

השופר haShofar

of DeKalb and Sycamore

Congregation Beth Shalom

820 Russell Road

DeKalb, IL 60115



CALENDAR

Friday, April 5	Shabbat potluck (meat)	6:30 PM
Sunday, April 7	Lox & Bagel Brunch	10 AM
Thursday, April 11	Book Group	7 PM
Tuesday, April 16	Board meeting	7 PM
Saturday, April 20	Passover: Community Second Seder	6 PM
Saturday, April 27	Shabbat Service with Yizkor	10 AM
Friday, May 10	Shabbat Service	7:30 PM

April - May 2019 Adar - Nisan - Iyar 5779

Jackie Laks Gorman, editor

From the President

Greetings to the members of Congregation Beth Shalom from your president. I was prepared to write my usual “approach of spring and Passover” letter invoking the changing of the season toward warmth and the approach of a beloved holiday. And indeed, I rejoice in the warmer air, the rise of flowers through the soil, and the emergence of buds from the trees. And Passover is almost here, with messages of liberation, with all its costs and consequences.

But I was deterred in my course by the horrific murders of Muslims—men, women, and children—at prayer in New Zealand a couple of weeks ago. Tragic events like these call for a response, even when they happen half a world away. I remembered how supportive the DeKalb community was after the Tree of Life murders, and how grateful I felt for it at a time when it is easy to feel vulnerable and alone. So I sent a message to Mohammed Labadi, president of the Islamic Center of DeKalb, on behalf of our congregation. I expressed sadness and horror at the murders and conveyed our sympathy, both for the loss of life as well as the fear and pain this must bring to their community. I asked him to let me know if there was any way in which we could be of help or support in this time. He responded immediately, thanking me for reaching out. But rather than asking for any immediate help, he said that they were asking God to help the families of the slain, that they trust in God and pray that something good can come from this tragedy, and he wished for peace upon us and all the world. It was a very simple yet essential exchange, an expression of our common humanity and the bonds of life and death that tie us together. I will stay in touch and follow up on any assistance they may require—the same way the DeKalb community came out for us after our own tragedy.

In the story of the Exodus from Egypt, which we are preparing to celebrate, the armies of Pharaoh are consumed by the waters of the Red Sea as they pursue Moses and the Israelites. Our commentaries note that although the Israelites cheered the downfall of the Egyptians, God forbade the angels from rejoicing in the deaths, as the Egyptians are God’s children too. We take a drop of wine from our cups for each of the plagues that God sent to free us in token of our grief for the suffering and death that resulted. We remind ourselves that the death and suffering of any, even in remote places of the world, diminishes us all, so we offer all the comfort and sympathy we can. Sometimes it is all that we can do.

A reminder that we will gather as a community for a Shabbat Morning Service (with Yizkor) on Saturday, April 27, at 10 AM, and a Shabbat Evening Service on Friday, May 10, at 7:30 PM.

Along with Shabbat Services, our major community celebration will be our Passover Community Seder on the second night of Passover, Saturday, April 20, at 6 PM. This will again be prepared by our treasurer and master chef Jeff Hecht and Associates and led by Harvey Blau. Please get your reservations in by April 8. A reservation form with other information can be found elsewhere in this *haShofar*.

In addition to our religious celebrations, we’ll also just get together as a community to eat and talk and learn. In April we’ll have our annual Lox & Bagel Brunch on Sunday, April 7, from 10 AM until 12 noon, hosted by Carol and Jerry Zar.

Please join us as well for a Shabbat (meat) potluck on Friday, April 5, at 6:30 PM. And our Book Group will meet on Thursday, April 11, at 7 PM.

For questions about our activities, you can always consult the congregation website at <http://bethshalomdekab.org>. If you have any questions or concerns not addressed on the website, email me at President@BethShalomDeKalb.org or rfeldacker1@gmail.com, or call (815) 762-0204.

Shalom,
Rob Feldacker, President

From the Rabbi

We have a children's book at home called *Rabbit's Good News* by Ruth Lercher Bornstein. Like many of our kids' favorite books, we read it over and over; they never seem to tire of the story's narrative and, most especially, the surprise (?) ending. At the beginning, we learn that "Rabbit and her family were deep in their warm dark hole in the ground. Her family was sleeping. But Rabbit was not." She peeks out and begins to discover the new life that has burst forth all around her family's hole while they had been hibernating. We are told that Rabbit "follows a soft green sound" until she comes to the always delightful conclusion: "Spring is here!"

