

# השוֹפָר haShofar

of DeKalb and Sycamore

Congregation Beth Shalom

820 Russell Road

DeKalb, IL 60115

## Happy Chanukah



## CALENDAR

Friday, November 18	Shabbat Potluck (dairy)	6:30 p.m.
Friday, December 2	Shabbat Service	7:30 p.m.
Sunday, December 11	Chanukah Shop Open	10 a.m.-noon
Sunday, December 11	<i>The Other Son</i> , dinner and movie	5:30 p.m.
Sunday, December 18	Chanukah Party	
	Children's activities	4:00 p.m.
	Dinner	5:00 p.m.
Friday, January 6	Shabbat Service	7:30 p.m.
Thursday, January 19	Book Group, <i>The Hired Girl</i>	7:00 p.m.
Friday, January 20	Shabbat Potluck (meat)	6:30 p.m.

**November-December-January 2016/7 Cheshvan-Kislev-Tevet 5776**

*haShofar: Carol Zar, editor*

## From the President: Joining Together

To the members of Congregation Beth Shalom,

Greetings to all and best wishes that this message finds you and yours enjoying the season in good health and spirits. I hope that you all enjoyed (and endured well) the High Holidays and harvest festivities as much as I did. But while the savor of fall is as sweet as apples and honey, time marches on swiftly to the winter season and the celebration of Chanukah as we turn toward the warmth of candlelight and the comfort of meals, movies, and books.

The coming months provide ample opportunity for any who wish to participate in a variety of activities with our community.

- \* For those who wish to dine together, we will hold a Shabbat potluck (dairy) on November 18 and another on January 20 (meat);
- \* For those who wish to pray in company, we will hold a Shabbat service on Friday, December 2 and on January 6;
- \* For those who seek both food and knowledge, with a bit of stimulating conversation, we have a movie night on Sunday, December 11, featuring the film *The Other Son*.
- \* For those wishing to purchase gifts and supplies for Chanukah, the shop will be open 10 a.m. to noon on December 11.

On Sunday December 18th, come celebrate the triumph of the Maccabees at our Chanukah Party!! Feel free to invite anyone in your family, wherever they live to join us for the fun! Children's activities will start at 4:00 p.m. and dinner will be served at 5:00 p.m.

It was wonderful to see so many of you at the High Holiday services, I look forward to joining many of you again as we pray, talk, think, and feast our way into the winter months. May this New Year bring blessings to you all.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call or email (or text) me:  
Rob Feldacker, 815-762-0204, rfeldacker1@gmail.com

## From the Rabbi: It's All About God

*When a person prays in an ordinary way, the words of prayer have not life of their own. It is only the name of God appearing in their midst that gives them life. Thus, when you recite the words: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord." life does not enter the words until the word "Lord" is uttered. But when a true master of prayer recites the words every word is a name of God.*

Your Word is Fire, The Hasidic Masters on Contemplative Prayer

During the High Holydays, I spoke about *middah ohev et HaMakom*, “the virtue of loving God”. I noted that *HaMakom*, which translates as “The Place” is one of our names for God. In the siddur, we can find over 100 names for God. Even more may be found in the *Tanach*. Some reflect the way God has appeared to us throughout history. Many are an expression of a specific need that we have or articulate a way in which we can draw closer to God.

After services, I was approached at two different times by people with similar questions. “When I went to Sunday School, I was taught to write “G-d”. Never “God”. How do you write God?”

If you started reading at the top, you know my response. Based on years of answering these questions, I find that there seems to be a rigid line drawn in the sand between those who write out the word “God” and those who are shocked by the appearance of a lack of piety and insist on substituting a hyphen for the “o”.

So, who’s right and who’s wrong? Or is this one of those times when everyone can be right?

The rabbis of the Talmudic era tell us, “Destroy the names of their (false) gods, but do not destroy the name of God”. They are referring to the physical act of destroying the letters that make up God’s name. If we take this statement in its most literal form, the safest way to avoid destroying God’s name is to avoid writing it in the first place. But since we like to write about God, some believe that by leaving out the vowels or that by slightly altering a single consonant, they are adhering to the words of our sages.

Thus the modern tradition of writing the English word G-d was born and you were free to erase the blackboard and throw out your notebook paper. It really is a very modern tradition. Two thousand years ago, the rabbis didn’t know about English, let alone blackboards or notebook paper.

It is generally agreed that the rabbis were referring to the special four-lettered Hebrew name of God which you sometimes see written in English as YHWH and which is known as the “tetragrammaton” (try saying that fast three times in a row). The rabbis also extended the law to cover destroying or erasing these seven Hebrew names of God: “*El*”, “*Elohim*”, “*Ehyeh*”, “*Adonai*”, “*Shaddai*” and “*Tzeva’ot*”. All are found in the *Torah*.

