

# השופר haShofar

of DeKalb and Sycamore  
Congregation Beth Shalom  
820 Russell Road  
DeKalb, IL 60115

## CALENDAR

Jan. 22	Shabbat Potluck (meat)	6:30 p.m.
Jan. 25	Tu B'Shevat	
Feb. 12	Shabbat Service	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 21	Adult Education Evening	6:00 p.m.
Feb. 26	Shabbat Potluck (dairy)	6:30 p.m.
March 3	Book Group	7:00 p.m.
March 11	Shabbat Service	7:30 p.m.



**January-March 2016    Shevat-Adar I 5776**

*Carol Zar, editor*

## Message from The President

Greetings to the members of Congregation Beth Shalom.

May this letter find you and yours enjoying the season and in both good health and spirit. This letter looks both forwards and backwards in time. Looking back, I would like to express my gratitude to Adam Sinason and all the members of our congregation who came forward to donate and help with our Thanksgiving basket donations for the Salvation Army. Thanks to your efforts, hundreds of families in the DeKalb/Sycamore area were provided with a Thanksgiving meal.

Looking forwards, I can report that efforts to find a new rabbi following Rabbi Gordon's retirement in June are moving forward. With the help of the members of the Rabbi Search Advisory Committee, the CBS Board has drafted a new job description, congregation description, and advertisement for the position, which will go out for publication with the new year.

We can also look forward to regular meetings of our Book Club, led by the Rabbi and featuring *A Marriage of Opposites*. We will also have the rescheduled adult education event featuring food, dessert, and a documentary on the Venetian Ghetto!

All this is in addition to our regular Shabbat services and potlucks. Please come join us to keep heart and spirit well fed and warm until the spring.

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

Shalom,  
Rob Feldacker  
815-762-0204  
[rfeldecker@gmail.com](mailto:rfeldecker@gmail.com)

## Message from The Rabbi

### Reflections on How I Spent My Winter Vacation

On my last day in Israel this trip, I realized I was eating a lot more meat than I do at home. Of course, I reflected, keeping kosher here (in Ramat Gan) doesn't keep me from a shwarma on the corner, nor from buying a package of sliced turkey at the corner market, nor from ordering out Chinese. We spent the better part of the day at the Jaffa Bazaar, and when lunchtime rolled around we looked around and settled on a spot, eating at tables on the sidewalk. I almost ordered kabobs because I could – but I settled on falafel; enough meat already!

Another thing I noticed on this “last day” was human diversity. On the bus there were black-hatted men and women with their hair covered, intermingled with bare-headed men and women in slacks and hair in every variety and color. In a furniture store at the bazaar, a Southeast Asian couple shopped for sofas, and when we sat at lunch, the next table included dreadlocked, pierced, and tattooed Hebrew speakers. Shopkeepers were Jewish or Arab Israelis, speaking Hebrew and/or Arabic, Russian or English. This was the diversity of non-tourist Israel, the diversity of everyday life in a country where nothing was closed on Christmas or New Year's Day until sundown when Shabbat arrived and the ever-present traffic noise dwindled to an occasional vehicle. We benefitted from the post-Chanukah sales furnishing our new apartment near our kids. We didn't see any Christmas lights, but the trunks of the palm trees lining the airport roads were tightly wrapped in silver, gold, or blue lights, evoking Chanukah candles to the eye. It was a breath of fresh air to spend three weeks enjoying our children and grandchildren in our Jewish homeland, aware of the tensions between Jew and Arab through the media but not witnessing them with our own eyes.

Binyamin's bar mitzvah was not what you might expect. Thursday evening, when you were celebrating New Year's Eve (or ignoring it), his party included a dinner buffet, klezmerish music, his speech on the mitzvah of living in the land of Israel, gender-segregated dancing, and a slide show of family photos depicting Binyamin's first 13 years. I met a second cousin and his wife for the first time. He grew up in Florida, the age of Ari, our oldest, and made aliyah to a religious settlement in the West Bank (or Judea and Samaria if you are of a different ilk). Leo's first cousin came from Efrat. They wouldn't be here on Saturday as they don't travel on Shabbat.

