

# השופר haShofar

of DeKalb and Sycamore

Congregation Beth Shalom

820 Russell Road

DeKalb, IL 60115



***Happy Tu B'shevat!***

## CALENDAR

Friday, January 11	Shabbat Service	7:30 PM
Tuesday, January 15	Board meeting	7 PM
Saturday, January 26	Shabbat Service	10 AM
Friday, February 1	Shabbat potluck (dairy)	6:30 PM
Thursday, February 7	Book Group	7 PM
Sunday, February 10	Film & Food Night	5:30 PM
Tuesday, February 19	Board meeting	7 PM
Friday, February 22	Shabbat Service	7:30 PM

**January-February 2019    Tevet-Shevat-Adar 5779**

*Jackie Laks Gorman, editor*

## ***From the President***

Greetings to all the members of Congregation Beth Shalom! I wish you a happy new year of the Common Era, 2019, and hope this message finds you and yours in good health and spirits. 2018 has certainly been a year of change, of some sadness and misfortune to be sure, but also a year when our community came together to support each other and to maintain the bonds and practices that hold us together. And it was a year when the wider community around us in DeKalb and Sycamore came to our support as well with offerings of solace and help in our times of sorrow.

Most keen among our losses this year was the passing from our midst of Abraham “Avi” Bass, who had for many years been an anchor of our congregation and community as a scholar, organizer, internet communicator, and friend. He always participated in this congregation to the fullest and had a great part in all the deeds of this community from communication via the web to honoring those who passed each year at Yizkor services. Ever mindful of NIU’s Jewish students, he was a longtime guide and adviser to Hillel, always looking for ways to keep the Jewish community relevant and vital to each new incoming class. His passion and knowledge will be sorely missed.

In the coming year, we on the CBS Board will work toward securing the future of our congregation and the safety of our congregants. I expect to have definite news to make public concerning the work of the Rabbi Search Committee soon, but am very pleased that Rabbi Gordon, our rabbi emeritus, will be able to conduct most services in January, February, and part of March before she travels to visit her family before Purim. I am very grateful to the search committee—Jeff Hecht, Harvey Blau, Jason Hanna, and Carol Zar—for their hard work in sifting through numerous applications to find and interview several capable and qualified candidates.

The safety of our congregation has been foremost in my thoughts these past months, and I appreciate the members of the congregation who took the time to share their ideas and suggestions with me, either in person or in writing. The Board and I have met with members of the DeKalb Police Department and are working with them on a series of steps to improve the security of the building and coordinate with efforts to improve safety and community not only for us but for the North Annie Glidden neighborhood we are surrounded by. These talks are ongoing, but possible steps you may see soon include improved lighting around the building and modifications to the front doors. We will also be changing the landscaping around the building to provide a safer environment as well as improving the signage of the parking areas. Other measures may also be included as we continue to work with officers; interested congregants are free to attend Board meetings to make further suggestions, and I will of course keep everyone in the congregation informed through this newsletter.

These measures, needed though they might be, will not detract from our main goal of providing the Jewish community with a place for prayer, for service, for learning, and for joy in the coming year. The new year brings renewed hope, and the coming festival of Purim (in March) reminds us that we have a long history as canny, clever, determined survivors in the face of adversity.

Come join us in 2019! In the coming months, we have several activities to offer:

- On Friday, January 11, we will have a Shabbat Service at 7:30 PM.
- On Saturday, January 26, we will have a Shabbat Service at 10 AM.
- On Friday, February 1, we will have a Shabbat potluck (dairy) at 6:30 PM.
- On Thursday, February 7, the Book Group will meet at 7 PM.
- On Sunday, February 10, there will be an Adult Education movie night, with dinner, from 5:30 to 8 PM.
- On Friday, February 22, we will have a Shabbat Service at 7:30 PM.

As always, if you have any questions, concerns, opinions, or news, please feel free to contact me by phone at 815-762-0204 or by email at [President@BethShalomDeKalb.org](mailto:President@BethShalomDeKalb.org) or [Rfeldacker1@gmail.com](mailto:Rfeldacker1@gmail.com).

— Rob Feldacker, President

## ***From Rabbi Gordon***

In the Midrash (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13) we find: “When God created Adam, God led him around all of the trees in the Garden of Eden. God told him, ‘See how beautiful and praiseworthy are all of my works. Everything I have created has been created for your sake. Think of this and do not corrupt the world; for if you corrupt it, there will be no one to set it right after you.’ ”

This is compelling for us today on so many levels. I originally sought to include this teaching in the newsletter this month because of Tu B'Shevat, the New Year of the Trees, which occurs this year on January 21. This holiday has evolved into a commemoration of our appreciation of nature and a reminder to actively protect the natural world. With climate change occurring at a quicker pace than previous estimates, it hits home that having corrupted the world, there will be no one to set it right after us.

And the world of humanity has been corrupted on other levels by hatred, by verbal and physical violence, by disregarding that each of us is created in God's image, at a terrible pace over the past two years. Tu B'Shevat, January 21, is also when the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., is observed this year.

