

השוֹפָר haShofar

of DeKalb and Sycamore

Congregation Beth Shalom
820 Russell Road
DeKalb, IL 60115



<https://www.vecteezy.com/free-vector/jewish-holiday>>Jewish Holiday Vectors by Vecteezy

CALENDAR

Friday, January 10	Religious School	5 PM
	Shabbat service	7:30 PM
Tuesday, January 21	Board meeting	7 PM
Sunday, January 26	Adult Ed program	7 PM
Friday, January 31	Religious School	5 PM
	Shabbat potluck (meat)	6:30 PM
Thursday, February 6	Book Group	7 PM
Friday, February 14	Religious School	5 PM
	Shabbat service	7:30 PM
Tuesday, February 18	Board meeting	7 PM
Friday, February 28	Religious School	5 PM
	Shabbat potluck (dairy)	6:30 PM

January-February 2020 Tevet-Shevat-Adar 5780

Jackie Laks Gorman, editor

From the President

Unto Congregation Beth Shalom come these greetings from your president:

I wish you a happy New (Common Era) Year! I write in the hope that this missive finds you and yours in good health and spirits despite the terrible events recently in the news. My heart is sore for our fellow Jewish communities in Jersey City, New Jersey, and Monsey, New York. An attack on a Jewish community anywhere feels like an attack on us all, even if we live across the country or the world.

We have just concluded the festival of Hanukkah, a celebration of ancient victory over those who sought our submission. As in those days of yore, we recoil from the horrendous actions of those who would harm us, but persevere in our resolve to maintain our customs and our community. We need to keep the light of the menorah in our hearts in these troubled days. In the postings of a friend: “May the light shine in joy, and in defiance of those who would see darkness over all the world.”

Later in this issue, those who contributed in the last months to the congregation and to the Thanksgiving Bags food drive will be recognized for their generosity, but I want to especially thank those members of our congregation who helped make the Hanukkah party such a success. Thanks especially to Harvey Blau and Koleynu for their very special musical performance, and to Jeff, Leslie, and Rachel Hecht for their monumental efforts in making latkes and sufganiyot for a crowd of 60! Thanks to all those who made menorahs (see pictures later in this issue!) for the menorah crafting display. I see more creativity every year!

Some of our events and activities to look forward to in the coming months include:

- Shabbat service (January 10, 7:30 PM)
- Adult Education: The Book of Job II (January 26, 7 PM)
- Shabbat potluck dinner (January 31, 6:30 PM)
- Book Group (February 6, 7 PM)
- Shabbat services (February 14, 7:30 PM)
- Shabbat potluck dinner (February 28, 6:30 PM)

As I mentioned in my last letter, we will soon be updating our method of reaching out to the congregation by email. If you did not submit your preferred email address when you sent in your membership forms, send it now to Jackie Gorman at jgorman7@juno.com. Also, you must contact Jackie if you are *not* currently a member but want to continue to receive our mailings.

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

Shalom,
Rob Feldacker, President

Is Hanukkah History?

As the days become shorter and we feel the onset of winter, the Jewish calendar provides us with an opportunity. Hanukkah dates back to the struggle led by a small Jewish army led by the Maccabees. The Syrian government had decreed that local religions, including Judaism, be rooted out. They outlawed circumcision, kosher food, and the observance of Sabbath and traditional Jewish holidays. Many of the assimilated Jews of the time went along with the decree and joined forces with the Syrian majority. The Maccabees, however, were deeply committed to Jewish culture and traditions, which led them to organize a revolt waged through guerrilla warfare against the large and powerful Syrian army. The miracle of this victory was that the Jews succeeded against all odds and were able to rededicate the Temple in Jerusalem to Jewish service.

Ironically, the Hanukkah story was not included in the Hebrew Bible. Rather, the story was passed on through the generations in Greek, not Hebrew, and included in the New Testament by Hellenized Jews who had converted to Christianity.

Through almost two millennia, Hanukkah remained a real but secondary festival of the Jewish people. Beginning late in the 19th century, Hanukkah had a second birth, which stemmed mainly from the emancipation of the Jewish people and their increasing day-to-day contact with the Christian and secular world. Also, Jews who were becoming semi-assimilated to the broader (Christian) society felt themselves both attracted to and threatened by the joyful Christmas celebrations and their attractiveness to children. Looking for some answer to the assimilating tug, many Jews found Hanukkah—both for its proximity to Christmas and because of its anti-assimilationist content—a useful tool for strengthening Jewish identity.