Friday night, after our family Shabbat dinner for 14, friends from their community came for dessert around 9 p.m., with separate circles of chairs for men's conversations and women's conversations, with kids sprawled between. Saturday morning the service started at 7 a.m. (!) and I made it to shul at 8:15 in time to hear most of his leyning (Torah chanting) -- he read the entire portion -- and to pelt him with candy from the balcony women's section after he finished the Haftarah and hid under his tallit.

On our last evening in Israel, we had Jake's family over for dinner, all eight of them, along with Ben, who traveled from Melbourne for the occasion. What a blessing to have them all around our dining room table!

--Rabbi Maralee Gordon

## A Night in Venice

Join us on Sunday night, February 21, for an Italian-style dairy dinner (tiramisu for dessert!) and an intriguing video about the Jews of Venice in the 16th and 17th centuries, followed by a short discussion. (This is the program originally scheduled for December.)

Our speaker, via a DVD, will be Professor David Ruderman of the University of Pennsylvania, where he holds a named chair in modern Jewish history and is the director of the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies. He focuses on the lives of several fascinating Venetian Jews, including a Jewish doctor and the composer who introduced choral music to the synagogue.

This period, Ruderman says, restructured Jewish cultural life and ushered in a new era of Jewish-Christian relations. You'll discover the answers to these questions:

- Could Jews really attend Italian universities in the 17th century?
- Why is medicine a popular profession among Jews?
- How were Jews an important part of the history of Venice?
- Why were the Italian ghettos not all bad for Jews?

Dinner will be at 6 p.m. Advance dinner reservations are required. You may make a reservation by sending an email, with the number attending, to [ebass@niu.edu](mailto:ebass@niu.edu) and then sending a check for \$8.50/person, made out to Congregation Beth Shalom, to Elizabeth Bass, 224 Rolfe Road, DeKalb, IL 60115.

**Checks must be received by Wednesday, February 17.** If you want to join us just for the video, be there before 7 p.m. We should be done by 8 p.m. Friends and older children are welcome for both dinner and the video.

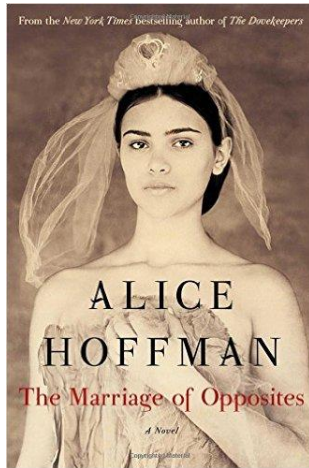
--Elizabeth Bass, CBS adult ed chair

## Thank Yous: Better Late Than Never

On August 30, the CBS end-of-summer picnic had the largest attendance in a long time. The day was warm, the food was good. Lots of desserts and homemade salads went well with the hot dogs and fixings! Thanks to Missy Garman for providing the kosher dogs, David Gorman for manning the grill, and Louie Schoenberg for donating the soda pop and ice.

Thanks to the Hecht Family for providing the goodies for our December Oneg and to Rivka Baker and Linda Schwarz for doing the honors in January.

## March Book Club Selection: *The Marriage of Opposites*



January's book club read took us to Algeria and Paris. Our March book, *The Marriage of Opposites* by Alice Hoffman, primarily will take us to St. Thomas in the Caribbean. Amazon describes the novel as "a forbidden love story set on the tropical island of St. Thomas about the extraordinary woman who gave birth to painter Camille Pissarro—the Father of Impressionism."

