



Temple House of Israel Bulletin

A Member Congregation of the Union for Reform Judaism
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www.thoi.org

Our mission is to perpetuate Jewish life and identity through a welcoming community of spirituality, learning, service, joy and worship

FEBRUARY 2018 / SHEVAT — ADAR 5778

From our Temple President

Dear members and friends,

As we begin this new secular year, take a moment to reflect on resolutions you may have made. How are you doing with those? Is the commitment you intended taking hold? I know how hard keeping a resolution can be and I know my resolutions are made with what I hope is genuine intention and resolve. Knowing all that does not make it easy to keep taking those small steps to meet the goal. Often times I find myself flagging or even giving up altogether because at the moment the resolution seems too difficult to achieve. However, sticking with it has led to some very satisfying moments and a feeling that all things are possible; a success worthy of replication!

During the January 10th congregational meeting, I listened intently as congregants spoke about the temple and all that we have here. One thing clear to me was that this congregation has a strong core and from within that center emerges a tenacity for keeping our small congregation in existence, as well as an acceptance of the diverse spectrum of Jews that belong to THOI. We need to be resolved, to commit to a resolution that no matter who we like or dislike, no matter if our Jewish practice is different or the same as others, we are willing to belong, attend and participate in the life of the temple because our presence is for the surrounding Jewish community.

So, I propose a THOI resolution: Commit to working together positively to create the vibrant Jewish community so many want. Keeping this resolution will be difficult and even daunting at times. It is not the work of only a committed few but rather the majority. Your participation is vital in all aspects of temple life both social and religious. Consider the contributions you can make to ensure THOI succeeds and thrives. Striving together we can accomplish much!

L'Shalom
Bonny Strassler

Stay tuned for the date of the next congregational meeting to review the summary of the survey results being prepared by Tim Ruebke of Fairfield Center. Our next steps will be to meet together and discuss the prevalent themes illustrated by the survey comments and focus our efforts on creating priorities for our future. Every step we take is intended to clarify who we are as a congregation and what is our future as a vibrant Jewish community. Please contribute to the process and come to the meeting.

From the Rabbi's Desk

Dear Temple House of Israel Congregants and Friends,
What a very busy time it has been recently! Unpredictable weather, lots of events on the calendar and much going on in the community. I hope you have been staying healthy, rested and calm.

January 6th was a healing service and we gathered in the social hall as a kehilah kadoshah (a holy community) with selected readings pertaining to healing—of ourselves, each other and the world at large. We will hold another healing service in May. January 31st we will celebrate with a Tu B'Shevat seder. Great food, interesting texts and four glasses of wine! Mark the date and join us. (See the attached flyer for details)

On February 2nd we will enjoy a visit from Rev. Shelby Owen who will be our guest preacher for the devar Torah [I will be speaking at Emmanuel Episcopal on Sunday the 4th in exchange—you are welcome to join me there].

And plan now for February 16, which is the Spring Community Awareness Shabbat service. Invite your friends, neighbors, co-workers, teachers and anyone else who might be interested in seeing a Shabbat Jewish worship service. We will offer some explanations during the service and a chance to ask questions afterwards. We are also coming this with the Jewish Disabilities Awareness and Inclusion Month observance and the Women's Group is providing ASL signers for hearing impaired or deaf persons at this service. In addition, the majority of this service will be in English (other than the Torah service), with some participation by members of the Women's Group and others from Temple House of Israel.

Rabbi Joe's message is on page 6

Contacting Rabbi Joe

Please note: Rabbi Joe may be reached by email at **RabbiJoeB@hotmail.com**. Other email addresses may not reach him in a timely fashion, or at all). He reads email regularly, except on Jewish Holidays or Shabbat, when he does not use the computer.

His cell phone number is 925-272-8563 (925-2-RAVJOE). Please note and use this number—messages left elsewhere are not checked regularly.