Today, we are faced with many questions about the role and relevance of Hanukkah for us as modern Jews. What role should Hanukkah play in our lives and in the lives of our families? What messages from Hanukkah's history are important for us to communicate to our children? How should we understand the way in which Hanukkah has developed as a holiday over time?

- Do you ever feel that you, too, are a member of two differing cultural groups?
- At certain times, do the traditions of one of these cultures tend to overshadow the values and traditions of the other? Does this cause conflict for you? If so, how do you deal with this tension?
- Do you think Hanukkah is as effective today as it was in the 19th century in strengthening Jewish identity? Why or why not?

Though these questions tend to loom large in the winter holiday season, they are relevant and important ideas to bring with us into the whole year. Negotiating identities and finding ways to

celebrate in community are at the core of what it means to be human in the 21st century. It is my hope and prayer that our community at Congregation Beth Shalom continues to be a place where these conversations and questions are both asked and answered.

I hope you have enjoyed the winter break—and see you in 2020. ☺

— Rabbi Julie Adler

Upcoming Shabbat Services and Potlucks



- Friday, January 10: Shabbat service at 7:30 PM, followed by an oneg.
- Friday, January 31: Shabbat potluck dinner at 6:30 PM. This is a meat meal.
- Friday, February 14: Shabbat service at 7:30 PM, followed by an oneg.
- Friday, February 28: Shabbat potluck dinner at 6:30 PM. This is a dairy meal.

What's Happening at Religious School



Religious School is progressing wonderfully! We've continued our study of Hebrew adding the new letters *mem*, *aleph*, *gimmel*, *dalet*, and *hay*, which means the students now know three-fourths of the letters on the dreidel! (We're still waiting to learn *nun*.) We also know the vowel sounds *ah* and *ee*. The students are learning quickly and retaining the new information from week to week. It's been a joy to witness their growth as Hebrew readers and writers!

The kids love our Torah curriculum, reading and acting out the plays from the book *Sedra Scenes* (*sedra* is another word used for "Torah portion"). The students continue to ask excellent questions about the stories in the Torah, the "character" of God, and the sometimes not-so-great choices our Biblical heroes make in the stories. We look forward to our next meetings in January.

— Rabbi Julie Adler

A Recap on Thanksgiving Bags

This year, under the direction of David and Karen Sinason, we assembled 201 Thanksgiving food bags and delivered them to the Salvation Army for their holiday food distribution program. More than 600 families in DeKalb County signed up for extra help at the holiday, so our contribution filled one-third of their need—pretty good for our size congregation! Thank you to our packers and lifters: Elizabeth Bass; Liz and Harvey Blau; Becky Cohen; Rob, Rachael, and Eowyn Feldacker; David and Caitlin Gorman; Courtney, Jason, Lorelei, and Phoebe Hanna; Nora London; Barb and Jeff Parness; Nahum Shemi; Karen and David Sinason; and Marilyn Stromberg. A special thanks to David Sinason for comparing prices, purchasing the food, loading and unloading, and organizing this project.



And of course, thank you to all those who donated money for this special program:

Rivka and Bill Baker
Elizabeth Bass
Robinn Blatner
Liz and Harvey Blau
Derryl Block and Steven Greenfield
Becky Cohen
James and Lady Cohen
Rob Feldacker and Valerie Garver
Missy Garman and David Jacobson
Maralee Gordon and Leo Schlosberg
Jackie and David Gorman
Jason Hanna and Courtney Hanna-McNamara
Lynn Hauser and Neil Ross
Jeff and Leslie Hecht
Kathy and Richard Katz

Katz Family Foundation
Barbara Kaufmann
Nora London
Jane and Steve Lux
Eric and Linda Mogren
Jeff and Barb Parness
Shulamit Ran and Avi Lotan
Irene and Herb Rubin
Linda Schwarz
Nahum Shemi
Linda Sherman
Karen and David Sinason
Sandi Spansky and Jim Mitchell
Marilyn and Paul Stromberg
Carol and Jerry Zar

Next Adult Ed: The Book of Job, Part II

On Sunday evening, January 26, we will have the opportunity to continue learning wisdom from the Book of Job with Rabbi Adler. She is excited to share with us more of the hidden treasures of this complex and provocative text. This time, we will focus on Job's infamous friends who come to comfort him when they learn of his misfortunes. We will use this as an entrée to discussing Jewish traditions about visiting the sick and also a few traditions about comforting mourners that stem directly from this text.

Food History Next on Our Reading Menu

What makes a bagel or a kugel or gefilte fish “Jewish”? And why?

