

השופר haShofar

of DeKalb and Sycamore

Congregation Beth Shalom

820 Russell Road

DeKalb, IL 60115



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CALENDAR

Friday, February 28	Religious School	5 PM
	Shabbat potluck (dairy)	6:30 PM
Sunday, March 8	Purim Celebration	
	Children's activities	3 PM
	Megillah reading	4 PM
	Potluck (dairy)	5 PM
Saturday, March 14	Shabbat service	10 AM
Sunday, March 15 — <i>new date!</i>	Film & Food Night	5:30 PM
Tuesday, March 17	Board meeting	7 PM
Friday, March 27	Religious School	5 PM
	Shabbat service	7:30 PM
Thursday, April 2	Book Group	7 PM
Thursday, April 9	Community Passover Seder	6 PM
Saturday, April 18	Shabbat service with Yizkor	10 AM
Tuesday, April 21	Board meeting	7 PM
Friday, April 24	Religious School	5 PM
	Shabbat service	7:30 PM
Sunday, April 26	Lox & Bagel Brunch	10 AM

March-April 2020 Adar-Nisan-Iyyar 5780

Jackie Laks Gorman, editor

From the President

To the members of Congregation Beth Shalom come greetings from your president:

When I was a child, I always looked forward to Purim, for a lot of reasons. I liked the carnivals, games, and hamantaschen; the songs (silly as they are); and the feeling of happy celebration. I always saw it as heralding the arrival of spring and a chance to make joyful (and loud) noise together. I look forward to celebrating our Purim holiday with you this March (see further in this newsletter for details).

When the Board was finished accounting for the money spent on our Thanksgiving food drive this year (over 200 bags filled and donated!), it was determined that more than \$6000 remained in the Food Pantry Fund, far more than required for next year at our current level of activity. After deliberation, we decided that the best course of action in keeping with the desires of those congregants who had donated money for food needs would be to divide 50 percent of the current Food Pantry Fund into four equal portions and donate it for food distribution to the Salvation Army Food Pantry, the Barb Food Mart (serving families in District 428), the Spartan Food Pantry (serving families in District 427), and the Huskie Student Food Pantry (serving NIU students). The money was duly disbursed and letters of thanks have begun to come in from the organizations. While not huge in monetary terms, this was a significant gift and much in keeping with our tradition of providing for those in need.

Last May when we held our annual meeting, there were too few Congregation members in attendance to recruit a Nominating Committee to find officers for the next Board term. I will be calling around looking for committee members in the next few weeks, but I am asking in advance now for volunteers for this important role. If you would like to serve on the committee this year and help recruit Board members for the next term, please let me know by email at President@BethShalomDeKalb.org.

Several congregants have expressed valid concerns for the safety of the Congregation when we are having activities in the basement and cannot watch the back door. We have attempted to answer these concerns by purchasing a doorbell system, which allows those downstairs to monitor the back door from the basement, allowing the upstairs doors to remain locked. If you are trying to get in during an activity and find the back door locked, remember to look for the bell to ring!

For questions about our activities, you can consult the congregation website at <http://bethshalomdekalb.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 me at (815) 762-0204.

Shalom,
Rob Feldacker, President

From Rabbi Adler

My friend and colleague Rabbi Elliot Kukla tells a story about spending an afternoon shortly before Passover watching giant goldfish swim in the Japanese ponds at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. He describes a large pool where fish as big as a muscular forearm splashed about happily. Meanwhile, in a small pool nearby, the fish were only the size of his thumb. A gardener walking by stopped to chat with Rabbi Kukla and explained that goldfish, like potted plants, will grow to inhabit whatever space you offer them. They remain stunted in bowls and tanks but grow into incredible dimensions when placed in spacious ponds. Rabbi Kukla laughed when he heard this and responded, “Just like all of us!”

This teaching strikes me as the perfect Torah for this time of year, as we journey from Purim toward Passover. Jewish tradition teaches that in the weeks following Purim, it is our task to do intense physical and spiritual preparation for Passover, a holiday that is all about making room for expansion.

We read in the Mishna, the oldest layer of Jewish law, “*B’chol dor v’dor chayav Adam lirot et atzmo k’ilu hu yatza mi’ Mitzrayim*”—“In every generation one is obligated to see oneself as someone who personally went out from slavery in Egypt” (*Pesachim 10:5*). What does it mean to feel as if we ourselves came out of Egypt?

This commandment is often interpreted as a call to remember slavery, but in fact it is asking us to identify with *leaving* slavery. The Hebrew word for Egypt is *Mitzrayim*, a narrow place of contraction and oppression. Leaving Egypt, most literally, means creating space in our lives to grow—fearlessly leaving the *Mitzrayim* of our goldfish bowls for wider ponds!

