning, November 18, volunteers are asked to come fill the Thanksgiving Baskets at 1530 Crayton Circle W., DeKalb, IL 60115.

On Thursday, December 7, the CBS Book Group will meet at 7:00 pm

On Saturday, December 9, at 10:00 am we will hold a Shabbat Service

On Sunday, December 17, at 5:00 pm we will have our Hanukkah Party and dairy potluck Friday,

December 22, at 7:30 pm we will hold our final Shabbat Service for 2017.

As always, mindful that I will not be in DeKalb until January, if you have questions, comments, or concerns please contact me at President@BethShalomDeKalb.org

Shalom,

Robert Feldacker President, Congregation Beth Shalom of DeKalb

From the Rabbi: Muddled Prayers, Clear Heart

As I write, we are in the middle of the Jewish month of *Cheshvan*. *Cheshvan* is also known as *MarCheshvan*. *Mar* translates as bitter. *Cheshvan* is considered bitter because it is the only month without any holidays or specific *mitzvot* associated with it. Tradition holds that it is reserved for the messianic era, when it will be filled with special observances.

Cheshvan is the anticlimax of the previous month of *Tishrei*, which was filled with spiritual experiences and communal activities. The *Lubavitcher* Rebbe saw this as a special time “to take the inspiration and all that we gained in the month of *Tishrei* and integrate it into our lives, learning how to balance the spiritual and the physical elements of our life in unison and harmony.”

I would be remiss if I did not take note of one widely practiced yet generally unnamed observance of *Cheshvan*. It is the “Second Exodus”. Observed by more Jews than observe *Pesach*, it is a time when Jews flee synagogues throughout the world. Adding greatly to the bitterness of the month, we realize that we must wait another year to see friends we’ve cherished for years when we scan the pews around us.

While there are far too many contributing factors behind this exodus to address in one column, I would like to take a look at one, which I’ll call “prayer anxiety”. It peaks during the High Holydays and lingers throughout the year. Why so much anxiety? Because inexperienced *davenners* (those who pray) compare themselves to other *davenners* in the congregation and become discouraged. They seem to see only those who “appear” to be more accomplished, not the wide range of *davenners* who reflect every imaginable skill set from none to rebbe status.

The inexperienced *davener* often expresses this concern in terms of speed, worrying about keeping up with the congregation or in terms of pronunciation, stressing over mispronouncing Hebrew and sounding foolish. In *shul*, there’s no need to keep up with the Cohens! Prayer is a communal activity with highly individualized participation. We should assume that no matter how fast or slow we daven or how accurately or muddled we sound, if prayer is sincere and filled with *kavannah* (intent), God hears all and has no trouble sorting things out”.

Hasidic sage Reb Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev tells a story to illustrate this very point.

Once Reb Levi came to an inn where many Jews were lodging because it was a market day. The famous rabbi joined these businessmen for an early minyan. However, he was shocked at how fast they rushed through their prayers and how badly they mispronounced so many of the words.

At the end of the service, he marched up to them and began uttering nonsense syllables such as "Ba ... sha...boo... ". The merchants were so astonished they could not speak. Finally, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak explained to them: "The way I spoke to you is the way you just spoke to God!"

At first, they all stood there very ashamed. Then one of the men answered the rabbi: "When a baby utters syllables that have no meaning to anyone else, the mother and father seem to know what the infant needs. Even if you, Rabbi, didn't understand our prayers, we feel confident that God knows our true thoughts and feelings."

"This merchant was right," Rabbi Levi Yitzhak declared. "He showed more faith in God than I did. He taught me something that I now want to teach you: On this holy day, even the prayers of those who are unable to say them properly will be heard if they come from the heart... "

How do we prepare our hearts for prayer? How do we get our kavannah on? One answer is to prepare ourselves for the very act of praying. Don't go into prayer cold. Stop, take a moment or however long you need to focus on your intentions. When you are ready, pray. Reb Nahum of Bratslav, known as the Bratslaver Rebbe, has a recipe for success:

There are times when you must prepare yourself before you can pray.

Reciting Psalms or studying 'Torah before prayer may provide the strength you need.

But take care also to avoid giving yourself too fully to these preparations lest they consume all your strength and leave no room for prayer itself.

Enter into prayer slowly. Do not exhaust your strength, but proceed step by step. Even if you are not aroused as your prayer begins, give close attention to the words you speak.

As you grow in strength and God helps you to draw near, you can even say the words more quickly and remain in God's presence.

Put all your strength into the word's, proceeding from letter to letter with such concentration that you lose awareness of your bodily self. It will then seem to you that the letters themselves are flowing into one another.

This uniting of the letters is our greatest joy. If joy is felt as two human bodies come together, how much greater must be the joy of this union in spirit!

Do not think that the words of prayer as you say them go up to God. It is not the words themselves that ascend; it is rather the burning desire of your heart that rises like smoke toward heaven.

If your prayer consists only of words and letters, and does not contain your heart's desire . . . how can it rise up to God?

As with everything, practice makes perfect. Looking forward to seeing you on Shabbat when our prayers will most certainly rise up to God!

Rabbi Barb Moskow

Chanukah Shop Open Just One Day



Congregation Beth Shalom's Chanukah Shop will be open on Sunday, December 10, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. We'll be fully stocked with dreidels, gelt, menorahs, and candles, as well as general Judaic items. If you can't make it to the shop that day, we'll also be open for business briefly during the Chanukah Party on December 17.

If you have any questions, contact Jackie Gorman at jgorman7@juno.com.

The Great Menorah Contest

The contest will take place during the Chanukah Party on December 17

The Rules:

You may enter as an individual or as a family or both.

Build a Hanukkiah out of the most unusual materials you can find.