The blurb continues: "Growing up on idyllic St. Thomas in the early 1800s, Rachel dreams of life in faraway Paris. Rachel's mother, a pillar of their small refugee community of Jews who escaped the Inquisition, has never forgiven her daughter for being a difficult girl who refuses to live by the rules. Growing up, Rachel's salvation is their maid Adelle's belief in her strengths, and her deep, life-long friendship with Jestine, Adelle's daughter. But Rachel's life is not her own. She is married off to a widower with three children to save her father's business. When her husband dies suddenly and his handsome, much younger nephew, Frédéric, arrives from France to settle the estate, Rachel seizes her own life story, beginning a defiant, passionate love affair that sparks a scandal that affects all of her family, including her favorite son, who will become one of the greatest artists of France."

So, join us for some history, some art, and some torrid emotions in the tropics on March 3 at 7 p.m. We really enjoyed our books this year, and the ensuing discussions, and expect to do so again

--Elizabeth Bass, adult ed chair

## Volunteers Help Feed Our Community



Thanks to December Food Pantry volunteers Elizabeth Bass and Carol Zar and to Rob Feldacker and family for providing a meal for 50 residents of Hope Haven.

These mitzvahs serve many people in need in our DeKalb community and are very much appreciated.

There are still opportunities for you to help in July and August (the 1st Wednesday of the month for Hope Haven and the 3rd Thursday morning 9:00-12:00 at the Salvation Army Food Pantry.

Please let me know if you can help.

Liz Blau, social action chair, [liz@lizblau.com](mailto:liz@lizblau.com)

## Thanksgiving Baskets – We Did It Again!



Congregation Beth Shalom presented the Salvation Army with 168 bags of holiday food for their Thanksgiving distribution to people in need. Our production line was staffed with volunteers braving the cool and windy November morning. These “get right to work” people did this task in 35 minutes! Thank you to Missy Garman, Karen Sinason, Elizabeth Bass, Harvey Blau, Adam Sinason, Dave Sinason, Avi Bass, Ilya Krishtal, and to photographer Liz Blau.

Thank you to all who donated. The Food Pantry was very appreciative of our contribution.

Adam Sinason

## Donations

### Tree of Life

A leaf has been added to the Tree of Life by Missy Garman in honor of Bernie Paul, a friend and a mensch.

Leaves for our Tree of Life can be purchased at any time. Contact Dave Sinason for more information. [dsinason@niu.edu](mailto:dsinason@niu.edu)



## Interested in a Trip to Israel?

Congregation Kneseth Israel in Elgin has put together a trip to Israel, June 7-16, 2016, and is opening it up to members of all congregations that belong to the Prairie Jewish Coalition as ours does.

If you have thought or dreamed of going to Israel, this may be an ideal opportunity. You will be traveling with a group from the northern Illinois region on a trip tailored for this group, not an off-the-rack tour. Overnight stays include Jerusalem, the Galilee, and Tel Aviv, with day trips to Ein Gedi, Masada, Caesare, and elsewhere.

The cost for the 10-day trip, not including airfare, is \$3,029. This price includes accommodations; land transportation in a private, air-conditioned coach; all breakfasts and dinners and some lunches; admissions; luggage handling; and a multi-lingual guide. The single-person supplement is \$800. The agency can arrange air flights too. Early registration is encouraged.

A detailed trip brochure, with a daily itinerary, is attached to this haShofar. Print copies are available from adult ed chair Elizabeth Bass at [ebass@niu.edu](mailto:ebass@niu.edu) or 815-756-1227. More information is available from travel agent Karen Kass at Starship Travel in Arlington Heights. She may be reached at 847-394-1155, ext. 101, or toll-free at 866-394-6300.

## Chatter

First the good news. Congratulations to **Abby Chemers** on the birth of her grandson Benjamin Asher on November 5, 2015. Benjamin lives in Colorado with his parents Alyse and Matthew Smith. Now the not so good news for the congregation. Abby has moved to Colorado to be near the Smiths. Can't blame her, but we'll certainly miss her.

Kudos to **David Sinason** who added yet another degree to his résumé. In December, Dave received a bachelor's degree in history from NIU.