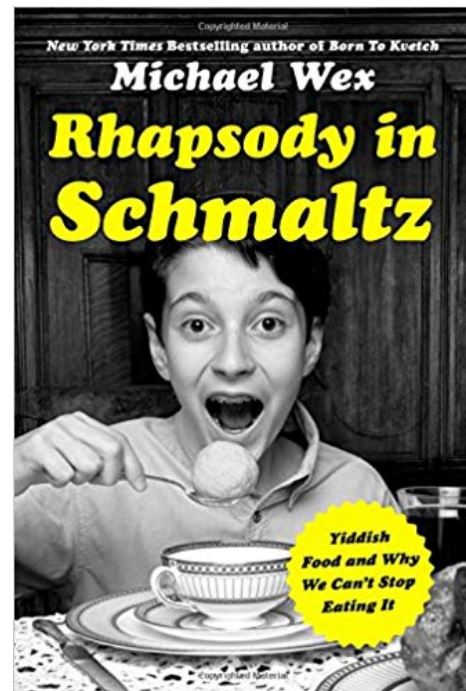
The answers, and much more, will be found in *Rhapsody in Schmaltz: Yiddish Food and Why We Can't Stop Eating It* by Michael Wex, our next Book Group read. The book is a tasty tzimmes of both history and humor.

Amazon notes that Wex “traces the history and social impact of the cuisine that Yiddish-speaking Jews from Central and Eastern Europe brought to the U.S. and that their American descendants developed and refined. The book looks at how and where these dishes came to be, how they varied from region to region, the role they played in Jewish culture in Europe, and the role that they play in Jewish and more general American culture and foodways today.”

Wex also looks at the religious roots and rules of food among the Yiddish-speaking communities, going back to Biblical and Talmudic times.

Everyone is welcome to join our discussion of *Rhapsody*, whether or not you have participated before. We'll meet at 7 PM on Thursday, February 6, at the synagogue.

— Elizabeth Bass, Adult Ed Chair



Social Action

The holidays are always a busy time for our Social Action volunteers. Thank you to Carol Zar for helping shoppers at the Salvation Army Food Pantry in December, to Elizabeth Bass for providing dinner to the Hope Haven shelter in December, and to the Feldacker family who stepped forward to make and deliver dinner on January 1. All of these mitzvahs are greatly appreciated.

Elsewhere in this *haShofar* is a full report on the Thanksgiving Bags food drive. Let me just say here that it was a festive time at the Salvation Army on distribution day as our bags, along with all other donations, were given to those in need. Thank you to Jackie Gorman and Barbara Kaufmann who volunteered with me on giveaway day.

— Karen Sinason, Social Action Chair

Toda Raba

Thank you to all of the following who donated to the congregation from late October through the end of December 2019. (Donors to the Thanksgiving Bags food drive are listed elsewhere.)

Elizabeth Bass—a bequest in memory of Avi Bass

Norden Gilbert

Jason Hanna and Courtney Hanna-McNamara

Katz Family Foundation

Nadine Zimmerman—in memory of Elizabeth C. Lane

Regarding Elizabeth's gift, it came from the Abraham Z. Bass Trust. Elizabeth notes the following: *In our years in DeKalb, Avi's primary organizational allegiances were to his department and to our Jewish community. One had his head; the other his heart. When he set up his trust quite some years ago, a bequest to the congregation was the first he mentioned after bequests to family members. For him, the congregation was his local family. Its health and well-being mattered deeply to him. Just like with a family member, he was always willing to lend a hand when needed, whether leading a service or setting up tables for a potluck. But then, he got as much from the congregation as he gave to it. This gift helps to recognize that.*

Also Thank You to . . .

Toda raba to the Blaus and the Mogrens for hosting our November oneg Shabbat and to Missy Garman who hosted in December even while Dave was in the hospital! Rob Feldacker was the host for our November potluck. Thanks to him for all he does for us.

— Carol Zar, coordinator

Making Charitable Donations to the Congregation

Did you know that if you have an IRA and are required to make minimum distributions each year, you can make donations to the congregation as part of it? According to Investopedia (<https://www.investopedia.com/taxes/can-i-use-money-my-ira-donate-charity/>), “Money from an individual retirement account can be donated to charity. What’s more, if you’ve reached the age where you need to make required minimum distributions . . . from your traditional IRAs, you can avoid paying taxes on them by donating that money to charity . . . You just have to be sure to follow the rules carefully.”