PLEASE CALL if you have any urgent messages or in case of an emergency, and please let Rabbi Joe know if you or anyone you know is ill or would want a call or visit for any reason. You are also invited to contact Rabbi Joe to arrange an appoint-

February Services and Events

- We'll celebrate **Tu B'Shevat with a seder on January 31** beginning at 6:00 pm. See the flyer attached.
- **February 2 Shabbat Services will include guest Rev. Shelby Owen** sharing her comments with us. In exchange, Rabbi Joe will be preaching at Emmanuel Episcopal Church on Sunday the 4th at 10:30 am.
- Our **Spring Community Awareness Shabbat will be held February 16** celebrating Jewish Disability Awareness month. The service will be signed for the hard of hearing and the deaf. See flyer attached.
- **Feb 28 is the Know Your Neighbor potluck lunch** with guest speakers from newly arrived immigrants explaining their experiences. See flyer attached.

From Rabbi
Lynne
Landsberg

February is Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month

Traditionally, the Jewish community commemorates the Sabbath before Purim with a special reading that begins with the word *zachor*—“remember.” The passage reads, “Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey after you left Egypt—how undeterred by fear of God, he surprised you on the march, when you were famished and weary and cut down all the stragglers in your rear” (Deuteronomy 25:17-18).

It is especially fitting that Shabbat *Zachor* falls this year during the month of February (2/24), which the Jewish community has designated as Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month. The Hebrew word in Deuteronomy that we translate as “stragglers” - *ha-necheshalim*—appears only once in the entire Bible. To explain its meaning, the medieval commentator Ibn Ezra suggests that its Hebrew root may have a meaning similar to a more common Hebrew root that means “to be weak”. As such, he took *ha-necheshalim* to mean “those who did not have power to walk”. Similarly, Rashi (11th century) understands it to mean “those who lack strength”, though he adds that this is “on account of their sin”.

Who were “the stragglers in your rear”? They were the slow, the weak, the enfeebled—the invalids. Perhaps in ancient times, these people were, in fact, considered *invalid* human beings and so the Israelites abandoned them, leaving the stragglers on their own to struggle at the rear of the Exodus.

Though today we do not connect disability with sin, the invalidation of people with disabilities remains a modern bias. Where are the “stragglers” today? Unfortunately our society—including many Jewish communities—continues to leave them behind.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau about 20% of the population have some sort of disability. While there are no firm statistics on the percentage of Jews with disabilities, there’s no reason to believe that the proportion is very different in our community. Within our midst exist Jews who are hearing- and vision-impaired, Jews with intellectual disabilities, Jews with cognitive or psychological disabilities—Jews who need more than ramps and designated parking spaces to meet their needs.

Many rabbis and synagogue presidents report that they don’t have congregants with disabilities who require special accommodations. And in one troubling way, they may be correct—these Jews are often *not* present within our synagogues because they perceive they are not wanted there. How many of our synagogues, nationwide, have sign-language interpreters or Braille prayer books? How many offer service programs or congregational bulletins in large print. Only a select few synagogues provide religious school classes designed for children with special needs; even fewer have such classes for adults. Fewer still offer any programs, trips or religious services at all designed to include people with *all* types of disabilities.

Civil rights begin at home—in our synagogues and in our communal institutions. All Jews must make conscious efforts to break down the physical, communicative and attitudinal barriers that separate individuals with disabilities from our community. It is time for members of *all* Jewish Movements to come together to help our congregants, indeed all Americans, recognize that people with disabilities are *people* first—people with unlimited potential, not to be defined by their disabilities.

From Rabbi Lynne Landsberg (con't)

Hasidic master the Yehudi HaKadosh said, "Good intentions along not accompanied by action are without value. The main thing is the action, as this is what makes the intention so profound." This February, the 10th annual Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month, let the Jewish community come together to begin a fully committed and educated process of welcoming Jews with disabilities.

Rabbi Lynne Landsberg is the former Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism's senior advisor on disability rights and founder and former chair of the Committee on Disability Awareness and Inclusion of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

Accessibility at THOI

During the 2008-2009 year, a group of congregants met to assess what could be done to make our building more accessible. The following was accomplished.

- ◇ One pew from each side of the sanctuary was removed and the existing pews were re-spaced to give more leg room.
- ◇ Those two pews were cut in half, new side panels were built and four short pews were placed in the alcoves on the sides of the bimah. That allowed people to sit in the sanctuary without steps and also provided space for wheelchairs.
- ◇ The restrooms were reconfigured; new and wider entry doors were built and new toilet partitions were installed to accommodate people with disabilities.
- ◇ A ramp was added to the primary entrance into the social hall with a door hinged to swing both ways.
- ◇ The doorway from the social hall to the back hall and restrooms was widened as was the door from the back hall into the sanctuary.
- ◇ An audio system was installed for hard of hearing people
- ◇ One Shabbat service was printed in large type with six copies in 3-ring binders available for those who need it.

