

February Calendar of Events

Mon. Feb. 2—Intermediate Hebrew, 10:00am; Cuttermill Road Traffic hearing at GN Plaza Village Hall, 7:30pm

Tues. Feb. 3—Worship Meeting, 7:00pm; Board Meeting, 7:30pm

Fri. Feb. 6—Shabbat Service, 8:00pm

Sat. Feb. 7—Torah Study & Service, 9:30am; Cantillation, 11:00am

Fri. Feb. 13—Shabbat Service, 8:00pm

Fri. Feb. 20—Renewal Service, 7:30pm; Shabbat Service, 8:00pm

Sat. Feb. 21—Torah Study & Service, 9:30am; Cantillation, 11:00am

Mon. Feb. 23—Intermediate Hebrew, 10:00am

Fri. Feb. 27—Kabbalat Shabbat, 6:15pm

Sat. Feb. 28—Torah Study, 9:30am; Torah Service, 10:30am; 50/50 Reverse Raffle Drawing at Temple Trivia Night, 7:30pm

**Plant a
 Tree
 In Israel**



Call the office to order your
 Tree Certificate for \$18

Oy Vey Trivia Night & “50-50” Reverse Raffle Drawing

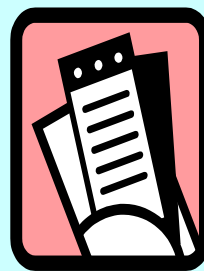
*Saturday, February 28,
 7:30pm*

Join us for a fun-filled
 evening of trivia, Jewish
 & otherwise



**Plus... Raffle Prizes and
 Announcement of**

**Our “50-50” Raffle
 Prize Winner**



*Prizes will be awarded
 as we go along, and
 wine and refreshments are
 included!*

*\$20 admission with reservation—\$25 at the door.
Free Admission with Purchase of \$100 Raffle Ticket
 Please RSVP to the temple office so we can prepare!*

*Form a group to buy a ticket at your office!
 Four people can chip in \$25 each for a \$100 ticket....*

RABBI'S COLUMN

Religion Without God?



I recently came across a fascinating article by T.M. Luhrmann, a professor of anthropology at Stanford University entitled: “*Religion Without God.*” She begins by noting that God-neutral faith is a growing trend where God plays less and less a role in religious services. She goes on by saying that atheist groups offering religious-like services (*ie* without invoking God) have been springing up around this country – including the Bible Belt. The Sunday Assembly, founded in Britain, holds nearly 200 gatherings worldwide, draws thousands of people, and features music, sermons, readings, reflections and even the waving of hands. As Sanderson Jones, one of the founders, is quoted as saying: “Singing awesome songs, hearing interesting talks, thinking about improving yourself and helping other people – and doing that in a community with wonderful relationships. Which part of that is not to like?” In short, such groups, as do God-based religious organizations, answer the human quest for community and belonging.

Another significant component of services provided by atheist groups is the incorporation of rituals and ceremonies into their community experience. It turns out that rituals isn’t about expressing religious commitment as much as about doing something in a way that marks the moment as different from the everyday and forces you to see it as important and special. Ritual focuses your attention on some moment and deems it worthy of respect. By extension a ceremony is a collection of choreographed rituals which leads to a defining moment of significance. The moment may be either personal (*eg* a funeral) or communal (*eg* Bastille Day). Luhrmann says further that inherent in performing a ritual is the opportunity to *say out loud* a personal feeling or desire. That act of saying out loud actually makes a difference by making it *real*. Studies have suggested that saying that you are grateful makes you feel grateful. Saying that you are thankful makes you feel thankful. I’d like to add expressing out loud our distress helps to focus in on the source of our distress making it less overpowering. A ritual works if it changes a person’s sense of their lives. All this can be done without reference to God and therefore without religion.