Martin Luther King, Jr., taught us so much, such as: *Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. And: Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.*

He reminded us that *Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.* And that *Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.*

And in his letter from the Birmingham Jail, MLK quoted the prophet Amos: *Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.* Let his teachings guide us to do our part to set the world right, on every level.

## ***Loss of a Longtime Congregant: Thoughts on Avi Bass***



On December 9, Congregation Beth Shalom lost a longtime member, whose nearly half-century of commitment and contributions will be sincerely missed. Abraham (Avi) Bass arrived in DeKalb with his wife, Elizabeth, just a few years after our local congregation was formed. His strong sense of community caused him to step in wherever he saw a need. As a result, beginning in the early years, Avi organized High Holy Days services, including obtaining an out-of-town cantor and leading the services. Up to more recent times, he oversaw the logistics of having those services at Northern Illinois University, making the room reservations with the NIU Holmes Student Center and supervising the schlepping of the ark, Torahs, and other items to the right place at the right times.

Avi instituted the congregation's funeral committee and worked with local funeral homes to guide them in hosting Jewish funerals. He taught in our Religious School and helped people who were considering conversion. In the years before we had a rabbi, he represented our congregation to the DeKalb-Sycamore community, and he conducted funerals and even a few weddings.

In an ongoing application of his computer savvy to serving the Jewish community and his commitment to open communication, Avi created the congregation's first website, managed our e-mail communications (including with non-members showing an interest), and for many years maintained and distributed a directory of members. After *haShofar* went to electronic-only distribution, he printed and mailed it to congregation members who did not use e-mail.

His contributions, both public and behind the scenes, were invaluable in Congregation Beth Shalom's early days and in its operation over so many years. Our gratitude for his capabilities and his commitment will endure.

— Carol and Jerry Zar

## ***Upcoming Shabbat Services and Potlucks***

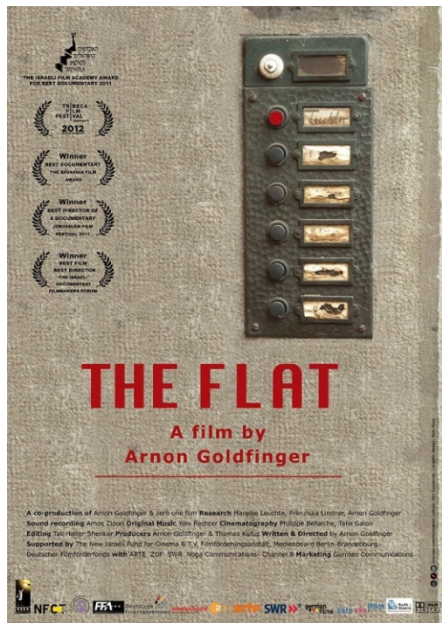
Friday, January 11: Shabbat Service at 7:30 PM, followed by an oneg.

Saturday, January 26: Shabbat Service at 10 AM.

Friday, February 1: Shabbat potluck dinner at 6:30 PM. This is a dairy meal.

Friday, February 22: Shabbat Service at 7:30 PM, followed by an oneg.

## Film & Food Night: Family Secrets, Swastikas, & Stars of David



*The Flat*, a film about family secrets and international history, begins when documentary filmmaker Arnon Goldfinger helps his mother to clean out the Tel Aviv flat of his grandmother, who emigrated to Palestine in the 1930s and who died at 98. Among the books, clothes, and papers, they find a startling item: a commemorative coin bearing a swastika on one side and a Star of David on the other.

The unraveling of the coin's origins and why his grandparents had it is the story of this documentary. We'll show the movie on Sunday, February 10, preceded by a catered buffet dinner at 5:30 PM.

The director's search for the story—and the truth about his family's past—is a detective tale and also a discussion of why we choose to remember or repress family history. The truth turns out to be astonishing, almost unbelievable. It

unites a little-known chapter in the history of both Israel and Germany to the history of three generations of two families.

Since most of the film takes place in Israel, it's appropriate to have another of our popular Middle Eastern buffets, catered by Jamrah. Dinner will feature chicken shawarma, falafel, pita, hummus, salad, and various sauces. Advance reservations and payment for dinner are required. Send a check for \$11/person for dinner, made out to Congregation Beth Shalom, to Elizabeth Bass, 224 Rolfe Road, DeKalb, IL 60115. **Reservations must be received by Wednesday, February 6.**

Guests and teens are welcome. If you want to join us for just the film, we should start it soon after 6:15. We'll be done about 8 PM.

Links to reviews:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/19/movies/the-flat-a-jewish-family-history-in-a-documentary.html>

<https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-flat-2012>

And there are many more reviews at [https://www.mrqe.com/movie\\_reviews/the-flat-m100100926](https://www.mrqe.com/movie_reviews/the-flat-m100100926)

— Elizabeth Bass, Adult Ed Chair



## **February Book: A Jewish Family Odyssey**

Our February book discussion, postponed from December, will be *The Girl from Human Street: A Jewish Family Odyssey* by *New York Times* columnist Roger Cohen. If you haven't yet read it, you have time to do so. And, if you have, we'll refresh each other's memories.