In a sense, we, too, have been hibernating. During the cold winter months, we've stayed in our warm holes. Slowly, we peek out and awaken to the signs of Spring's arrival—small at first—and then all at once, like a delightful surprise.

As you likely know, the next holiday on the Jewish calendar is Passover. Soon, we will dip new greens into salt water on our Seder tables and we will open our doors—not just to welcome Elijah the Prophet into our homes, but to welcome a new season as well.

There are many wonderful traditions on Passover and, likely, each of us has a favorite part of the celebration. There's something special about the way in which we as Jews celebrate: We read the same texts each year, and while the texts remain a constant, we ourselves are the ones who change from one year to the next. And somehow, every year there is the possibility of a surprise: a new insight, a new person at the table, a new hope borne as we "follow the soft green sound" in our own lives.

A few years ago, I encountered a text I had read year after year at my own Seder table in a different context that, suddenly, helped me to see it in a completely new light. It was an ordinary Shabbat morning sometime during the Torah reading. The Torah portion, *Va'etchanan*, included words I had seen in every *Haggadah* I'd ever used, but in a slightly different form. The verse reads in Deuteronomy 6:20-25:

When, in time to come, your children ask you, “What mean the decrees, laws, and rules that the Lord our God has enjoined upon you?” you shall say to your children, “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the Lord freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand. The Lord wrought before our eyes marvelous and destructive signs and portents in Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household; and us He freed from there, that He might take us and give us the land that He had promised on oath to our fathers. Then the Lord commanded us to observe all these laws, to revere the Lord our God, for our lasting good and for our survival, as is now the case. It will be therefore to our merit before the Lord our God to observe faithfully this whole Instruction, as He has commanded us.”

It is the story later reinterpreted by the rabbis to be the words of the “wicked son” in the litany of the Passover Seder. Interestingly, though, in this context, there is no such judgment made upon the child, his question, or his identity as a Jew. In addition, the child is not gendered male; in fact, the text reads “children,” which essentially allows for a much more generalized interpretation including many different kinds of children and many different kinds of challenges and questions.

The text in Deuteronomy does not react with anything resembling the anger implied in the Passover *Haggadah* to the question(s) raised by the successive generation; it acknowledges that these children did not experience the Exodus firsthand and so must ask their predecessors about both their experience of slavery and their subsequent liberation.

The Passover *Haggadah*, in quick judgment of the boy and his question (plus the seamless switch from “children” to “son,” assigning both gender and singular, individual responsibility to the questioner), deems the appropriate response to be “ ‘because of what God did to me, in taking me out of Egypt,’ ” explicitly reminding Seder participants that the wicked son “distances himself from the service [by saying ‘to you’ and not ‘to me’]” and so generations of Jews performing the rite of the Passover Seder are explicitly instructed to exclude him in the reply, admonishing him by telling him if he had been present during that time, he would not have been freed.¹

Looking at the original text and again at the liturgy of the Passover Seder, it’s not difficult to see how the biases of the rabbis completely altered a simple question into a boundary of acceptability and inclusion in the Jewish people and its story. The rabbis, in thus interpreting the text of Deuteronomy, essentially determine (seemingly arbitrarily) lines of communal acceptability that thereby limit and judge the very questions they seem to simultaneously want to encourage in the next generation of Jewish children.

The story of the “Four Sons” comes just after the “Four Questions” in the Seder. In fact, the idea of the “Four Questions” strongly encourages (actually, *mandates*) the asking of essential questions, imploring the youngest children to participate in the Seder even amid their own struggles, their lack of Judaic knowledge, and their lack of familiarity with the rituals.

¹ Traditional Haggadah: *Haggadah Shel Pesah*.

This rabbinic move from “children” to “son,” from a presumed harmless question asked by a younger generation to its elders to the labeling of both the question and the child as “wicked,” is hardly innocent. In addition, the biases and rejection of the “wicked son” reflect the myriad ways in which the normative Jewish community has traditionally (and unfortunately) dealt with difference over generations after the codification of Deuteronomy. In fact, a book with the title *Respecting the Wicked Child: A Philosophy of Secular Jewish Identity and Education*² was published in 1998 utilizing the “wicked son” as a metaphor for secular Jewish identity. Diverse *Haggadot* throughout different countries, cultures, and eras depict the “wicked son” to appear like whatever culturally specific “enemy” or “opposition” functions during that place and time. The “wicked son” has come to represent any force that the normative power system wishes to oppose, systematically and publicly. Religious Israeli *Haggadot* depict the wicked son as a soldier in the Israeli army; many American-made *Haggadot* depict the wicked son as an assimilated youngster dressed in that generation’s chic clothing.