All of us know what it means to live in *Mitzrayim*—a narrow place where we are compressed by hectic schedules, tight expectations for who we can and should be, and rigid self-judgments—but can we identify with *leaving*? We know what slavery looks like, but this year can we imagine freedom? Can we remember a moment when we broke through the bondage of our lives and discovered radical, chaotic expansion—fearless, unfettered growth?

The Passover story is all about breaking through boundaries—national and spiritual borders, as well as the limits of our imagination. Right after breaking free from the borders of *Mitzrayim*, the Israelites face another seemingly immutable boundary. As they are fleeing slavery with their taskmasters in hot pursuit, they come up against the Sea of Reeds—a churning, impassable ocean. But then the horizon literally expands. The sea splits open.

This is arguably the most pivotal moment in Jewish history. We *recount* this moment each and every day in Jewish prayer and *relive* this moment each and every year in this season. Why do we need to be reminded of this story so often? This is the moment that we realized that the horizon is literally wider than it first appears. Possibilities for growth and change are endless: Seas can split open and slavery can end.

The miracle of the Sea of Reeds is not just that the ocean parted. The miracle is that the Israelites *saw* the ocean divide and, despite everything they had ever been taught about the way the world

works, they charged forward into the narrow dry path that appeared like a sliver of hope between the waves. This teaches us that in order to be truly free, sometimes we need to have the courage to take risks and burst through seemingly immutable boundaries—even the laws of nature!

As the Passover Seder comes to a close each year, we chant Hallel, the group of psalms that thank the Divine for implanting within us the capacity for liberation. We sing: “*Min HaMetzar Karati Yah, Anani Ba'merchav Yah!*”—“From narrowness I called out to God, And God answered me with expansive opening.” In these weeks leading up to *zemen heruteinu*, the season of our freedom, may each of us ask for and be blessed with a sense of expansive opening. Like the giant goldfish in Golden Gate Park, may we have room for our true “fins” and “scales,” our unique power and beauty, to unfold.

— Rabbi Julie Adler

What's Happening at Religious School



Religious School continues to be fun and educational! We've continued our study of the Hebrew language and have begun to intersperse “real words!” in Hebrew so as to expand the students' Hebrew vocabulary. Our curriculum includes words used in modern Hebrew as well as in liturgy found in the prayer book. We've explored how “root letters” work in Hebrew to build a language based on linguistic commonalities.

It's the kids' favorite part of class when we read and act out short plays based on the weekly Torah portions. They're learning key narratives from our tradition in a creative and fun way.

I look forward to our upcoming meetings, leading up to the holidays of Purim and Passover!

— Rabbi Julie Adler

Upcoming Shabbat Services and Potlucks

Friday, February 28: Shabbat potluck dinner at 6:30 PM. This is a dairy meal.

Saturday, March 14: Shabbat service at 10 AM.

Friday, March 27: Shabbat service at 7:30 PM, followed by an oneg.

Saturday, April 18: Shabbat service with Yizkor at 10 AM.

Friday, April 24: Shabbat service at 7:30 PM, followed by an oneg.

The Chosen Our March Movie Choice

What movie is listed as #1 in Kathryn Bernheimer's book *The 50 Greatest Jewish Movies: A Critic's Ranking of the Very Best*?

It's the 1981 movie *The Chosen*, based on the novel by Chaim Potok, and it is the selection for our next Film & Food night on Sunday, March 15. (Note that this is a change of date from our annual calendar.)

It's the 1940s. Two Jewish boys, one from a Reform background, the other part of a Hasidic community, meet playing stickball. Although they have differences, their friendship grows. When they reach college, outspoken support by Reuven's father (Maximilian Schell) for a national Jewish state causes conflicts with Danny's conservative father (Rod Steiger), leading to tension for their sons.

Come join us on March 15 for dinner at 5:30 PM, then the movie around 6:20. If you can't make dinner, you're welcome to just join us for the movie.

Dinner will be cheese ravioli with marinara sauce, a spinach salad, and garlic bread from Rosati's, plus dessert and beverages. Reservations, at \$10 per person, are required and may be made by sending a check, made out to Congregation Beth Shalom, to Elizabeth Bass, 224 Rolfe Road, DeKalb, IL 60115. **Reservations must be received by March 11.**

— Elizabeth Bass, Adult Ed chair

Relatives, Rituals, and the Midwest: Our April Book Choice

Washing the Dead by Michelle Brafman, our April Book Group selection, is a novel about three generations of a Milwaukee Jewish family, their secrets, and the events that lead the main character to leave the Orthodox faith in which she was brought up. Eventually, she returns for a burial ritual, years after her mother's actions separated her from her community.

The 2015 book, said *Haaretz* in its review, "succeeds in showing how family history has a way of sneaking up on us from the depths of the past, shaping the present in ways both familiar and unexpected." Another reviewer says, "How do we begin to forgive those who injured us? Start by reading Brafman's unflinching and inspiring novel."

So, get started on your reading and join us to discuss the book on Thursday, April 2, at 7 PM at the synagogue.

