

# השוֹפָר haShofar

of DeKalb and Sycamore

Congregation Beth Shalom  
820 Russell Road  
DeKalb, IL 60115



## CALENDAR

Friday, Oct. 31	Shabbat Service cancelled	
Thursday, Nov. 6	Book Group: <i>The Dovekeepers</i> and <i>Second Person Singular</i>	7 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 8	Shabbat Service & potluck lunch (dairy)	10 a.m.
Monday, Nov. 10	<i>Deadline for Deli Dinner reservations</i>	
Friday, Nov. 14	<i>Deadline for receipt of Thanksgiving basket checks</i>	
Sunday, Nov. 16	Deli Dinner & Movie	5 p.m.
Friday, Nov. 21	Shabbat Service	7:30 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 4	Book Group: <i>The People of the Book</i>	7 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 5	Shabbat Service	7:30 p.m.
Sunday, Dec. 7	Hanukkah Store open	10 a.m.-noon
Sunday, Dec. 14	Hanukkah Party / Potluck (dairy)	5 p.m.
Tuesday, Dec. 16	<i>First Night of Hanukkah</i>	

**November-December 2014 Cheshvan-Kislev 5775**

*haShofar: Elizabeth Bass, editor Avi Bass, designer*

## FROM THE PRESIDENT: THANKSGIVING & TORAHS

I hope this message finds you in good health and enjoying the season. I have greatly enjoyed spending another round of High Holy Days, harvest festivals, and Torah celebrations with you as a community. I hope you are feeling refreshed and renewed for another year of Jewish worship, culture, and charitable efforts. I want to use this letter as an opportunity to remind you of two particular opportunities for charitable action before the end of the year.



The first is our congregation's usual efforts towards providing Thanksgiving meals for those in our local community who are in need. (See page 7.) Last year our congregation filled over 160 bags, and I hope we can continue our efforts. The Salvation Army, which runs the program, has been very grateful for our participation in the past.

The second opportunity is closer to home. While we may have come through the High Holy Days, Sukkot, and Simchas Torah refreshed and renewed, the same cannot be said for our community Torah, which is worn and in need of professional repair. I direct your attention to the message on this subject on page 5 in this Shofar; it will inform you of how you can assist in our goal to repair it so that it can be a part of our community for many years to come.

Lastly, I remind you, in these sometimes mindless times, to take care of the nourishment of your minds. Come join with us for our book club discussions, starting November 7 with *The Dove Keepers* and also *Second Person Singular*; then there is our adult education Deli Dinner on Nov 16, featuring a documentary on the life of Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat who saved thousands of Jews during the Holocaust.

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

--Rob Feldacker, 815-762-0204, rfeldacker1@gmail.com

## HANUKKAH SHOP OPEN JUST ONE DAY



Hanukkah begins on the evening of Tuesday, December 16. In anticipation, our gift shop will be open for one day only, on Sunday, December 7. The shop will be open during Religious School, from 10 a.m. to noon. Stop by for all your Hanukkah needs, including candles, menorahs, dreidels, gelt, wrapping paper, and small toys. A supply of general Judaic items is also available, as well as Koleynu CDs.

## FROM THE RABBI: LISTENING & HEARING

*(Excerpted from Rabbi Gordon's Kol Nidre sermon)*

I want to talk about a tool for being our best selves: Listening. You all know the Hebrew word for listen. Morning and evening we remind ourselves to listen – *Shma Yisrael!* Listen, Jews! And we expect, maybe even take for granted, that God will listen. Three times a day we describe the Divine One in our daily worship as *shomea tefilah*, hearing our prayer. When we recite *Avinu Malkeynu*, we plead with God to listen. *Avinu Malkeynu*, hear our voices, our plaintive and passionate cry for presence and responsiveness.

Barbara Breitman, a Jewish spiritual guide, writes that the Shema declares that hearing is the quintessentially sacred act for Jews (Barbara Breitman, “Holy Listening: Cultivating a Hearing Heart”). Tonight, and all through the next 25 hours [of Yom Kippur], we need to listen to our hearts. If we don’t stop and listen deeply, we cannot hear God. In this we have the example of the prophet Elijah. When Elijah the prophet, who was in constant danger from King Ahab and Queen Jezebel trying to kill him, could take it no longer, he went to Mt. Horeb, also known as Mountain-of-God. He stood inside the entrance of a cave, and, the Book of Kings tells us, God passed by. There was a great and mighty wind, splitting mountains and shattering rocks by God’s power. God was not in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake. God was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake, there was a fire; God was not in the fire. After the fire, there came a quiet, small voice. When Elijah heard that soft murmur of a sound, he knew to come out of the cave to pour out his heart to God.