So, do we need to fear destroying our God if we destroy that specific letter combination written or printed on a piece of paper? Seventeenth century scholar Rabbi *Shabtai HaKohen*, known as *The Shach*, one of the great commentators on the *Shulchan Arukh* (one of our sources on how we know to do what we do), wrote that the prohibition against erasing only applies to the eight names of God, when written in Hebrew. In other words, English, Chinese, and Swahili don't count.

Some hold that the prohibition against destroying the eight Hebrew names of God applies to all written, printed, or chiseled words. Others take a narrower position and say that the prohibition applies only when one of the seven is written by a *sofer* who writes with the *kavannah* of sanctifying the name.

Back in my Sunday School days, I was troubled anytime the notion of *kavannah* was added to the mix. When covering the concept of *kavannah*, we were taught that intention without action regarding a sin was equal to committing the sinful action. In other words, if it was my intention to write God's name then no matter how I end up writing it, the *kavannah* (intention) is still there and it may not be destroyed. In Judaism, intention is as important as the act itself

I know of several congregations, believing they are following this guideline, will throw photocopies into the trash instead of saving them for the genizah (a place for the burial of materials with God's Hebrew name on them). For others this goes a little too far in not showing respect for sacred texts.

So nu, what should you do? As Rabbi Brad Artson wrote, *If writing "Gd" or "G-d" helps you remember that God is special and deserves our highest respect, then write it that way. If it doesn't, then write it in full. What matters isn't how we spell out an English title for the Holy One, but that we let the Almighty into our hearts.*

Kol Tuv!

Rabbi Barb Moskow

## Chanukah Shop Open Just One Day



Congregation Beth Shalom's Chanukah Shop will be open on Sunday, December 11, from 10 am to 12 noon. 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 18.

If you have any questions, contact Jackie Gorman at [jgorman7@juno.com](mailto:jgorman7@juno.com).

## Celebrate Chanukah, Latkes & More

Come one, come all, to our annual Chanukah party!

At 4 p.m. on December 18 there will be activities for the children followed by a DAIRY potluck dinner at 5 p.m. for the entire congregation. Homemade latkes will be provided. Please bring a dish to pass that does not contain any meat or shellfish.

Please also bring a new **unwrapped** toy or game to be donated to the children at the Children's Learning Center. A large number of the children there are from families facing economic challenges. Our contributions help to make their holidays a little brighter.

Our party will be a fun way to get ready for Chanukah which begins this year with the first candle lighting on Saturday night December 24. Harvey Blau and Koleynu will help get us in the spirit by leading us in traditional holiday songs. New this year is the Great Menorah Contest (see information below).

To RSVP for the Chanukah party please call, text or email Missy Garman at 815-858-5315 or [misgarman57@gmail.com](mailto:misgarman57@gmail.com).

Looking forward to seeing you all there!!

## The Great Menorah Contest

### The Rules:

- Build a menorah out of the most unusual materials you can find.
- The Hanukkiah must be 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.
- **The most important rule is: you must be able to light it without setting the Hanukkiah or the synagogue on fire!**

**3 Prize Categories:** You may enter as a family or as an individual or both.

- Most Creative Design
- Most Unusual Materials
- Most likely to elicit a response of "huh...how did you do that?"



## Food & Film

Join us for another evening of food and film. On Sunday evening, December 11, we will show the 2012 film *The Other Son*, which got 3½ stars from Roger Ebert. It will be preceded by a Middle Eastern buffet dinner.

We start with dinner at 5:30 p.m., followed by the movie, which runs under two hours, around 6:15-6:30. A short summary: While preparing to enter the Israeli military for his compulsory service, young Joseph Silberg learns he was accidentally switched at birth with the son of an Arab couple from the West Bank -- a shocking revelation that sends both families reeling.

The film presents various views on the relations among, and attitudes of, Israelis and Palestinians. But you also can forget the politics and look at the story as an examination of the nature vs. nurture question. One writer says: As the boys become friends, their families have to re-evaluate their beliefs and “resistance to neighboring culture” (xenophobia) prior to connecting with their true identity.

Dinner will be catered by Jamrah, our newest local Middle Eastern restaurant, and will feature both chicken and beef shwarma, falafel, hummus, pita, appropriate sauces, and a vegetable salad. Plus, we’ll have beverages and dessert. All that for just \$10/person. Reserve a place by first sending an email to me at [ebass@niu.edu](mailto:ebass@niu.edu), indicating how many are coming. Then send a check for the appropriate amount, made out to Congregation Beth Shalom, to Elizabeth Bass, 224 Rolfe Road, DeKalb 60115. Dinner reservations must be prepaid and must be received by December 5.

Links to reviews of *The Other Son*: <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-other-son-2012>  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/26/movies/the-other-son-about-the-palestinian-israeli->

Elizabeth Bass, Adult Ed. Chair

## Book Group



Between the time I write this and the time you read it, our book discussion group will have had its first meeting. While those present agreed that they were not big fans of *The Imperial Wife*, the November selection for our book club, we still had a lively 90-minute discussion of the book and the subjects it raised. The rabbi led our conversation that included topics such as the immigrant experience, oligarchs, and society's views of ambitious women, all topics touched on in the novel.