“*Religion without God*” seems like an oxymoron if you agree with the primary dictionary definition of religion. The Oxford defines religion as “The belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods.” Miriam Webster succinctly defines it as “An organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, and rules used to worship god or a group of gods.” It would seem that God (or gods) is a necessary ingredient in religion. Luhrmann says, “Religion is fundamentally a practice that helps people to look at the world as it is and yet to experience it – to some extent, in some way – as it should be. Much of what people actually do in church [and synagogue] – finding fellowship, celebrating birth and marriage, remembering those we have lost, affirming the values we cherish – can be accomplished with a sense of God as metaphor, as story, or even without any mention of God at all.”

So what happens when there is religion without God? Building a world based only on human ability and human relations alone is like the proverbial house built on a foundation of shifting sand. We humans are not so good at delivering the world as it should be. Since the days of Gan Eden, we have shown that our humanity – being human – sometimes misleads us. To err is to be human. Yet, having been created in the image of God with a vision of a perfect world we have assurance that perfection is nearly attainable and therefore worth struggling for. Religion, with God and Torah at the center, gives us the confidence that every day is meaningful and full of blessings no matter how it turns out for better or worse. Religion not only interconnects living creatures on earth today, but connects us with the human legacy that came before us and with the ultimate One who is beyond time and space. Religion without God is just a social club which is handy when convenient and satisfactory. Religion with God lasts for eternity.

Rabbi Ted Tsuruoka

CANTOR'S COLUMN

A Song of Jewish Love



This year we began the celebration of Jewish Music Season on the last day of January, a commemoration that runs from *Shabbat Shirah* until Passover. *Shabbat Shirah*, “The Sabbath of Song,” is the Sabbath on which the Torah reading is Exodus 14 – 17, which includes the Song of Moses and the crossing of the Sea of Reeds. God’s love for us is manifest in our deliverance from slavery, which sets the scene for a community preparing to experience freedom and working together to make dreams come true.

Although I like to think that Jewish music is celebrated throughout the year, recognizing Jewish Music Season enables us to take a closer look at some specific aspects of our rich musical tradition.

Valentine’s Day, a day most Americans consider to be a light-hearted secular day, also occurs this time of year. With these two themes sharing our February calendar, I thought it would be interesting to talk about Jewish love songs.

Jewish sacred love songs find their origins in the poetry of *Shir haShirim*, or The Song of Songs, a part of the Bible composed entirely of a series of love lyrics. According to Jewish tradition, King Solomon wrote *Shir haShirim* in his youth. As a middle-aged man he wrote Proverbs and in his old age, Ecclesiastes. However, modern critical scholarship considers *Shir haShirim* to be a collection of love poetry from various periods.

According to the Talmud, there was great controversy over whether or not the collection should be included in the Bible. The book does not mention God or events in religious history. It speaks of spring and brides, of sensuous delights, of pomegranates and frankincense. The Song of Songs is a book of love songs between a man and a woman. Indeed, its poetry is quite erotic and explicit. The woman, the Shulamite, is certain of and direct about her love:

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth,
for your love is sweeter than wine (1:2).

She invites her beloved into her garden and it is she who initiates lovemaking. This is one of the few places in the Bible where man and woman are equal, and perhaps the female, in this case, even plays a more prominent role.

Let my beloved come to his garden
and eat its choicest fruit (4:16).

Certainly, words and images form several layers of meaning and the literal and the metaphorical intertwine. She celebrates both her own sexuality and his. And he is loving, tender and powerful. Like the woman, he uses animal imagery to describe his lover:

Behold, you are beautiful, my love
behold, you are beautiful!
Your eyes are doves behind your veil.
Your hair is like a flock of goats,
Moving down the slopes of Gilead...(4:1-2)

Your two breasts are like two fawns,
Twins of a gazelle,
That feed among the lilies (4:5).

Other animals also live in this garden where all nature – plants, spices, subterranean streams and rivers – glorify the love of female and male. It is a mutual love of heart, mind and soul, a passionate love that makes eternal renewal possible.

