

השופר haShofar

of DeKalb and Sycamore

Congregation Beth Shalom

820 Russell Road

DeKalb, IL 60115

IN MEMORIAM

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of our rabbi, Barb Moskow. This issue of haShofar includes a number of items that she submitted prior to her untimely death. They appear as she provided them. Please note that the events discussed will take place as scheduled with congregation members filling in for the rabbi.

CALENDAR

Friday, February 16	Shabbat Potluck (dairy)	6:30 p.m.
Sunday, March 4	Purim Celebration	4:00 p.m.
	Megillah Reading	
	Potluck (dairy)	
Friday, March 9	Shabbat Potluck (meat)	6:30 p.m.
Friday, March 23	Shabbat Service/Koleynu	7:30 p.m.
	will sing	
Saturday, March 31	Congregational Seder	6:00 p.m.

February-March 2018 Adar-Nisan 5778

Carol Zar, editor

Message from the President

Greetings to all the members of Congregation Beth Shalom.

It was with great sadness that I recently delivered news to you of Rabbi Barb Moskow's death. In her time with us, Rabbi Moskow was a vibrant and stimulating part of our congregational life. She brought energy and enthusiasm to her role as leader of our congregation. She will be dearly missed, not only by us at Congregation Beth Shalom, but by the wider Jewish community of Northern Illinois, many among whom have sent word with generous offers of condolence and support. While her family has not indicated that they wish to share details of her funeral, we will decide on an appropriate way to honor her memory and her contributions to Jewish life in our area.

As the attached fliers and her last letter to us below can well attest, the Rabbi was an integral part of all of our activities and obviously her absence will require us to adjust. The Board has determined to keep as much as possible of our previously scheduled activities, including those for Purim and Pesach. For this we may need some volunteers from the congregation to step up, so please watch for those opportunities to come by email.

Our next board meeting is scheduled for February 20th, and we will deliberate on how to proceed with both our immediate activities this March and April and our goals in hiring a rabbi. In the interim, I have received several generous offers from the rabbis of Congregation CKI, MCJC, and B'nai Israel if any member of our congregation needs a rabbi. If you need contact information for any of them let me know.

Even though we are still in the depths of winter it is time to consider the spring and the approach of Purim and Pesach! These are our current plans, and any changes will be announced by email.

We will celebrate the Mitzvot of Purim on Sunday March 4th with Megillah reading at 4:00 and a dairy potluck dinner at 5:00 with hamentaschen and songs from Koleynu! We will hold our community Seder, with the return of food prepared by Jeff Hecht, on Saturday, March 31, at 6:00. Please see the attached announcement for more details!

Along with these celebrations we will have our regular schedule of worship and activities: Our next Shabbat service is on March 23 at 7:30 pm and Koleynu will be singing. Join us for Shabbat potlucks on February 16 at 6:30 pm (dairy) and again on March 9 at 6:30 pm (meat).

I am always eager to hear from congregants! If you have any questions, concerns, opinions, or news, please feel free to contact me at President@BethShalomDeKalb.org or call/text me 815-762-0204.

Shalom,
Rob Feldacker, president

Message from The Rabbi

WE BELONG TOGETHER

A story is told of a man who attended shul each weekday and Shabbat to pray with the congregation. One day he stopped coming to synagogue. After a while the rabbi became concerned and decided to pay the man a visit. It happened to be a very cold day when the rabbi came knocking at the man's home. The man welcomed the rabbi into his home and together they sat down near the fireplace to stay warm. The rabbi inquired as to the man's state of health. He told the rabbi that his health was good. His business was also doing well. In fact, he had no complaints.

"So why did you stop attending shul?" asked the rabbi. "I have decided that I could concentrate better on my prayers when I pray at home. Here, I'm not distracted by anyone, so now I pray at home each day." The rabbi continued the conversation.

Before leaving, the rabbi picked up the fire tongs. He went over to the fireplace and removed one glowing coal from the rest. Then he placed it on the side of the fireplace, away from the other coals. "Now watch this single coal and watch the rest!" declared the rabbi.

While the other coals continued burning and warming the room, this single coal slowly lost its glow until it became completely extinguished and cold. "You see what happens to a hot and glowing coal when separated from the others," said the rabbi to the man. "This is the reason why you should come back to shul and continue praying together with the others. When we pray together one benefits from the warmth of the others. But, when one is alone, like the single coal, they will eventually become extinguished and cold." The next day the man was back in shul.