When we quiet the noise of our lives, still the distractions of our anxieties, we can hear the deep yearnings of our hearts, we can listen for God. Faith is a constant effort, a constant listening to the eternal voice, taught Abraham Joshua Heschel. And if God is *shomea tefilah*, the Ultimate Listener, then we honor the image of the Divine within us most fully when we listen to others, to ourselves, and to the Holy in our lives.

Listening. Those of us with hearing loss struggle with the mechanics of listening. Consonants are ambiguous. If you speak to us in an undertone – forget it! Maybe, instead of my nearly invisible hearing aid, I should wear a big sign SPEAK UP – I CAN’T HEAR YOU! But then, we’d all have to wear those signs, regardless of physical hearing loss. How often do we shut off our desire and ability to hear each other? For most of us, it’s not about the ambiguous consonants—it’s about tuning in, or not, to the intent of the speaker. Do I really think she’s telling me that story to see if I can come up with one to top it? Hmm, probably not. More likely, she wants to share an exciting or disturbing or heartwarming part of her life—she wants me to get it. Is he telling you how he’s worried about his son getting picked on so you can tell him not to worry, it happened to your kid and he’s fine ten years later? Probably not. Probably he is expressing his anguish at the denigration this beautiful soul is experiencing, and his own desperation over how to make it better, and he needs you to understand how this tears him up inside.

Is she sharing the news that she’s going to have gall bladder surgery next week in order to hear your war story about having your appendix out? Probably not. Probably she’s worried – about

pain, about being anesthetized, about how the recovery time will disrupt her life, and she needs a deep look into her eyes and an arm around her shoulder.

To be there for each other – our major task in the world – we need to hear beneath the words. A story was told of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, when, early in her work with hospice patients, she labored to learn how to work more effectively with people facing the dying process. While she believed she was exploring important territory, she felt that the interventions she was using were not making a difference in reaching her patients. Then one evening Dr. Kubler-Ross went back after hours to visit a man who was dying of cancer. She stopped short of entering the room because she noticed that he was talking to someone. She couldn't see who that person was. As she eavesdropped she heard this man pouring out his deepest thoughts and feelings. Kubler-Ross said she was stunned. The patient was doing what she had for weeks unsuccessfully tried to get him to do. She waited at the door to speak to this amazing counselor/facilitator and learn his or her techniques. After a while, and much to her amazement, out stepped the cleaning lady! Kubler-Ross took her aside and asked her how she got that man to talk so freely. The cleaning lady responded simply, "Honey, I didn't do a thing. I guess he just knew I was willing to listen. And, when he started to talk, I just sat there, held his hand and listened to him. The good Lord did all the rest!"

Rabbi Amy Eilberg tells this story and adds: The wise person in dialogue is the one who listens more than she speaks, asks more than expressing his truth. Wisdom is found in hearing the spaces between the spoken words, recognizing and honoring the life experience in which a particular view is grounded.

Can you recall a time when you were deeply listened to? What was it like to be attended to in that way? "Across a wide range of experiences, people use such words as 'healed,' 'loved', 'whole,' and 'at peace.' Many people recall occasions when, at a very dark time of life, being deeply listened to brought enormous comfort, even a sense of transformation." At any time, being deeply listened to acknowledges and affirms our very being.

Can you think of a recent time when you listened to someone absently? What happened after your inattentive presence? A child's tantrum? A storm of negative emotion or a silent pout from a spouse? The withdrawal of a teen to an electronic communicator? Eilberg reminds us that "in the realm of personal experience, life is palpably different when we are listened to fully, lovingly, and wholeheartedly. When we listen we are giving the greatest gift by receiving what the other person has to say. Offering one's full attention is the greatest, most generous gift of caring and compassion one person can give to another."

This teshuva, turning to the other, connects us where we are most real. If we don't deeply listen to each other, we can never find that part of God that resides in each of us.

You can listen with your ear or you can listen with your heart. And may your deep listening carry you into a year of at-one-ment. Amen.

--Rabbi Maralee Gordon

## AN IMPORTANT LETTER FROM THE BOARD

Dear Congregants:



The Torah is an integral part of our congregation, our worship, and our religion. As such, it is the responsibility of all congregations to maintain their Torahs. We have recently discovered that one of the Torahs at Congregation Beth Shalom needs your help.

During Simchat Torah--the holiday that comes right after Sukkot, and which means “rejoicing in the Torah”--we carry the Torahs around the sanctuary, dancing and singing with them. We also read both the concluding part of the Torah and the opening part.

When Rabbi Gordon was doing so, she discovered that a number of the individual letters in one Torah were damaged. It is likely that other parts of the Torah are in need of repair as well. It is not uncommon for Torahs to need repairs: handles can break, seams can split, the parchment can rip or become soiled, and the ink can fade, crack, or lift off. The true state of our Torah will not be known until it is examined and inspected by a *sofer*, or scribe, who is a specially trained expert.

