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Congregation Beth Hamedresh – Beth Israel

BULLETIN

Editor: Stan Schaffer

January President's Message

Dear Friends,

Our Chanukah party was a great success this year. Almost 40 people from our shul and Beth Am attended, despite the snowy weather. Steve Teitel did his usual wonderful job organizing the enterprise. Setup was done by Ami Schmerl, Helen Gulack, Aline Honickman, and Nina Klionsky. Steve did the cooking, along with Judith Mercer and Esther Vogelstein. Janet Grabel did the fantastic menorah cake. The servers were primarily Ruth Teitel, Harris and Aline Honickman, and Paula Bobb, though several other people also got up to help out. Clean up crew consisted of Ami Schmerl, Helen Gulack, Aline Honickman, Janet Grable, Judith Mercer, and Esther Vogelstein. All of the helpers deserve a round of applause.

Everyone tells me they had a good time. I certainly enjoyed doing the Chanukah trivia contest, I was surprised and delighted by how much everyone knew, though I was shocked, shocked I say, that no one knew how many sons Mattathias had. Study up for next year! Ami Schmerl regained his title (he lost it last year) as dreidel champion.

Ira Cohen and I volunteered as drivers to help people get to the party. Several of us are willing to be drivers for people who need rides to services or other shul events. If you need a ride, call me (271-2945) or email me (just_a_gabbai@frontiernet.net) and I will do my best to hook you up.

One last Chanukah note. In my December message I made a comment about the spelling “Hanukkah”. Hermann Vogelstein and Aaron Marsh both pointed out to me that the letter “Chuf” has a dot in it, indicating that it was originally a doubled letter in the Hebrew and that is represented by the double “k”. Maybe I'll put that in next year's trivia contest.

We welcomed Rabbi Goldberg back from his trip to Israel. There will be three joint services with the Rabbi officiating in January. Because January 1st is a Saturday, the 2nd Friday and 2nd Saturday are not in the same weekend. The Rabbi will be with us on the 8th at BHBI and on the 14th at Beth Am. In addition there will be a joint Saturday Beth Am service on the 29th. Please note that service will take place in a room at Temple B'rith Kodesh (either Room 100 or Room 200, look for signs). We're meeting there because Temple Beth Am is exploring the possibilities of alternative places to meet.

I've noticed that we get our best Shabbat morning attendance at the joint services we have with Beth Am. I'm happy to see your support for joint services. Recently we have been making an effort to start our Shabbat morning services on time, and we have been finishing on time. I'd like to ask you to come about 10 minutes earlier than has been your custom, so that we don't waste time waiting for a minyan.

I'll end by wishing you all a Happy 2011.

B'shalom,

Leon Metlay



BHBI CALENDAR OF EVENTS – JANUARY 2011

Saturday	Jan 1	9:30 AM	Shabbat Morning Service Blessing for the New Month	Torah: Vayeirah
Sunday	Jan 2	9:00 AM	Service, Breakfast and Discussion	
Friday	Jan 7	8:00 PM	Shabbat Evening Service at Heather Heights in Pittsford Light candles at 4:33 PM	
Saturday	Jan 8	9:30 AM	Joint Shabbat Morning Service with Temple Beth Am at BHBI with Rabbi Goldberg officiating	Torah: Bo
Sunday	Jan 9	9:00 AM	Service, Breakfast and Discussion	
Monday	Jan 10	7:30 PM	Monthly Meeting of the BHBI Board of Trustees	
Wednesday	Jan 12	7:30 PM	Joint Torah Study with members of Temple Beth Am and Temple Beth David at BHBI	
Friday	Jan 14	8:00 PM	Joint Shabbat Evening Service with Temple Beth Am at Beth Am with Rabbi Goldberg officiating Light candles at 4:40 PM	
Saturday	Jan 15	9:30 AM	Shabbat Morning Service	Torah: Beshalach
Sunday	Jan 16	9:00 AM	Service, Breakfast and Discussion	
Friday	Jan 21	8:00 PM	Shabbat Evening Service Light candles at 4:49 PM	
Saturday	Jan 22	9:30 AM	Shabbat Morning Service	Torah: Yitro
Sunday	Jan 23	9:00 AM	Service, Breakfast and Discussion	
Friday	Jan 28	8:00 PM	Shabbat Evening Service Light candles at 4:58 PM	
Saturday	Jan 29	10:00 AM	Joint Shabbat Morning Service with Temple Beth Am at Temple B'rith Kodesh in Room 100 or Room 200 with Rabbi Goldberg officiating Torah: Mishpatim	
Sunday	Jan 30	9:00 AM	Service, Breakfast and Discussion	