In Pirkei Avot 2:4, Hillel says: "Do not separate yourself from the community. I have always thought that his statement was an incredibly insightful observation of the nature of Jewish life. No need to preface by encouraging participation. Hillel assumes that a Jew is by default a member of the Jewish community. As members, we are obligated to take an active role, to share in all aspects of communal life and to seek out ways to better the lives of everyone.

When our sages talk about community, they often refer to the minyan, a minimum of ten members. Our sages believed that *wherever ten Israelites are assembled, either for worship or for the study of the Law, the Shekinah (Divine Presence) dwells among them.*

This idea is reinforced in the daily morning Amidah, when we pray, *Grant peace, goodness and blessing, grace, kindness, and mercy to us and to all Your people Israel. Bless us, our Creator, all of us together, through the light of Your Presence.*

Where did the sages get the notion of a minimum of ten for a community? As usual we have several sources. The Babylonian Talmud found scriptural authority for ten in Num. 14:27, "*How long shall I bear with this evil congregation which murmur against me?*" The "evil congregation" refers to ten of the twelve scouts, who were sent to spy out the land of Canaan and spoke out against going forward.

An earlier reference to ten can be found in Exodus, where Moshe, on the advice of his father-in-law Yitro, appoints chiefs of groups of ten men and their families.

From these sources, the sages determined that the smallest congregation which is permitted to hold public worship is one made up of ten people. Of course, we can pray as individuals or in small groups of less than ten!

However, the Mishnah (Megillah 4:3) lists eight specific instances when a minyan is required. I have added, parenthetically, the specific prayers situations they refer to.

They do not 1. 'Divide' over the Shema (The Barchu), 2. Nor pass before the Ark (The Amidah), 3. Nor lift their hands (The Priestly blessing), 4. Nor read from the Law (Reading from the Torah), 5. Nor conclude with the Prophets (The Haftarah), 6. Nor arrange the standing and sitting (ancient funeral traditions), 7. Nor say the benedictions of the mourners or the consolation of the mourners (Mourner's Kaddish), 8. Nor the benedictions of the bridegrooms (Sheva Brachot), 9. Nor use God's name in preparing for grace after meals, with less than ten (Birchat HaMazon).

What happens if a community cannot sustain a minyan of ten adult Jews? We work things out! We have a very long tradition, going back to ancient times, of working things out when it comes to Jewish practice. Some communities will count a Torah or two. Some will include a baby. Others find a solution in The Palestinian Talmud where it is noted that seven people constituted a minyan.

Of course, it is true that individual prayer can be deeply meaningful and immensely powerful, but there is something equally meaningful and powerful in being in the presence of your community. During the 21st century when loneliness is rampant, and the lack of human face-to-face connection is lamented, sometimes we need to be encouraged to “benefit from the warmth of others” in our community. We need our minyan as much as it needs us.

At the turn of the 20th century, Moishe, a religious Jew, is traveling by train from Galveston to Dallas. Somewhere in between the two cities, in the middle of the great Texas wasteland, the train stops, and a big menacing Texan sporting two huge six-guns gets on the train.

He swaggers down the aisle, searching until finally he comes across Moishe. The Texan looks Moishe up and down and asks in his deep Texan drawl, "Hey, you a Jew?" Moishe, quaking in his boots and saying the shema under his breath, stammers out, "yes I am a Jew." To which the Texan replies, "git kim arois mir darft a minyan."

As the Rabbi said, “When we pray together one benefits from the warmth of the others. But, when one is alone, like the single coal, they will eventually become extinguished and cold.”

I look forward to seeing all of you benefit from and contribute to the warmth of others at our shul.

Rabbi Barb Moskow

Holiday Observances

Dear congregation,

We have lots of things coming ahead within the next few weeks that I am very excited to share with you.

For Purim on March 4th, activities begin at 4:00 p.m. with the Megillah reading. Koleynu will be enhancing the reading with their singing. We have a dairy potluck directly afterwards at 5:00. Some fun activities for the children will follow the potluck. Unfortunately, we've had to cancel the Mishloach Manot project as that was an undertaking by Rabbi Barb.