It is easy to understand the controversy regarding the collection’s inclusion in the Bible, but it was the

(Continued on page 4)

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS

It's Not Just the Lower East Side

Those who attend “Current Events” know that the story of Jewish immigration in the United States is a topic of continuing interest. We have learned, for example, that 400 Jews live in North Dakota, fewer than in any other state except South Dakota; that the first Jews came to Colorado in the 1850’s to prospect for gold; that the first king of New Orleans rex carnival mardi gras parade was a Jewish businessman.



The first Jews came to this country in 1654. And since then millions of Jews have come here. There have been Jewish soldiers in all of our wars. Jews fought in the revolution and on both sides in the Civil War. There were Jewish cowboys and farmers, successful political leaders, as well as gangsters.

Jews did not stay exclusively in eastern big cities. We came into this country from ports other than New York and there are Jews whose ancestors never set foot on Ellis Island. In short, the American Jewish experience is extensive and fascinating.

While not all Jewish immigrants were penniless, many were. While some were educated, most spoke only their native tongue. As a group we have done very well, and we owe much to this country and its ideals.

Our next Yom Kippur break discussion will be “Isaiah’s Immigration Stories”. Think about your family’s history and plan to share your story with your friends next high holidays.

Helman Brook & Kathie Davis

(Continued from page 3) Cantor’s Column

great Rabbi Akiba who said, “The whole world is not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is holiest of the holy.”

Rabbi Akiba’s opinion prevailed. Judaism understands the Song of Songs as an allegory for the love of God and God’s people, Israel, and as such is considered sacred. So profound is the love between God and Israel that it can boldly be expressed in such sensuous terms. Out of this passionate love comes God’s pleading command: “Love me then with all your heart and all your soul and all your might!”

Love in this most deep and binding form is the foundation and guarantee of our existence and eternal renewal. *Shir haShirim* stands as a symbol and a loving dialogue between a people and our God.

So whether we interpret *Shir haShirim* as a love song between God and the Jewish people, or whether we appreciate this example of beautiful Biblical poetry as an expression of commitment between two people who love each other, we can feel proud that the Song of Songs is such a valued part of our Jewish heritage.

Cantor Leslie Friedlander

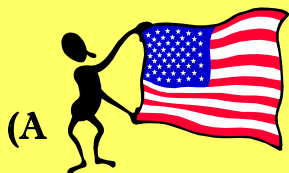
February 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2 Intermediate Hebrew, 10:00am Traffic hearing at GN Plaza Hall, 7:30pm	3 Worship Meeting, 7:00pm; Board Meeting, 7:30pm	4	5 Tu B'Shevat	6 Shabbat Service, 8:00pm	7 Torah Study & Service 9:30am; Cantillation, 11:00am
8	9	10	11	12	13 Shabbat Service, 8:00pm	14
15	16 President's Day 	17	18	19	20 Renewal Service, 7:30pm; Shabbat Service, 8:00pm	21 Torah Study & Service 9:30am; Cantillation, 11:00am
22	23 Intermediate Hebrew, 10:00am	24	25	26	27 Kabbalat Shabbat Service, 6:15pm	28 Torah Study 9:30am; Torah Service, 10:30am Trivia Night/ 50/50 Reverse Raffle Drawing, 7:30pm

Save The Date: Friday, March 13, 2015

Join tens of thousands of Jews across America as we come together to eat, drink, relax, enjoy, debate and celebrate at the 18th annual

Shabbat Across America



*Bring the family - bring your friends to a
Delicious kosher dinner at 6:30PM
followed by Shabbat service at 7:30pm
Program of National Jewish Outreach)*

RSVP REQUIRED!—487-5373

Adults: \$30 in Advance; \$35 at the door; Children under 13: Free

**Bakers wanted: for information
please call Kathie Davis at 487-1576 or Helene Dorfman at 487-3395**

A Word About Temple Isaiah

Temple Isaiah is a warm, welcoming, non-judgmental community of friends. We welcome all who seek a Jewish experience because we provide a setting where each individual can enjoy his or her own level of religious practice, spirituality and intellectual search. Temple Isaiah especially welcomes interfaith families. We believe that non-Jewish spouses can enrich our congregation's understanding of Judaism and life in 21st century America. We also warmly welcome Jews-by-Choice on their sacred journey in their religious exploration of Jewish life.