The Hanukkiah must be kosher.

You must be able to light it without setting the Hanukkiah or the synagogue on fire!

Award Categories:

Most Creative Design

Most Unusual Materials

Most likely to elicit a response of "huh...how did you do that?"

Smallest Hanukkiah

Largest Hanukkiah

What makes a Hanukkiah kosher?

A kosher Hanukkiah must have eight branches with the candle or oil holders on one level in a straight line. The shamash, the candle used to light the others, should either be out of line or on a different level than the other eight candles.



Food & Film

Whether or not you read Deborah Lipstadt's *History on Trial* for our October book group, you are welcome to join us for a showing of *Denial*, the film based on her book. The 2016 film is more dramatic and faster paced than the book and stars [Rachel Weisz](#), [Tom Wilkinson](#), and [Timothy Spall](#).

The film, like the book, is the story of why and how writer and historian Deborah E. Lipstadt, an Emory University professor, must prove that the Holocaust actually occurred after David Irving, a renowned denier, sues her for libel in London. A libel defense in the English legal system is very different from in the U.S. The burden of proof is on the accused to prove that what was written is true, so that

Lipstadt and her legal team must prove that the Holocaust happened.

We'll show the film on **January 21**, preceded by a buffet dinner. Watch your email for details as to time, menu, cost, and reservations. If you can't make the dinner, you're welcome to join us just for the film.

Elizabeth Bass, Adult Ed. Chair

Book Group: Growing Up Jewish In Egypt

Our book group has read several memoirs about poor and middle-class Ashkenazi families. For our December book, we have a memoir about a wealthy Egyptian Jewish family. *Sipping from the Nile: My Exodus from Egypt* focuses on the life of the writer, Jean Naggar, who was born in 1937. But she also relates fascinating stories of her parents, grandparents, and other ancestors, who came to Egypt from Italy and became prominent bankers.

It's a family where children get sent to prestigious English boarding schools and spend summers in cooler Europe, a family that celebrates Jewish holidays on a grand scale in the Sephardic tradition. But it is also a family that, just like its poorer Ashkenazi cousins, faces the issues of always being outsiders and of eventually being kicked out of the country they called home.

The book is available in both print and electronic editions. We'll meet to discuss it on Thursday, December 7, at 7:00 p.m. at the synagogue. Join us.

Elizabeth Bass, Adult Ed Chair

High Holy Days Thanks

Dear congregants:

I would like to thank everyone who had honors and who helped with the High Holidays this year! They were a resounding success considering we had new machzorim and we held them at the synagogue for the first time in nearly 50 years. Many people stepped up to the plate with their assistance (too many people to mention), so please allow this short paragraph to be a big thank you for making the High Holidays such a welcoming and warm environment for all. When the community comes together in the way that it did this past High Holy Days season, it really makes me feel proud being a member of Beth Shalom.

James Cohen, Ritual Chair

And Then There Was Succoth

Let me repeat what I said on Erev Rosh Hashanah: it was great to see our congregation holding services in our synagogue. I expect that this is what we will be doing in the future.

No sooner were the High Holy Days over than it was time to put up the sukkah. Many people helped with construction, decoration, and (eventually) dismantling.

I would like to thank **James Cohen** for leading this project, as well as **Lady Cohen** and **Emma Cohen** for their contributions to decoration, in which they were joined by **Caitlin Gorman**, **Courtney Hanna-McNamara**, **Jackie Gorman**, **Karen Sinason**, **Lorelei Hanna**, and **Phoebe Hanna**. Thanks to **Ilya Krishtal** for help with putting up, and to **Jason Hanna** for help with putting up and taking down, and especially to Lorelei and Phoebe, for assistance and for many, many comments and observations. **Missy Garman** drove all over town in quest of corn stalks. Special thanks to Linda Parker and her son Chris, who were instrumental in getting the structure assembled; we had a lot of professors on hand, but not many people who understood what keeps things from falling.

Next comes Hanukkah. We will be having our annual party downstairs at the synagogue at 5:00 pm on Sunday, December 17. Aside from latkes and music, there will also be a best menorah construction contest.

David Gorman

Social Action

Thank You to **Liz Blau** and **Barbara Kaufmann** for working at the Salvation Army Food Pantry. Elizabeth Bass, Robin Schoenburg, and Carol Zar each provided a meal to the residents of Hope Haven. All their time and donations are greatly appreciated. The basket in the hall at the synagogue is the place to bring plastic garbage bags (needed at the pantry) and unopened food, cleaning, or grooming products.

Thanksgiving donations are still needed. The estimate is over 700 families asking for help in DeKalb County. In the past years we have provided an amazing number of well packed baskets, now bags. Please help us continue this mitzvah. Donations should be made out to Congregation Beth Shalom and mailed to: Adam Sinason 1530 Crayton Circle West, DeKalb, 60115

Onegs and Potlucks

One way to celebrate Shabbat is to join us at our services and potlucks. Friday evening services are always followed by an oneg. In October, **Derryl Block** and **Steve Greenfield** hosted the oneg. This is a time for schmoozing and enjoying each other's company. On November 17, The **Hechts** will be hosting. We'll be joined that evening by Deborah Jungmi Kang, associate pastor at DeKalb First United Methodist Church, and a group of members from their youth education program.

We don't have another Shabbat potluck planned until January. We're still looking for hosts for that evening and subsequent ones. If you're interested, contact Carol Zar at czar@niu.edu.

Chatter

Mazel Tov to **Karen and Dave Sinason** on the engagement of their son **Adam** to Ashley Hock. Both are NIU graduates now working in downtown Chicago. A fall wedding is being planned. Of course, Adam is our long-serving Thanksgiving-basket coordinator.