For Pesach, we will be holding the second-night Seder at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday night March 31st. Jeff Hecht will again be honoring us with his masterful cooking skills and Harvey Blau will lead the singing.

Further information on both events is being sent as two additional PDF files attached to this issue of haShofar. Looking forward to seeing you there!!

James Cohen, ritual chair

Volunteers Help Feed Our Community

The Social Action Committee would like to thank Elizabeth Bass and Carol Zar for working at the Salvation Army Food Pantry. December is always a busy month there, and volunteers are much appreciated. Barbara Kaufmann and I prepared dinner for Hope Haven Shelter. They too have a busy season; their numbers are 60 + people, almost at capacity. Thank you, Barbara, for your help. Thanks also to Leslie and Jeff Hecht who provided dinner to Hope Haven in January. The staff and residents are always grateful for the meals we bring.

Karen Sinason, social action chair

Thanksgiving Bags.

November 18, a cold, rainy morning, 14 people in assembly line fashion, put together 168 bags of food to help those in need in DeKalb County. We filled the bags with vegetables, yams, cranberry sauce, gravy and a dessert, loaded 6 cars, then drove to the Salvation Army Center. Our bags are always neat and greatly appreciated. Thank you to all volunteers: Liz and Harvey Blau, Elizabeth and Avi Bass, David Gorman, Jason, Lorelei and Phoebe Hanna, their family Ross and Dashiell McNamara, Karen and David Sinason and Ashley Hock.

Thank you to all who donated. The coordinator says Beth Shalom is a standout in the generous amount of food we provide.

Adam Sinason



And a Good Time Was Had by All



Our congregation's annual Hanukkah party was held a bit before the actual festival this year, on December 10th. Thanks to Karen Sinason for handling setup. The potluck dinner featured a number of events and activities. I will take the opportunity to acknowledge people as I mention these.

Latkes, the centerpiece of the holiday menu, with sour cream and (homemade) applesauce, were prepared and fried by Jeff and Leslie Hecht.

There was a performance by Koleynu, led as always by Harvey Blau. Singers included Liz Blau, Caitlin Gorman, Barbara Kaufman, Roberta Maxfield, and Bernie Paul. It is nice to be able to applaud the choir, which we can't do when they perform at services.

Rabbi Barb Moskow organized children's activities; thanks to Courtney Hanna-McNamara for help. There was also a fun Hanukkah trivia game and the second annual Great Menorah Contest: amazingly, all the entries were winners.

And for those needing last-minute gifts or supplies for the holiday, Jackie Gorman graciously opened the Hanukkah Shop for an hour during the party, with help from Caitlin Gorman.

Thanks to everyone for making this a lively and successful event. It really represents our community at its best.

David Gorman, vice-president

Israeli Mystery our April Read; New Date

Murder on a Kibbutz: A Communal Case by the popular Israeli mystery writer Batya Gur is our next book group read. First published in Israel and then in the US in 1995, the book is a look into the realities and challenges of kibbutz life then as well as Gur's third mystery featuring detective Michael Ohayon of the Serious Crimes Unit. The book is available at local libraries and online.

From the Publishers Weekly review: "...yields a fascinating account of the ways in which this quintessential Israeli institution has changed, and in some ways failed to change, with the years. There are telling portraits of older kibbutzniks and of the stresses they face..."

And another review: "To the average American, the kibbutz, Israel's communal village, seems like an exotic lifestyle, permeated by idealism and communal sharing. Reality is more complex. Idealism does exist, as do a shared lifestyle and strong community feeling--but one also finds dissension over ideology, e.g. whether children should stay overnight with their parents or in a "children's house," or whether elders should be housed in a central facility."

We'll meet to talk about the book on Thursday, April 12, at 7 p.m. at the synagogue. Note that this is a **different date** than previously announced. All are welcome, whether or not you've participated in other reads.

Suggestions for future reads, something with a Jewish connection or content, are always welcome from everyone.

--Elizabeth Bass, adult ed chair

Thank You, Thank You

Thank you to the folks who hosted our onegs and potlucks over the last several months. Liz and Harvey Blau provided the goodies in December and Karen and Dave Sinason did the honors in January. The Zars hosted the potluck in January.

Carol Zar

Good bye

This is my last issue of haShofar as editor. Jackie Gorman will be taking over as haShofar editor. Thanks to everyone who contributed!

Carol Zar