Passover is heralded as contemporary Judaism’s most celebrated holiday: More Jews hold a Passover Seder than participate in any other Jewish rite or ritual. How interesting that so many different Jews in such diverse communities practicing divergent Jewish lives all participate in some version of exclusion by reading (or believing) that tradition labels a child (or, children) as “wicked” for asking essential questions of relevance and meaning.

I think it’s time for a reexamination of this question and its questioner(s) in their original context in Deuteronomy. Looking again at Deuteronomy, the question is simple: It comes from a new generation that does not know the slavery of the past; they ask the generation that came out of Egypt to describe it to them, asking (appropriately), “What does all of this mean to you?” The answer that comes should reflect the integrity and sensitivity of the question, indicating that it is precisely “because of what God did for me that I must obey the guidelines established for my spiritual, social, and physical well-being.”

The text in Deuteronomy can teach us to look anew at our tradition and, most especially, at texts we assume to have been appropriated and interpreted by sages without biases we do not share. In this case, what the rabbinic tradition has deemed the legacy of “the wicked son” is actually Moses’s instruction to the people about how to educate the generations that come thereafter about experiences and places that helped to shape the communal narrative contributing to their cultural and religious identity. The “wicked son” is, actually, not a “son” at all, but a group/collective/generation simply called “children” in Deuteronomy.

At our Passover Seders, my family always rotated leadership of the Seder around the table, enabling each participant to read aloud in turn. The kids all wanted to read “the wise son,” as we assumed that this meant we, ourselves, embodied values and traits valued by our tradition. I now see that, perhaps, we should have each been vying to read the part of “the wicked son,” as “his” question is the one quoted directly from the Torah!

I’ll never see the “Four Sons” section of the *Haggadah* in the same way as I once did. I think this is a good thing. Each year, we as Jews are asked to come out from the dark places where we’d

² Silver, Mitchell. University of Massachusetts Press, 1998.

been hibernating and to look anew at the world. May we have the wisdom and courage to ask questions of ourselves, our predecessors, and the texts we hold dear and may we listen carefully as we try to answer the questions asked by others. We may well encounter a surprise at the end.

With Blessings,
Rabbi Julie Adler

Upcoming Shabbat Services and Potlucks

Here's what's scheduled for April and early May:

Friday, April 5: Shabbat potluck dinner at 6:30 PM. This is a meat meal.

Saturday, April 27: Shabbat Service with Yizkor, at 10 AM.
(Note that Yizkor is said four times a year, not just on Yom Kippur. The end of Passover is one of those times.)

Friday, May 10: Shabbat Service at 7:30 PM, followed by an oneg.



Passover Help Needed



Elsewhere in this *haShofar* is everything you need to know about our congregational Passover Seder and how to make reservations. If you can help Jeff Hecht with preparations on April 18, 19, or 20 (Thursday, Friday, or Saturday), please let him know at 815-895-0345 or Jeffrey@HechtHouse.com.

Thank You for Being So Generous

Thank you to the following people who made donations to the congregation from mid-February to mid-March 2019:

David and Karen Sinason
Craig Wenckur

Congregation Beth Shalom Annual Pesach Second Seder

Traditional Kosher for Passover Seder Dinner

Saturday, April 20, at 6 PM

Led by Harvey Blau, featuring the *Season of Renewal* Haggadah

Congregation members, their families, and invited friends are all welcome.

RSVPs are a must so that we can plan for enough seating and food!



First Course

Matzoh, Maror (bitter herb), Hazeret (lettuce), Charoset (apple/cinnamon), Karpas (parsley)
Gefilte Fish and Beitzah (hard-boiled egg)
"Bubbe's Recipe" Chicken Soup with Matzoh Balls

Main Course (buffet style)

Passover Chicken Schnitzel, Court Bouillon Poached Salmon
Sweet Potato & Carrot Tzimmes, Garlic Mashed Potatoes
Spring Vegetables with Quinoa, Roasted Seasonal Vegetables

Dessert Station

Assorted "Small Cakes," Macaroons, Passover Chocolate Chip Cookies, Fresh Fruits



BRING YOUR OWN SEDER PLATE

Each family is encouraged to bring their own Seder plate – we'll provide the "fixings"! This will give you another chance to use your Seder finest and to share with other folks its history and your traditions!