The meeting will be at 7 PM on Thursday, February 7.

The book traces four generations of Cohen's family, from the 19th century to today and from Lithuania to South Africa under apartheid where some remained, and then to England, the United States, and Israel. Cohen travels to the town in Lithuania from which his grandparents came, back to South Africa where he was born and where some family still lives, to England where he grew up, and to Israel, where other relatives live.

Links to reviews:

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/11376484/The-Girl-from-Human-Street-Ghosts-of-Memory-in-a-Jewish-Family-by-Roger-Cohen.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/01/books/review/the-girl-from-human-street-by-roger-cohen.html>

[https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00LYXPYIA/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?\\_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00LYXPYIA/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btkr=1)  
Amazon.com: The Girl from Human Street: Ghosts of Memory in a Jewish Family eBook: Roger Cohen: Kindle Store

— Elizabeth Bass, Adult Ed Chair

## **Social Action**

The Social Action Committee thanks all of the volunteers who sign up at our picnic in August and always remember when their date comes later in the year to help the organizations we work with. Thank you most recently to the following for providing dinner at the Hope Haven Shelter: Liz and Harvey Blau, Barb and Jeff Parness, and Leslie and Jeff Hecht.

The Salvation Army Food Pantry is busy during the holiday months. Thank you Liz Blau and Elizabeth Bass for volunteering there to help those in need.

If you are interested in joining this dedicated group, please contact me. There are openings.

— Karen Sinason, Social Action Chair

## ***A Recap on Our Thanksgiving Baskets***

Congregation Beth Shalom performed a true mitzvah this year by providing the Salvation Army food distribution program with 216 bags filled with all the fixings for a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. Stuffing mix, potatoes (scalloped and sweet), gravy, three vegetables, cranberry sauce, a boxed dessert mix, and a gift card for a turkey were included.

The day we assembled the bags was cold and snowy, but our dedicated group packed the bags, loaded them up, and then unloaded them at the Salvation Army building. The people in charge were so grateful and pleased at the number and organization of our bags.

Thank you to all who donated money for this special program. And thank you to all the volunteers for their good work:

Elizabeth and Avi Bass; Harvey and Liz Blau; Linda and Eric Mogren; Courtney, Jason, Lorelei, and Phoebe Hanna; Rob, Rachael, and Eowyn Feldacker; Nora London; Nahum Shemi; Karen and David Sinason; and Ashley Sinason.

— Adam Sinason, coordinator



## ***Hanukkah: Fun for All***



Our annual Hanukkah party was held this year on the first night, December 2. About 45 congregants and community members gathered for food, song, and another edition of our annual Great Menorah Showcase.

Special thanks go to Jeff and Leslie Hecht, who prepared latkes, homemade applesauce, and (a special treat!) beignets.

Rabbi Maralee Gordon led children's games and activities, featuring a synagogue scavenger hunt, making Lego dreidels, and dancing.

Koleynu, led as always by Harvey Blau, sang songs to welcome the holiday, and Jackie and Caitlin Gorman opened the Hanukkah Shop for those needing last-minute gifts and supplies.

Thanks to all who attended and helped make the Hanukkah celebration so successful.

— Jason Hanna, Ritual Chair



*Phoebe and Lorelei: Most Colorful*



*Rachael: Most Sustainable*



*Eowyn: Most Magical*



*Liz: Tastiest*



*Caitlin: Waxiest*



## ***Onegs and Potucks***

Thank you to Liz and Harvey Blau who did double duty hosting both the November oneg and the December potluck. Thanks also to the Hecht family, Jeff, Leslie, and Rachel, for hosting the December oneg. Your efforts are much appreciated!

— Carol Zar, coordinator

## ***A Note from Elizabeth Bass***

Dear Beth Shalom Community—

I am most grateful for all the support and affection that I've received from congregation members during Avi's brief illness and after his death. The cards and the calls. The sweets for shiva and the meals for our family. The contributions in his memory. And the hugs.

This support actually started with the lovely bouquet from the congregation that was delivered to the hospital early in Avi's illness. We put it on the ledge opposite his bed, so that it was the first thing he saw when he woke up each morning. No matter how gloomy it was outside, the flowers were a welcome note of brightness inside for us—and for the hospital staff.

Your many acts of loving-kindness, of which our liturgy speaks, reassured my family that, when they went home, I would be in good hands. And that easing of their hearts, eases my heart.

Thank you.

Elizabeth

## ***Chatter***

**William Baker's** fifth book on the Nobel Prize-winning author Harold Pinter (1930-2008), *Pinter's World: Relationships, Obsessions, and Artistic Endeavors*, has just been published by Fairleigh Dickinson University Press and co-published by Rowman & Littlefield. Bill also recently returned from his annual visit to the People's Republic of China. He is visiting professor of English at Zhejiang University, one of the most prestigious in China.

**Catherine Raymond** is well on her way to U.S. citizenship. She has passed the exam and says she is "nearly there but I still need to pay allegiance to the flag." That should happen in the next few months.

