

השופר haShofar

of DeKalb and Sycamore

Congregation Beth Shalom
820 Russell Road
DeKalb, IL 60115



Seder: see page 5

CALENDAR

Thursday, March 19	Book Group: <i>The Unamericans</i> , by Molly Antopol	6:30 p.m.
	<i>Reservation deadline for March 22 Thai dinner</i>	
Friday, March 20	Shabbat Service	7:30 p.m.
Sunday, March 22	<i>Sholem Aleichem</i> film & Thai dinner	5:30 p.m.
Monday, March 23	<i>Reservation deadline for April 4 Community Seder</i>	
Saturday, April 4	Community Second Seder	6 p.m.
Thursday, April 16	Book Group	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, April 18	Shabbat Morning Service	10 a.m.
Sunday, April 26	Lox & Bagel Brunch	10 a.m.

March-April 2015 Adar-Nisan 5775

haShofar: Elizabeth Bass, editor Avi Bass, designer

FROM THE PRESIDENT: ENJOY OUR WARMTH

Greetings to the members of Congregation Beth Shalom:

I write this in hope that, as you read this, spring has begun, and we are not still mired in a frozen wasteland! But even if the warm weather is slow to come, I wanted to invite you to share in all our upcoming activities to warm the spirit.



This March 20, we have a special Friday Night Shabbat Service, accompanied in our worship by Koleynu, our very own volunteer choir, directed by Harvey Blau. We may even have a contingent of international guests join with us. Come one, come all!

On March 22, join us for an adult education movie night and Thai food supper, featuring an interesting documentary on the life of Sholem Aleichem, the author.

April starts with Passover! Come join us for the Community Seder on April 4. Please feel free to invite friends and family to come.

Then, in addition to our Saturday Morning Shabbat Service on April 18, we will have our Lox & Bagel Brunch on April 26.

In all these activities and observances, please feel invited not only to come yourselves, but also to invite family and friends who have never joined us or who have stayed away for a long time.

Our last membership count after dues came in revealed that we only have 47 families in the congregation; and, while the situation is not dire, to maintain the level of activity that this community has come to expect, we need people to show up to support our efforts. There may be several in the community whose earlier lives led them away from their Jewish culture but who may be ready or curious about the opportunities we offer. Others may simply desire a sense of shared fellowship yet never sought it out. If you know of any such persons, consider inviting them to join us for some of the activities mentioned in the preceding paragraphs.

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

Shalom,

--Robert Feldacker 815-762-0204 (rfeldacker1@gmail.com)

FROM THE RABBI: A SNAPSHOT OF MOROCCO

The Jewish United Fund of Chicago (JUF) sponsors a rabbinic mission each January to a place where their funds, consisting of our donations, provide aid to Jewish communities. Up until now missions have been to Europe, and I was able to go on three missions over the years to Belarus, Budapest, and Prague. They involved visits with Jewish community leaders and those receiving aid, treks through the snow in Jewish cemeteries, and seeing the sights of historically Jewish areas as well as palaces and landmarks.

WHERE'S MOROCCO?



This year's trip was to Morocco, and I was fortunate to be able to go. We got off the plane and headed for Rabat, arriving midday for lunch at the ornate home of David Toledano, the head of the Jewish community. From his name you know that his ancestors were from Toledo, Spain, arriving in Morocco circa 1492, at the time of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. Lunch was an elaborate feast of every kind of Moroccan food there is, and the special guest at lunch was the American ambassador to Morocco, Dwight Bush, hailing from East St. Louis. He spoke about the good relations between Morocco and the U.S., and how he has been learning the ropes in the six months he has been the ambassador.

In Rabat we toured the elaborate tomb of King Mohammed V, as well as the area of the king's palace. We were soon to learn that every city has a king's palace, inhabited on a rotating basis by the king, depending on where he has business to conduct.

Our next stop was Fez, where we toured the mellah, the historical Jewish quarter, including a synagogue preserved as a museum, the Jewish cemetery, and the plaqued building where Rambam (Maimonides) lived in the 12th century. We went on to the medinah, the old part of the city, and toured many craft workshops: rugs, ceramics, leather goods, woven goods, and metal works. In the leather goods workshop we looked down from the second floor on the huge dyeing vats below, and the workers swishing cloth or leather in the vats. Many of these crafts used to be the purview of Jewish craftspeople.

That night over dinner we heard from two young men involved in the Maimuna society, a group of Moroccan Muslim young people who educate people on the historic, Jewish cultural contribution to Morocco. One young man told how his grandmother described sharing holidays with Jewish neighbors when she was growing up, and what an impression it made on her.

Before the trip, I learned from our reading materials that Jews have lived in Morocco for at least 2,000 years. Morocco is home to 48 Berber tribes, and centuries ago some of them were converted to Judaism, some to Christianity, and some to Islam. Most today are Muslim. Up in the mountains, we visited the grave of a Jewish Berber tzaddik (righteous one), and toured a typical Berber home, with cows and chickens inhabiting the lower level, and rooms added on each time a son married.