— Elizabeth Bass, Adult Ed chair

Purim Is Coming!

On Sunday, March 8, Congregation Beth Shalom will hold its annual Purim celebration. Children's activities begin at 3 PM. Rabbi Adler will lead the children in a short Purim play and help them bake hamantaschen. At 4 PM, we'll shake our groggers as we read the Megillah. A potluck featuring Jackie and Caitlin Gorman's homemade hamantaschen will follow at 5 PM. This is a dairy potluck (so no meat or shellfish).

As always, congregants are welcome—indeed, encouraged!—to wear costumes.

— Jason Hanna, Ritual chair



Lox & Bagel Brunch



The Annual Lox & Bagel Brunch will be held this year on Sunday, April 26, from 10 AM until 12 noon, at the home of:

Marilyn and Paul Stromberg
215 Dunkery Drive, Sycamore

\$18 members
\$20 guests

Pre-paid reservations are required. Watch your email for specific information on making reservations. And remember that guests are welcome. This is a good opportunity to invite someone who might be interested in joining our community.

Passover Help Needed

Elsewhere in this *haShofar* you'll find a reservation form and information about our community Seder on April 9. If you can help Jeff Hecht with Passover preparations (either during the day on April 8 or prior to the Seder on April 9), please email him at Treasurer@BethShalomDeKalb.org. He'd also appreciate some assistance during the meal itself to help get the first course ready and out to everyone, as well as after the meal to help clean up. Let him know if you are interested and when you can help.

Congregation Beth Shalom Annual Pesach Second Seder

Traditional Kosher for Passover Seder Dinner

Thursday, April 9, 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 Rolled Chicken and Stringed Beef Brisket
Sweet Potato & Carrot Tzimmes and Garlic Mashed Potatoes
Seasonal Vegetables

Dessert Station

Assorted "Small Cakes," Macaroons, Passover Chocolate Chip Cookies, and 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 Friday, March 27.** 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) \$20 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: \$ _____

Social Action Report

Recently, the Board realized that the Congregation's Food Pantry Fund, from congregants who donated money for food needs in the community, contained a great deal of money. We decided to take 50 percent of the fund, divide it into four equal portions, and donate it for food distribution to the Salvation Army Food Pantry, the Barb Food Mart (serving families in District 428), the Spartan Food Pantry (serving families in District 427), and the Huskie Student Food Pantry (serving NIU students). This continues our tradition of providing for those in need in the greater community.

As another key part of our service to the community, we have two obligations every month: to help distribute food at the Salvation Army Food Pantry and to provide and deliver an evening meal to the Hope Haven shelter. It is truly a mitzvah to participate in each of these events, and I am so proud of and grateful to those who volunteer when they are asked. Thank you to Barb and Jeff Parness and to Carol Zar for providing dinner at Hope Haven during the last months, stepping up to ensure the residents have a hot, nutritious meal.

Thank you to Liz Blau who walked the aisles of the food pantry helping shoppers fill their carts. Each time I am there I am thanked for our help.

These service projects depend on volunteers, so please call, text, email, or see me to be a part of this standout group.

—Karen Sinason, Social Action chair

Toda Raba

Thank you to the following who donated to the Congregation since January 1, 2020:

Aron and Ellen Rolnitzky, in honor of Talia's baby naming

Also Thank You to . . .

Thanks to Karen and Dave Sinason and James and Emma Cohen for hosting the January and February onegs, respectively. Providing the "goodies" leads the rest of us to stay and nosh and schmooze!

— Carol Zar, coordinator

Odds & Ends

If you like Harry Potter and/or things about Yiddish, you might want to go to the following link: <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/culture-news/298268/harry-potter-translated-yiddish>, which is all about the recent official publication of the first volume of the Harry Potter series in Yiddish. The book was a multicultural effort, with the actual translation—which involved creating some unique Yiddish terms to reflect the magical world, as well as appropriate names for some of the characters—done by an Indian-American Orthodox Jewish translator who lives in New Jersey, and the publication done by a Swedish publishing house. Thanks to Elizabeth Bass for providing the link.

Chatter

Lorelei Hanna, Jason and Courtney's daughter, received a talent scholarship in piano from NIU's Community School of the Arts. She will perform at the CSA honors recital on February 29.

Valerie Garver has been awarded a Mercator Fellowship for September-December 2020 at the University of Heidelberg. She received it after a research group in Germany applied for an internationally renowned scholar to come work with them because of expertise missing in the group. They applied for Valerie to come because of her expertise in early medieval material culture.

Jeff Hecht was recently selected by the International Aikido Federation for promotion to the rank of Godan—fifth-degree black belt. Jeff has been studying Aikido since 1984, while training to become a reserve sheriff's deputy for the Orange County, California, sheriff's department. Since then, he has taught Aikido at different places, most recently at the Prairie Aikikai dojo in Sycamore, the school he runs with his wife, Leslie.