We offer a full range of religious services, courses in Torah and Jewish practice and discussion groups that are open and broad. We believe that education is a life-long work in progress. We believe that our community is enriched by each member and participant no matter their present experience or knowledge. Come and share your interests, questions and beliefs. You will be truly welcome and amazed.



From January 15th through April 30th 2015 – the American Zionist Movement will hold open voting for all American Jews to determine the United States' delegation to the 2015 World Zionist Organization. Every Jew has the opportunity to vote for the platform that most aligns with his/her personal views and help shape the agenda of the Congress.

**For more information and to vote go to
www.reformjews4israel.org**

Come In From the Cold...for Some February Fun!



**An Evening of Trivia Competition, the Drawing
of a Winning 50-50 Raffle* Ticket, and
Delicious Refreshments**

**Saturday, February 28, 2015
7:30 p.m. at Temple Isaiah of Great Neck**

Who said that February is just about shivering and waiting for Spring? At Temple Isaiah, we believe it's a great time to have fun. On February 28, we will be holding an evening chock full of excitement.



For those of you who like to test your wits, there will be an "Oy Vey" Trivia Contest with questions both Jewish and otherwise.

Throughout the evening tickets will be drawn for the 50-50 Reverse Raffle. In a reverse raffle, the losing tickets are pulled from the basket and the last one left is the winner. Along the way, there will be other prizes, so there are many winners. Raffle Czar Steve Fein will be sure to fill the drawing with suspense.



And to keep everyone's energy and attention from flagging, there will be delicious snacks and goodies.

***In a 50-50 Raffle, the winner receives 50% of the proceeds from raffle sales!**

Trivia Night Admission is \$20 per person if paid in advance—
\$25 at the door. **Free admission for each raffle ticket purchased!**
(Ask your friends and co-workers to join forces and buy a ticket—
Four people combined can purchase a \$100 ticket for just \$25 each.)

Tu B'Shevat – A Different Type of New Year

According to the Mishnah (Rosh Hashana 1:1), there are *four* new years:

The 1st of Nisan, in the spring, is the new year for kings and feasts – Passover is first.
The 1st of Elul, in late summer, is the new year for tithing animals born that year.
The 1st of Tishri, our Rosh Hashana, is the new year for counting the passage of years.
The 15th of Shevat, Tu B'Shevat, is the new year for tithing the first fruit of trees.

We celebrate Tu B'Shevat (which starts on the evening of February 4th this year) when most of the winter rains have passed in Israel, and the sap is beginning to flow in the trees. The original Tu B'Shevat is referred to in the Torah: “*Every year, you shall set aside a tenth part of the yield, so that you may learn to revere your God forever.*” (Devarim 12:22-23). The tenth (tithe) was to be brought to the Temple, given in recognition that God is the source of all blessings.

Now that the Temple in Jerusalem no longer stands, the observance of Tu B'Shevat has taken on expanded interpretations and meanings. More than 300 years ago in Safed, a beautiful mountaintop city in northern Israel, there was a custom of celebrating Tu B'Shevat sometimes with a seder and recognizing two overarching themes: The land of Israel and The Torah. We recognize the land of Israel, the spiritual home of every Jew, by eating fruits and produce grown in the Israel. We pay particular attention to the seven species of fruits and grain mentioned in the Torah: dates, pomegranates, olives, figs, wheat, barley, and grapes. Today, we also mark the holiday by purchasing a Tree in Israel from the JNF. You can order a tree certificate from the temple office.

Why Celebrate Purim?