Reservations are on a first-come basis and require prepayment by check to **Congregation Beth Shalom**.

All reservations must be received no later than Monday, April 8. Please print this form and mail it with

your check to: Congregation Beth Shalom

Attn: Second Seder

P.O. Box 1177

DeKalb, IL 60115

Name(s):

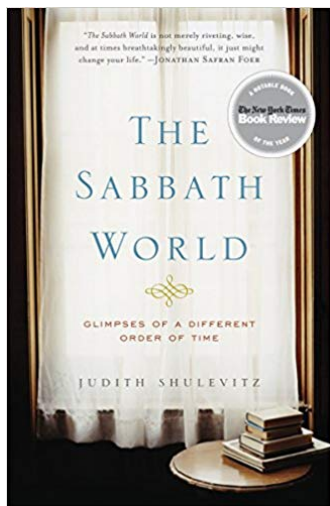
Adults (11 years old and older) \$18 per adult X _____ # of adults = \$ _____

Children (4 to 10 years old) \$10 per child X _____ # of children = \$ _____

Children (3 years old and under) Free per child X _____ # of children = \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

Book Group Selection: *The Many-Faceted Sabbath*



When I asked Rabbi Adler if she had any suggestions for our April book group read, her response was immediate. The book: *The Sabbath World: Glimpses of a Different Order of Time* by Judith Shulevitz. Here are her reasons:

Eight years after my husband and I were asked to review this book for the Jewish Book Council, it's still one of the best books I've encountered. It's essentially a memoir, peppered with the author's discovery of a universal human need for rest. Shulevitz takes the reader along on a journey through her own childhood memories of Shabbat followed by a long period of discarding the traditions that felt outdated and antiquated, and then, as an adult and academic, returning to Shabbat as part of an answer to a question driving both her personal and professional life.

The book was well-reviewed in the *New York Times* (“I found this hybrid of a book—part spiritual memoir, part religious history and sociological analysis and literary exegesis and philosophical musing—mostly irresistible”) and *Chicago Tribune* (“Shulevitz gives a nonlinear history of the Jewish and Christian Sabbaths. In exquisitely written tacks, she addresses citations in the Old and New Testaments and debates in the Talmud”).

So, get a copy, read it, and join Rabbi Adler and fellow congregants on Thursday, April 11, at 7 PM when we'll discuss it.

— Elizabeth Bass, Adult Ed Chair

Social Action Report

Thank you to all of our dedicated volunteers who give their time to the two organizations we provide assistance to. The Salvation Army Food Pantry sees upward of 30 clients each day it is open. They rely on volunteers to chat with clients, walk the aisles, and fill the bags with groceries. (A reminder: *They need bags!*) Thank you to Jane Lux and Barbara Kaufmann for working at the pantry last month.

Thank you as well to Rivka Baker and Marilyn Stromborg for providing and delivering a delicious, nutritious dinner to the residents of Hope Haven. They too are very appreciative of our help.

I have dates open for both the food pantry and the shelter. If you are interested, please call or email and I will set you up.

— Karen Sinason, Social Action chair

Purim Wrap-Up

Congregation Beth Shalom held its annual Purim celebration on March 17. With the guidance of Rabbi Adler, the Feldacker and Hanna children prepared and presented a Purim spiel, complete with costumes and homemade noisemakers. Rabbi Adler chanted some verses from the Megillah and guided us through Yiddish poet Itzik Manger's retelling of the Purim story, and then Harvey Blau led us in song. Having cheered Esther and Mordecai and booed Haman, we enjoyed a potluck dinner with delicious hamantaschen.



Special thanks to Jackie and Caitlin Gorman for baking the hamantaschen, and to Caitlin for bravely stepping into the role of King Ahasuerus in the kids' spiel.

— Jason Hanna, Ritual chair



NIU School of Music to Present Defiant Requiem

The NIU School of Music will present *Defiant Requiem: Verdi at Terezín* in concert on Sunday, April 28, at 3 PM, in Boutell Memorial Concert Hall in the Music Building on the NIU campus. Tickets will be available at the concert hall prior to the performance or can be purchased online now, at \$10 for adults and \$5 for students, at calendar.niu.edu/event/defiant_requiem.