Temple House of Israel was awarded "An exemplar Congregation" certification by the Union for Reform Judaism.

Thanks to Rabbi Joe, Mike Brown, Byron Grove-Humphries, David Waterman and Beth Young for their work at that time.

February Celebrations



Happy Birthdays

Jesse Brand celebrates on February 2nd

Vera Flint celebrates on February 17th

David Waterman celebrates on February 29th

Happy Anniversary February 12th to Ken and Elizabeth Schwartz

Judaica Shop

Stock up on **Chanukah merchandise** while it's still displayed in our shop. Need more candles or dreidels? Now's the time.

Following the February 2nd service, our **Judaica Shop will be redesigned** by Marsha Pillet to feature items for Passover. Everything will be in place for our Community Awareness Shabbat on February 16th.

If you'd like to place a special order, please contact Marsha directly at horsebaskets@gmail.com.



Women's Group

- Thank you to all who contributed to the **Journey Bag Project**. First Choice Realty published a thank you in the Staunton News Leader, which is now posted on our bulletin board in the social hall.
- The **2018 Yard Sale**, a major Women's Group fundraiser, will be held April 20 and 22. **Please start saving/collecting** and otherwise donating any gently used items and consider contributing baked goods. Even if you're not an active member in the Women's Group, we hope you'll participate. Elizabeth needs help to organize, set up and clean up.
- **Our next meeting** will be led by Gail Davis, Sunday **February 11 at 2 pm.** at her home, 506 Hillcrest Drive. Please bring a nosh to share and we'll make it a potluck!

Torah Restoration Challenge

One of our Torah scrolls is in need of repair. The pre-repair evaluation (including shipping and insurance) will cost approximately \$1000.

An anonymous benefactor has offered to match contributions up to a total of \$750 to establish a fund of \$1,500 to pay for the evaluation. Excess funds will be applied to the cost of restoration. As far as we know, there is no other guaranteed way to double your money instantly. Because of pending changes in the tax law, there has never been a better time to write a check to the temple.

To participate in the Torah Restoration Challenge, make out your check to THOI and write TRC OR "Torah Restoration Challenge" on the bottom. Donations continue to be accepted!



Know Your Neighbor

Know Your Neighbor is a gathering of people from Temple House of Israel, Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Trinity Church, the Islamic Center of the Shenandoah Valley and Allen Chapel AME Church.

The next meeting to get to know your neighbor will be Sunday, **February 28** beginning with a potluck lunch at 1:30 at the Islamic Center of the Shenandoah Valley in Harrisonburg. Lunch will be followed by a very interesting program. **Five recent immigrants to the Shenandoah Valley will speak briefly about their decision to emigrate and their experiences since coming here**—challenges, joys, surprises and adaptations. Join us! Snow date is March 4th. See the attached flyer for complete details.

News from the Pews

- **Mi Sheberach:** Continued thoughts and prayers for Shirley Brand, Leah Farmer, Steve Guberman, Rabbi Lynne Landsberg, Joanne Simons (Carla Donley's aunt), Dan Schorsch, and Nancy Witt.
- **Refuah Shelemach:** Recovery and support for Greg Cizek, Jim Clark, Michelle Clark, Tom Davis (Gail's husband), Kate Goldenberg, Sherry Lowe, Sue Solomon, Ellen Schorsch and Dennis Ward.
- Robert Pendleton is now at King's Daughters Center on North Augusta Street.

Rabbi's Message

At the end of the month of February and the start of March we arrive at the holiday of Purim, also called the Festival of Lots. In this instance, the term 'lots' refers to a means for choosing at random, often used in games of chance, along the lines of tossing dice, drawing straws, or picking from a hat. The Hebrew term 'Pur' means lot in this sense, and the plural is 'Purim' or 'lots'. The holiday is so named because the drawing of lots plays a role in the events described that make up the story behind the holiday.

The holiday is based on the tale we read in the book of Esther, one of the five megillot (scrolls) that make up the third section of the Tanakh (Hebrew Scriptures) which is referred to as Ketuvim (Writings).