Repairing a Torah is a long, delicate process that must be done by a *sofer*. It is also an expensive one, likely to cost thousands and thousands of dollars. This is why we are asking you today to consider making a special, tax-deductible donation to Congregation Beth Shalom specifically to repair the Torah. Checks should be made payable to Congregation Beth Shalom, P.O. Box 1177, DeKalb, IL 60115. Please note “Torah repair” on the memo line.

--The Beth Shalom Board of Directors

## BOOK GROUP: FROM MASADA TO JERUSALEM

When the book group meets on Thursday evening, November 6, at 7 p.m., we will discuss two very different books: *The Dovekeepers* by Alice Hoffman and *Second Person Singular* by Sayed Kashua.

*The Dovekeepers* is historical fiction, with events leading up to the siege at Masada; *Second Person Singular* is set in modern day Jerusalem. You'll enjoy the discussion even if you haven't read both books. Sayed Kashua, an Arab Israeli citizen, is spending at least this year at UIUC and has written some recent columns, poignant and humorous, on his and his family's culture shock there. You can google his name to find them.

The next meeting of the Book Group will be on December 4. We will discuss *The People of the Book* by Pulitzer prize-winning author Geraldine Brooks. This is a historical fiction look at the Sarajevo Haggadah.

## DELI DINNER & MOVIE FEED BODY & SOUL

Yes, we're doing it again! Join us for our third annual deli dinner and program, Sunday, November 16 at 5 p.m.

This year we will view a terrific documentary entitled *Sugihara: Conspiracy of Kindness*.



The film tells the story of a diplomat who was serving as Japanese Consul to Lithuania at the beginning of World War II. His heroic actions, against the wishes of his government, saved the lives of an estimated 40,000 people. This is a little known story of personal courage, sacrifice, and dedication.

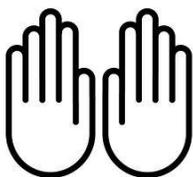
The kosher-style deli dinner will cost \$10 for members and \$12.50 for non-members. Anyone who wishes to join us for the movie only can come for free. Dinner reservations must be made by Monday, November 10, so that the appropriate amount of food can be ordered. Checks made out to Congregation Beth Shalom should be mailed to Carol Zar, 3095 Wolf Court, DeKalb.

The film is an awe-inspiring story of what one individual can accomplish. Hope you'll join us on November 16!

--Carol Zar, adult ed chair

## SHABBAT SERVICES ADD WARMTH TO COLD DAYS

Mark your calendars and plan to join us for these Shabbat services:



Saturday, November 8 at 10 a.m. -- Come help to make a minyan. (We have a Bat Mitzvah coming up in the spring, so it's important that the student takes part in a complete Torah service.) Services will be followed by a potluck dairy lunch, so please bring a main dish, side dish, or dessert to share.

Friday, November 21, at 7:30 p.m. -- The service will be followed by an oneg with desserts and conversation. A Shabbat potluck has been changed to a regular Shabbat evening service.

Friday, December 5, at 7:30 p.m. -- The service will be followed by an oneg, and yes, more desserts and conversation.

NOTE: The Shabbat evening service on Friday, October 31, has been cancelled.

## THANKSGIVING BASKETS – A CBS TRADITION

As we have for many years, Congregation Beth Shalom will put together Thanksgiving baskets for needy local families.

Adam Sinason, who has so efficiently coordinated this project for several years, has again volunteered to be in charge. We collect money. Adam purchases food in bulk. We fill the food baskets. Then we deliver the baskets to the Salvation Army, which collects names of families in need and distributes the baskets throughout the area.



The baskets are designed to provide Thanksgiving dinner and breakfast the next morning. The Salvation Army provides us with a list so that all baskets provide the same food. **Last year, our members contributed enough money to fill a record 160 baskets!** We believe that is more than any local church, most of which have much larger memberships.

So, this year, if you will again send a check, Adam again will make trips to the supermarkets and get the biggest bang for your buck. Checks should be made payable to Congregation Beth Shalom, marked for "Thanksgiving Baskets," and sent to Adam Sinason, 1530 W. Crayton Circle, DeKalb, IL 60115. **Money must be received by Friday, November 14.**

You can also volunteer to help fill the baskets; it takes less than an hour, on the weekend before Thanksgiving. Watch your email for specifics.

## CELBRATE HANUKKAH, LATKES & MORE



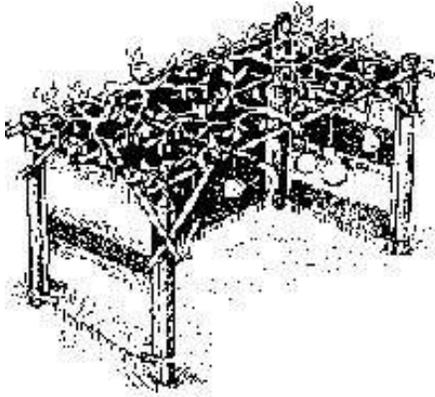
We are looking forward to sharing a Hanukkah potluck dinner with you on Sunday, December 14 at 5 p.m.