The performance will feature the NIU Concert Choir, the NIU Philharmonic, Cor Cantiamo, Voices in Harmony, the McHenry County College Chamber Choir, and members of the Rockford Symphony Orchestra. The performance will be conducted by Maestro Murry Sidlin; soloists include Sara Gartshore (soprano), Susan Platts, (mezzo-soprano), Andrzej Stec (tenor), and Samuel Handley (bass).

The signature concert of The Defiant Requiem Foundation, *Defiant Requiem: Verdi at Terezín* tells the story of the courageous Jewish prisoners in the Theresienstadt Concentration Camp (Terezín) during World War II who performed Verdi's Requiem while experiencing the depths of human degradation. With only a single smuggled score, they performed the celebrated oratorio 16 times, including one performance before senior SS officials from Berlin and

an International Red Cross delegation. Conductor Rafael Schächter told the choir, "We will sing to the Nazis what we cannot say to them."

Defiant Requiem is a concert-drama that was conceived and created by Foundation President Maestro Murry Sidlin. It combines the magnificent music of Verdi with video testimony from survivors of the original Terezín chorus and footage from the 1944 Nazi propaganda film about Theresienstadt. The performance also includes actors who speak the words of imprisoned conductor Rafael Schächter and others.

Defiant Requiem is not just a performance of the Verdi Requiem but a tribute to the inspired leadership of Schächter, who was forced to reconstitute the choir three times as members were transported to Auschwitz. The performances came to symbolize resistance and defiance and demonstrated the prisoners' courage to confront the worst of mankind with the best of mankind. *Defiant Requiem* is powerful, dramatic, and inspirational and has been presented worldwide more than 40 times since its 2002 premiere in Portland, Oregon.

The NIU Philharmonic is directed by Danko Drusko, and this performance will include members of the Kishwaukee Symphony Orchestra. Eric Johnson, the acting director of the NIU School of Music, directs the NIU Concert Choir in his role as director of choral activities; he is also the founding artistic director of Cor Cantiamo. Steven Szalaj directs both the McHenry County College Chorus and Voices in Harmony.

Todah Rabah

Thanks to Karen Sinason and Marilyn Stromborg for hosting our March 22 oneg and to their husbands for providing support.

— Carol Zar, coordinator

Upcoming on WTTW: Passover & Jewish History

The Four Sons and All Their Sons: A Passover Tale

The Four Sons are the focus of a traditional part of the *Haggadah*. This documentary looks at many versions of the story in art, words, and music.

Sunday April 14, 1 PM (rerun Sunday, April 21, 3 AM)

My Dear Children

One hundred years ago, Jews in what is today Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus suffered through what scholars now call “the Holocaust of its day” as pogroms killed as many as 250,000 Jews. This film follows a woman's quest to unravel a family mystery dating to that time.

Thursday, April 18, 9 PM (rerun Sunday, April 21, 4 AM)

Chatter

Dr. Rhonda Taube, daughter of **Michele Silverstein** and the late Gil Silverstein, spoke at NIU's College of Visual and Performing Arts and School of Art and Design in late March, on “Xena Warrior Princess Meets Efraín Ríos Montt: Contemporary Maya Dance and Pop Culture Imagery in Highland Guatemala.” Rhonda, who grew up in our congregation, received her BA and MA from NIU and is professor and chair of the Department of Art and Art History at Riverside (CA) City College. Her lecture was part of the 2018-2019 Elizabeth Allen Visiting Alumni Scholars in Art History Series, celebrating the 50th anniversary of Jack Arends Hall.

In March, the University Libraries at NIU held its annual Faculty Books Reception, featuring faculty members with 2018 publications. The following members of our congregation—and their publications—were honored:

Bill Baker, *Pinter's World: Relationships, Obsessions, and Artistic Endeavors* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press/Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group)

Valerie Garver (co-editor), *A Cultural History of Work, Volume 2: A Cultural History of Work in the Medieval Age* (Bloomsbury Publishing)

David Gorman (co-editor), *Aristotle's Poetics: The James Hutton Translations: Ancient Contexts, Interpretations* (W.W. Norton)

Jason Hanna, *In Our Best Interest: A Defense of Paternalism* (Oxford University Press)

Jeff Parness, *Illinois Civil Procedure* (LexisNexis)