This book tells of Jews living peacefully in a significant kingdom (uncertain, but probably Persian, and likely following the breakup of the empire consolidated by Alexander the Great. It is thought that the king described in this story may be Ataxerxes II, but that is not certain. Of course, it turns out that historical accuracy is neither important, nor the point.) No matter when or where it is supposed to take place, the story is revelatory of human natures and foibles. You already know the story (if not, come to a reading of the megillah!).

Trying to keep this article in check, I will simply say that after a plot that is full of twists and turns, farce and drama, tragedy and comedy, things are reversed, the villain Haman is eliminated, Mordecai is elevated to a chief advisor to the king, Esther moves from a passive character on whom the others act to an active participant and leader in the story, talking initiative and bringing about the action that we follow. These various reversals of fortune are an essential feature of how the holiday is celebrated.

One of the key aspects of this series of reversals is how things that are hidden become revealed, and those things that seem obvious are made unclear, or even invisible. This is hinted at in the very name of the book.

Esther is formed from the root samech-tav-resh: a hideaway, secret hiding place; secrete, mystery, unknown, hidden, covered over. It has the meanings, to contradict; to refute; (chemistry) to neutralize, to counteract; (literary, Talmudic) to muss, to make untidy (hair). In essence, Esther is the 'hidden one', the secret or holder of mystery. Her status is not known or revealed to begin, nor do we know anything of her qualities, other than her physical beauty which is mentioned. All else we must deduce from the unfolding tale.

In this same sense, too, Esther may stand in as a visible or perhaps near presence, one we can see, even if not know, perhaps as a hint at the truly hidden one, the figure that is never revealed yet always present. The book of Esther is the only book in the Tanakh which does not reference G-d, so G-d is truly secret or hidden in this story. Despite all the reversals and uncoverings, we never 'see' G-d—we can only infer G-d's action in all that takes place.

Far from the simple tale beloved by children, this is a story that is both sophisticated and deep when examined closely, and we can learn much from it—about the story, about human nature, about power and leadership, and about ourselves. This timeless tale speaks across the ages and resonates today. May your reading of the Megilat Ester be fruitful and full of meaning.

Chag Purim Sameach [happy Purim, Festival of Lots].
Rabbi Joe Blair

Reminders
that benefit
THOI

You can contribute to Temple House of Israel in several painless ways:

1. THOI is registered at amazonsmile.com. Any time you shop at Amazon simply go to smile.amazon.com from the web browser on your computer or mobile device. You may also want to add a bookmark to smile.amazon.com to make it even easier.
2. Honoring a birthday, anniversary, special event, or just having fun? Need to retaliate? For only \$25 you can have a flock of flamingos delivered anywhere in the near vicinity.



February
Donations

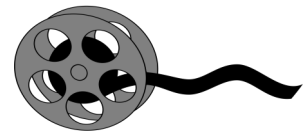
Thank you to the following people who support our small congregation with their much appreciated financial donations:

For the general fund Joseph Siron

 For the building fund Larry and Patty Sutker
 Torah Restoration Challenge Bonnie and Mike Brown
 Lynne Landsberg and Dennis Ward
 Rich and Beth Young
 Linda Blazer
 Jim Osborne
 Benn and Penelope Legum
 Ruth Chodrow
 Art Goldsmith and Jan Kaufman
 In memory of Milton and Frederica Weinberg Kronsberg, Fannie Strauss,
 Irvin and Ethel Weinberg, and Abraham and Johanna Weinberg
Jeffrey and Mickey Rosenblum
 In memory of Adam Clark to Rabbi's discretionary fund ... Bonita Robbins

Film

The Wayne Theater in Waynesboro will be featuring the **Rosenwald** film on Sunday, February 11th at 6:00 pm. Admission is 'pay what you will'.



February
Yahrzeits

Melvin Berman	Moshe Cohen	B. Edelman
Irving Goldberg	David Goldstein	Henrietta Goldstein
Fannie Greenstone	Hyman Greenstone	Oscar Mindell
Hiah Neuger	Harry Patterson	Betty Robins
Leah Schneider	Jerry Seligmann	Becky Shapiro
Dorothy Sragovitz	Regina Strauss	Mae Suskins
Minnie Switzer	Albert Williams	Rose Zultowski

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