Since account holders of traditional IRAs didn’t pay taxes on the money put into the IRA, distributions from the IRAs generally incur taxes. But account holders who are 70½ years old or older who make contributions directly from traditional IRAs to qualified charities are allowed to donate up to \$100,000 without it being considered a taxable distribution. Account holders must begin taking required minimum distributions (RMDs) from their IRAs each year when they reach age 70½, and these qualified charitable donations (QCDs) can also help meet all or part of the IRA’s RMD. There are specific IRS rules that must be followed for QCDs, so account holders making such donations should consult their IRA custodian and tax professional.

An Important Message About Our Mailings

In the next couple of months, the congregation will be changing the system we use for our mailing list, which will affect how we send out *haShofar* and all email announcements.

If you are *not* currently a member of the congregation and have been receiving *haShofar* and other electronic messages and ***wish to continue receiving them***, you must email Jackie Gorman at jgorman7@juno.com with your current email address. If you do not send her your information, you will not be placed on the new list. Also, if you are a member of the congregation and did not submit your preferred email address with your membership forms, contact Jackie with the information now.

New Doorbell Installed

With security concerns in mind, we have recently installed a doorbell system on the back door of the synagogue. That door has always been left unlocked when there was any activity going on in the building. This seems fine when during services, but we are going to try leaving the door locked if people are somewhere other than in the sanctuary, such as downstairs for a potluck or other event. In that case, the door will be locked. If you ring the bell, it will sound on both floors of the building, and someone will come to let you in.

A Happy Hanukkah



Nearly 60 congregants and community members attended our annual Hanukkah party on December 22, the first night of Hanukkah. It was a fantastic turnout! Rabbi Adler led the children in educational (and messy) activities, and we lit candles and ate latkes. Our congregational choir, Koleynu, sang some Hanukkah songs, including “Ocho Kandalikas” (led by Josh Rodriguez), and performed with a string trio—Laurie Rodriguez (violin), Courtney Hanna-McNamara (violin), and Ben Rodriguez (cello). Jackie and Caitlin Gorman opened the Hanukkah Shop for those needing last-minute gifts and supplies.



Special thanks go to Jeff, Leslie, and Rachel Hecht, who made enough latkes, applesauce, and sufganiyot (donuts) to feed, appropriately enough, a small army. Thanks also to Harvey Blau, director of Koleynu, and to Rob Feldacker and Nahum Shemi, who helped set up for the party.



Continuing a tradition begun by our late rabbi, Barb Moskow, we once again held the homemade menorah showcase. This year, we had 12 (a record!), including two that had to be refrigerated prior to the display. The menorahs were judged in 12 categories, and, incredibly, each won in exactly one.



Michael Adler
Most Heroic Menorah



Ezri Blau
Most Ecofriendly Menorah



Ivan Blau (worn by Ezri)
Most Wearable Menorah



Eowyn Feldacker
Most Magical Menorah



Rachael Feldacker
Cheesiest Menorah



Caitlin Gorman
Coollest Menorah

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Rachel and Jeff Hecht
*Most Impressively Welded
Menorah*



Lorelei and Phoebe Hanna
Mossiest Menorah



Josh Rodriguez
Most Dad-like Menorah



Laurie Rodriguez
Most Artistic Menorah



Rae Rodriguez
Most Pawsome Menorah



Sariah Rodriguez
Best Framed Menorah

Thanks to all who participated!

— Jason Hanna, Ritual Chair

Odds & Ends

Seen by Nora London online in early November:

It's November 1 and I see tons of stores putting trees in window displays today. Isn't it too soon? Can't we all agree not to start decorating for Tu B'Shvat until Hanukkah is over?

Chatter

Mother and daughter **Leslie and Rachel Hecht** were recognized in 2019 for their accomplishments in the martial art of Aikido. Les has been training in Aikido since 1986 and was recently promoted to the rank of Yondan (fourth degree black belt). Rachel has been training since 2002 and was recently promoted to the rank of Nidan (second degree black belt). Les and her husband, Jeff, serve as the head instructors at the Prairie Aikido dojo in Sycamore (<http://prairieaikikai.com/>). Rachel trains at the University of Colorado in Boulder, where she is a student.

Bernie Paul was honored twice in 2019 for his many years of service to the legal profession—in June by the Kane County Bar Association at its general membership dinner, and in November by the Illinois State Bar Association at a recognition luncheon. Bernie's practice, with offices in DeKalb, is primarily concentrated in municipal and administrative law. He represents the cities of Inverness and Hanover Park. Bernie has been active in the Illinois Bar Association and has chaired and served on committees and section councils of Illinois State Bar Association and on the Membership Services Committee.

If you have any news to share with the congregation, send it to Jackie Gorman at jgorman7@juno.com. Everyone would love to hear it.