Next up on our list for January is *The Hired Girl* by Laura Amy Schlitz. For the first time, we are reading a book aimed at young adults. But this award-winning book is described by The New York Times as “a book that effortlessly transcends the conventions of the young adult genre.” It centers on a young Pennsylvania farm girl who goes to work as a maid for a well-to-do Jewish family in Baltimore in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*The Hired Girl* has received several honors:

2016 Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction

2016 Association of Jewish Libraries Sydney Taylor Award

2016 National Jewish Book Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature

The book is available at the DeKalb and the Sycamore public libraries (and on inter-library loan if their copy is out). Online, the hardcover is only \$11.22 at [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com). For book reviews go to <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/08/books/review/the-hired-girl-by-laura-amy-schlitz.html>

So, read it, then join us at 7 p.m. on Thursday, January 19 for an interesting discussion.

Elizabeth Bass, Adult Ed Chair

## Shabbat Services and Potlucks Add Warmth to Cold Days

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

We had our first potluck dinner in September and the Blaus served as our hosts. About 20 of us enjoyed the food and fellowship. Friday, November 18, at 6:30 p.m., we will have a dairy potluck and Friday, January 20 there'll be a meat potluck. If you haven't been to one of our Shabbat dinners, you are missing a good time. Come and join us.

Friday, December 2, and Friday January 6, at 7:30 p.m. there will be a Shabbat service. The service will be followed by an oneg with desserts and conversation. Our first oneg in September was hosted by the Cohen family. Here's your chance to pray and later to schmooze with fellow congregants.

## High Holy Days Thanks

As the new ritual chair, I would like to personally thank all the congregants who participated in the High Holidays this year, making it such a warm and welcoming place to pray. Several congregants helped take the Torahs and other items over to the Holmes Student Center (Rob Feldecker, Avi Bass, Billy Dial, James Cohen) and put everything in place to be ready for when the rest of the congregants arrived to worship. The same congregants also were responsible for returning the items to the synagogue after the High Holidays were over. Moreover, over 30 congregants participated in making the High Holidays so special, from having an aliyah, carrying the Torahs, to opening the ark. As happens each year, Koleynu helped us welcome in the new year on Rosh Hashanah and set the tone for Kol Nidre. Harvey and the choir have once again performed beautifully. Our veteran Torah readers, Roberta Maxfield and Barbara Kaufmann, did their usual excellent job as did our shofar blower, Jerry Zar. What I found to be most special is that we now have a newly hired, passionate rabbi who is here for us and to be our new spiritual leader and teacher, Rabbi Barbara Moskow. I know we are all very much looking forward to learning from and praying with the new rabbi in many future services and functions.

In regards to Sukkot, special thanks go to Rob Feldecker for single-handedly putting up the sukkah and for Emma Cohen for decorating it. Rob Feldecker and David Gorman joined together to take it down.

On another note, I would like to thank Jackie Gorman for guiding me through all of the numerous responsibilities that are required of the ritual chair for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Succoth holidays.

James Cohen, Ritual Chair



## Social Action

Thanks to Jason and Courtney Hanna, Robin Schoenberg and Lizz Brookshire, and Carol and Jerry Zar, for providing meals for Hope Haven this Fall, and to Eileen Dubin and Roberta Maxfield for helping at the Salvation Army Food Pantry.

There are still openings for Food Pantry volunteers on March 16, May 18, July 20, and August 17. Please let me know at [liz@lizblau.com](mailto:liz@lizblau.com) or by phone 815-758-1143 if you can help out.

Liz Blau, coordinator

## Building and Grounds

There's always something. Like any building, the Congregation Beth Shalom building requires attention and a bit of forethought. For your information, here are some things that have been going on regarding upkeep.

One night last summer, the outside of the emergency exit door along with much of the wall on the south side of the building, was spray-painted with graffiti. That was cleaned up and we now have a motion-activated security light over that door. Speaking of lights, we have also begun to phase in next-generation lightbulbs inside the building. Most of the lights in the sanctuary, for example, have CFL bulbs (those curly fluorescent things) and, as they blow out, they will be replaced by LED bulbs, which last longer, don't flicker, and use far less electricity.

In addition, the carpet in the sanctuary was recently cleaned, the kitchen stove was serviced (end of that gassy odor), and various pieces of furniture have been repaired or replaced. Next it will be time to think about the outside of the building: roof, parking lot, signage. Yes, there's always something...

David Gorman, Building and Grounds

## Celebrating Succoth at Pushing the Envelope Farm

The religious school families attended the Prairie Jewish Coalition Succoth celebration at Pushing the Envelope Farm. It appears that a good time was had by all!



Marissa Dial and Emma Cohen



In the Sukkah



The Feldeckers



The Hannas