DO YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO IS UNAFFILIATED AND INTERESTED IN JOINING A CONGREGATION?

Let them know about BHBI's special free 3 month trial membership (available to prospective first-time new members only). Have them contact BHBI at 244-2060 or BHBI@frontiernet.net and we will be happy to give them information about BHBI and this great offer!!

TORAH STUDY

Join us for an interactive session of Torah study with our friends from Temple Beth Am and Temple Beth David at BHBI on Wednesday evening, January 12th at 7:30 p.m. The discussion is always lively!



FROM THE RABBI'S DESK

By

RABBI GEOFFREY GOLDBERG

January 2011

Over a century ago Rabbi Steven Wise turned down the offer of the pulpit of Temple Emanu-El in New York City. The reason why he declined the leadership of this the prestigious synagogue is that the Board wished to assert its right to vet his sermons before delivering them. Wise could not give his assent to this on because he believed in the freedom of the pulpit, even when the views expressed there not those shared by some, or even a majority of the congregation. So he started his own synagogue, later known as the Steven Wise Free Synagogue.

Many a rabbi has envied the courage of Rabbi Wise. There are, however, constraints and bounds on what a rabbi can say from the pulpit. An orthodox rabbi cannot expect to keep his position if, suddenly, one Shabbat morning, he suddenly preaches on the truth of Reform Judaism. Not would a Reform rabbi expect to keep his or her position if he/she suddenly declared a commitment to Orthodoxy. Most rabbis, however, learn to tread a fine line, couching unpopular or controversial views within carefully chosen language. A guiding principle, however, is that of fidelity to the highest ideals of the Torah and that one's teaching bestow honor to the Torah and honor to God.

We refer to such honor as *Kiddush ha-Shem*, Sanctification of God's name. Unfortunately, recent pronouncements of some Israeli rabbis have been the opposite, a *Hillul ha-Shem*, a defamation of God's name. Outrageous comments by Israeli rabbis are nothing new, but they reached new heights with the most recent pronouncements. They began when a rabbi in Safed, the city in northern Israel, spoke out against the selling or renting of apartments to non-Jews (i.e., Arabs). The local rabbi was soon supported by some forty municipal rabbis from across the country, including the son of Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef, the revered leader of orthodox *mizrahi* Jews. Reasons put forward for the prohibition included the danger of intermarriage, the threat posed by the "different lifestyle" of such gentiles and the lowering of real estate prices.

In response to this deeply troubling situation Rabbi David Golonkin of the Schechter Institute of the Masorti Movement in Israel has written a *Teshuvah* on the question "Is it permissible to sell or rent an apartment to a non-Jew in the Land of Israel?" With great erudition, Professor Golonkin shows that while there have been differences of opinion among *halakhic* scholars, many, if not most, are of the opinion that any prohibition that might have been applicable only applied to idol worshippers which Moslems certainly are not and nor are Christians.

Golonkin also points out how social and ethical factors influenced halakhic positions (and not just in this case, but in many *halakhic* decisions). Even in situations where restrictions were normally placed on interactions between Jews and gentiles the rabbis lifted them on the grounds of *mishum eivab*, in order to avoid ill will. Even if it could be argued that a Jew in Israel was prevented from selling or renting property to non-Jews, this is not to be followed, *mishum eivab*. Another guiding principle was *mipnei darkhei shalom*, "for the sake of peace," a principle which the rabbis drew upon for a number of important decisions.