We learned that Jews who lived in Morocco prior to the influx from Spain were known as *toshavim*, or residents, while Jews who emigrated from Spain and Portugal were known as *megorashim*, or exiled ones, and in many communities in Morocco they did not mix or affirm each other's customs.

In 1948, there were over 250,000 Jews in Morocco. With the establishment of the State of Israel immigration began. Berber Jews took very seriously the dictum "Next Year in Jerusalem" recited at the end of the Seder, and as soon as they could many of them made aliyah; others followed. The 1960 census showed 159,000 Jews in Morocco, decreasing to 42,000 in 1968. By 2003, only about 4,000 Jews still lived in Morocco. Many Moroccan Jews live in Israel, many in communities of Moroccan Jews, so that the Moroccan Jewish culture is alive in Israel as it dwindles in Morocco.

Mukhtar, our Muslim guide, explained to us, on one of our long bus rides between cities, that as you move west across North Africa, versions of Islam get more moderate. Morocco is the most moderate due to its mix of cultures. In the 1980s, young people in North Africa studied more extreme Islam in Saudi Arabia and caused trouble in Algeria. The first terrorist attack in Morocco by extreme Muslims took place in 2003. The new king, Muhammad VI, has wise councilors, and instituted a Religious Department, which unified mosques. There could be no private mosques, and all mosques have TVs that show the religious channel, which is moderate.

For women they started a two-year training institute to enable women to be religious guides to other women on the "real" religion. Previously, many women were getting no religious instruction at all as their husbands wouldn't let their wives go to mosques led by men. The program has been extended to Europe, since so many Moroccan families have moved there. In addition, the government has put serious efforts into raising the standard of living of the poor, since poverty breeds extremism. All mosques in Morocco have square minarets, whereas they are round in other countries.

Our Jewish guide, Rafi, has been involved in efforts to restore synagogues around the country, and for those that can no longer stand, to preserve items for the Jewish museum in Casablanca, the only Jewish museum in a Muslim country.

Most Jews still in Morocco today live in Casablanca, and we were able to attend services at two different synagogues on our Shabbat there and tour a Jewish school. The Jewish School receives support from the JDC, the Joint Distribution Committee, the international Jewish agency that provides aid to needy Jewish communities. We met with residents in a senior housing building in Casablanca supported by the JDC. They send social workers around the country to assess the needs of individuals and families. One woman from Marrakesh is now living in the senior building in Casablanca because of health reasons. She was grateful for the care and independence she has there, but misses her home in Marrakesh.

In Morocco we saw beautiful, bucolic countryside, the snow-covered Atlas Mountains, cities with ornate sections, ancient and modern, and people clothed in a variety of dress. It was truly a feast for the eyes, the mind, and the heart.

--Rabbi Maralee Gordon

MARCH BOOK GROUP: A SHORT STORY COLLECTION

The next meeting of our book group will be at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 19. We'll be discussing *The Unamericans*, a collection of short stories by Molly Antopol. Read a few stories or read them all. Feel free to join us, even if you haven't been to any previous meetings.

HEAR KOLEYNU AT A SPECIAL SHABBAT SERVICE

If you have enjoyed the sounds of Koleynu, our wonderful choir, at the High Holy Days and other times of year, then mark Friday, March 20, on your calendar. That night, there will be a special Shabbat service featuring Koleynu, under the direction of Harvey Blau. The service begins at 7:30 p.m. and will be followed by an oneg, with delicious sweets and time to schmooze. We may also have a group of international visitors from an NIU program joining us that night.

NEWS YOU CAN USE FROM PRAIRIE JEWISH COALITION

CBS members are invited to attend a May 3 presentation by a Torah scribe, organized by the Fox Valley Jewish Neighbors. Watch your email and the next haShofar for details. This may be of particular interest because of the work done on our Torahs this year.

The PJC Youth group, open to teens in all participating groups, will be having a Shabbat dinner with NIU Hillel on Friday, April 24.

A regional Friday Night Shabbat is being planned for July 17.

A trip to Israel, open to CBS members as PJC participants, is being planned for May 2016. Watch for details in upcoming months.

CHATTER

Mazel tov to **Barbara Kaufmann** of the engagement of her daughter, Rachel, who grew up in our congregation, to Daniel Katzman. Rachel works at California's Fresno State University. Daniel comes from Michigan but lives in Monterey; he is a Marine, finishing a master's in engineering. They will be moving to Quantico, Virginia, this fall and plan a 2016 wedding.

Rabbi Maralee Gordon & Leo Schlosberg welcomed a new granddaughter, Elisheva, born January 29, to their son and daughter-in-law Jacob and Michal Gesher, who reside in Ramat Gan, Israel. Elisheva joins Binyamin, Avigayil, Chananya, Amiel and Noam. So far they have met Elisheva only on Skype, but look forward to meeting her in person the first week of March, when another son, Ben, gets married in Melbourne, Australia.

Kelsie Kruskol, Julie & Bryan's daughter, played Millie in the Sycamore High School production of William Inge's *Picnic* in February.