Purim is one of the most joyous and fun holidays on the Jewish calendar. It begins this year on Wednesday evening, March 4th. Purim commemorates a time when the Jewish people exiled and living in Persia (5th century BCE) were saved from extermination at the hands of Haman – the prototypical embodiment of anti-Semitism down through the ages. Various observances are widely practiced including: Hearing Megillat Esther read in synagogue, sending gifts of food and drink (*shalach manot*) to neighbors, and giving *tzedakah*. There are a variety of lighthearted customs practiced including staging Purim spiels, hissing and shaking of groggers at the mention of Haman's name, wearing costumes, and the eating of hamentaschen. A certain amount of drinking is permitted to increase levity and joy. All these activities have come down through the ages signifying Purim, but why do we celebrate Purim? And what significance does it hold for the modern day Jew? Here are a few reasons:

- Purim comes to remind us of the importance of Judaism and Jewish identity.
- Jewish customs and rituals preserve Jewish continuity and way of life.
- As long as anti-Semitism persists, Purim reminds the Jew to be aware and vigilant.
- It is the responsibility of each Jew to protect and aid one another.
- It is the duty of each Jew to support Israel as the Jewish spiritual homeland.



So come for the fun and the hamentaschen on March 4th, but stay because Purim is a Jewish holiday that reaches out to every Jew and celebrates our heritage and mission to achieve universal peace in the world.

***Purim Service, Megillah Reading and Spiel:
Wednesday Evening, March 4th, 7:30pm***

General Donations

In Loving Memory Of:

Rose Greenberg, Grandmother of Mindy Israel
Mindy & Howard Israel
Addy Dorsky, Sister of Irene Lichtenstein
Irene Lichtenstein
Charles Miller, Grandfather of Denise Miller
Sadie & Max Shiller, Grandparents of Steve Fein
Denise Miller & Steve Fein
Albert Levin, Father of Betty Pollack
Betty Pollack
Nuhim Causanschi, Brother of Golda Shapiro
Golda Shapiro
Emily Soifer, Daughter of Arlene Soifer
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Arlene Soifer
Sophie Kristal, Mother of Evelyn Solow
Evelyn & Richard Solow
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In Honor of:

The Speedy Recovery of Franklin Greene
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Sheila & Victor DeFazio
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Gail & Robert Gordon
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Shelley Sherman
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Willia Lewis & Ed Moulin
The Speedy Recovery of My Friends at Temple Isaiah
Alvin Graham
The Speedy Recovery of Manny Bardash
William Rosenberg
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And Zack Reibstein & Jess Tayts
Lia & Morimer Hans

21st Century Building Fund:

Michelle & Rod Birnbaum

President's Wall:

June & Allan Feldman

Chanukah Appeal:

Lia & Mortimer Hans
Mindy & Howard Israel
Nina Koss
Jean & John Lesser

Memorial Plaques:

In Memory of Emily M. Soifer
Arlene Soifer

Tzedakah Fund:

Micki Victor



Save the Date(s)?

Please let us know if you would prefer to attend this year's Goods & Services Auction on a Saturday evening (March 21) or a Sunday afternoon (March 22)? We would really like your input!

Bequests to Temple Isaiah



It's both impressive and heartwarming—leaving a legacy to our temple for your favorite program or general funding. You can begin by writing out this sentence directing your attorney to modify your will:

"I hereby give, devise, and bequeath _____ (a dollar amount, or all or a percentage of the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate) to Temple Isaiah of Great Neck, now or formerly in the Village of Great Neck Plaza, 1 Chelsea Place, in the State of New York, for its general purposes."

[Our federal tax ID number is 11-2202208]

For further information, contact the office—we'll be happy to help.—or contact Steve Fein, who has generously volunteered to provide a free consultation on the topic.

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www.templeisaiahgn.org

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10th of the Month***

BULLETIN

Co-Presidents: Helman Brook, Kathie Davis

Rabbi: Theodore Tsuruoka

Cantor: Leslie Friedlander

Production: Cathy Reibstein



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