Congregation members will make the latkes and provide apple sauce and sour cream.

Each family should bring a DAIRY dish--salad, fish, vegetable or dessert-- to share. Harvey Blau and Koleynu will lead singing. All ages are welcome.

Please bring **an unwrapped toy** as a gift for the Children's Learning Center to distribute this holiday season. This center serves a large number of children, ages 6 weeks to 12 years, from low-income families in our community, some of whom do not receive help from other local agencies.

## THANKS TO SUKKAH BUILDERS & MOVERS



Many thanks to our intrepid builders who balanced on wobbly ladders to construct our sukkah this year. The team consisted of Rob Feldacker, James Cohen, Billy Dial, and David Gorman. Thanks as well to Karen Sinason and the Hecht family--Jeff, Leslie, and Rachel--as well as the members of Hillel who helped move tables and chairs and set up for our potluck dinner in the sukkah. A good time was had by all of the 25 people who attended and enjoyed eating outside under a starry sky.

--Jackie Gorman, ritual chair

## HIGH HOLY DAYS THANKS

This year, as always, there were many people who worked hard to ensure that Congregation Beth Shalom's High Holy Days services went off successfully. I'm sure that many of those who simply attend services don't realize how much effort goes into them. I assure you that setting up and getting ready for our High Holy Days services takes a great deal of planning, preparation, and labor.

Michael Remson returned this year as our High Holy Days rabbi, and Zach Weiss returned as our cantorial soloist. I know that both of them spend many hours practicing and going over the order of worship. Rabbi Remson's sermons and words of wisdom gave us all something to think about, and Zach's wonderful singing left us in awe and made services special.



The flawless performances of our choir, Koleynu, are also an essential part of our evening services that many of us look forward to all year. The members of Koleynu, under the dedicated direction of Harvey Blau, spend many hours in rehearsal in the months leading up to the holidays.

A key part of our worship, of course, is the Torah service. This year, three people chanted Torah: Jerry Zar (on Rosh Hashanah), Barbara Kaufmann (on Yom Kippur morning), and Roberta Maxfield (on Yom Kippur afternoon). Two others chanted the Haftarah: Carol Zar (on both Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur afternoon) and Jenny Gelman (on Yom Kippur morning). I am truly humbled by their voices, their knowledge, and the thought of all the time they spend dedicated to practicing and preparing. And, in addition to chanting Torah, Jerry once again performed the fundamental role of blowing the shofar for us.

There are still other people to mention. Jeff Hecht served as our gabbai for the first time during High Holy Days this year, making sure that the Torah service ran smoothly. In addition, James Cohen led the Yizkor service on Yom Kippur. Thanks to James for doing so, as well as to Avi Bass for maintaining the list of congregants and family members whom we remember.

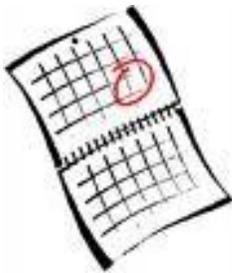
Thanks as well to all of the people who had an Aliyah, carried the Torah, and lifted and wrapped the Torah. And let's not forget Robin Schoenburg, who took the time to iron the lovely hangings that adorn the bimah and lecterns (which she made, in case you didn't know), and Barbara Kaufmann, who baked the delicious cake and cookies we enjoyed at our Erev Rosh Hashanah oneg and at the end of Yom Kippur.

Our High Holy Days services would not be possible without all the work that goes on behind the scenes. For many, many years, Avi Bass has made all the arrangements with NIU so that services can be held in the Holmes Student Center. He gets the moving and set-up crews in place to move and organize a huge number of items (e.g., the "portable" Ark, Torahs, prayer books, stools, kippot). This year, the moving crew consisted of James Cohen, Billy Dial, Rob Feldacker, Jeff Hecht, and Rachel Hecht. The set-up crew consisted of Liz Blau and David Gorman. Many people also helped pack everything up at the end of services. We also appreciate the assistance of Hillel and of the Holmes Student Center custodians and audiovisual, parking, and security staffs.

As ritual chair, I have to say that all this does not really get easier even though I've done it for a number of years now. *So todah rabbah* to everyone. You are much appreciated.

--Jackie Gorman, ritual chair

## JEWISH CALENDARS AVAILABLE



Thanks to David Jacobsen for arranging to get a generous supply of Jewish calendars from a Chicago funeral home. A pile of them is on the table in the hallway; help yourself to whatever your household needs.

## UPDATED BOARD OF DIRECTORS LIST

An updated board of directors list, with contact information, is on the next page.

Please consider stapling it to your congregational directory for future reference.