It is important to understand that the rabbis in question in Israel are not congregational rabbis we are familiar with here in the United States. They are not leaders of independent synagogues, but employees of the State of Israel. They do not have to worry about the sensitivities of synagogue leadership or synagogue members. Neither, however, do they seem to care much for public opinion, which has been scathing in its condemnation. They seem to have forgotten that Maimonides emphasized that rabbis, in particular, must be careful about their behavior since any inappropriate behavior or words will only bring criticism which is a *Hillul ha-Shem*. They certainly have also forgotten that Israel is a democracy which guarantees equal rights for all its citizens and for its minorities.

All this flared up during my recent stay in Israel. It was headline news in newspapers, radio and television. An editorial column in Haaretz, Israel's leading newspaper, entitled *Gizanut be-basut ha-Torah*, "Racism with the Sanction of the Torah," was a powerful condemnation of the rabbis in question. I commend Rabbi Golonkin for preparing his timely *Teshuvah*. I hope it will become known to the Israeli public. It certainly puts the record straight and may it bring back honor to the Torah and the application of the Torah to day-to-day life in Israel today.

The controversy raging in Israel is reminder that we must also be careful in our words and deeds so that they only bring about *Kiddush ha-Shem*.

Rabbi Geoffrey Goldberg

Yahrzeits

At the following Shabbat Services, we will read the names of our late loved ones whose Yahrzeits will occur on that Shabbat or during the following week.

Dec 31-Jan 1	Tevet	Jan 8-14	Tevet - Shevat	Jan 15-21	Shevat	Jan 22-28	Shevat
Samuel Meilstein*	26	Etta Levinson*	4	Daniel Hirsch*	10	Morris Gurian*	17
Ida Boyarsky*	27	Ida Silver*	4	Hyman Aaron		Stanley Clark	18
Philip Hershkowitz	27	Sidney Appelbaum*	6	Nusbaum*	10	Samuel Spencer	18
Jack Glazer	28	Jacob Komenski*	6	Miriam Weinberger	12	Gitla Perkal*	18
Joe Lazarus*	28	Morris Suskind*	7	Abraham Newell*	13	Bessie Gold	20
Jean Spencer	1	Max Springut	8	Anna Sanow	13	Benjamin Lapides*	20
Morris Weinstein*	2	Herman Strauss*	8	Rose Salzberg	14	Alexander Phillips	21
		Dvora Brodie*	9	Gidda Strauss*	16	Simon Pogal*	21
Jan 29-Feb 4	Shevat	Samuel Goldman*	9			Jacob Rubinstein*	21
Bernard Falk*	25					Sarah Maltinsky*	23
Marian Bernstein*	27						
Ada Goldstein*	27						
Samuel Keyfetz*	27						
Lottie Fink*	29						
Rose Ring*	29	* Denotes name memorialized on BHBI Memorial Plaque					
Henrietta Schaffer	30						
Boris Schwarts	30						

We pray that our mourners will be comforted among all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem and that the memory of the deceased continues to be a blessing to all who knew them.

GOODSEARCH.COM

Goodsearch.com is an on-line internet search program that pays non-profit organizations like BHBI a fee every time someone uses their search service. Go to www.goodsearch.com, enter the search term that you want and put in BHBI on the line where it says Who Do You Goodsearch For? BHBI will collect a fee for each search you make!

THE RABBI FUND

Contributions to the Rabbi Fund enable us to engage Rabbi Goldberg to lead additional services at BHBI during the year. Whenever the funds in the Rabbi Fund reach a predetermined level, we will schedule an additional service with Rabbi Goldberg. To contribute to this purpose, please send a check in to BHBI with a notation that the contribution should be used for the Rabbi Fund.

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MEMORIAL PLAQUES

Memorialize a friend or loved one by purchasing a BHBI memorial plaque. For more information, contact Stan Schaffer at 473-8072 or stanschaffer@frontiernet.net

GET NEWS DIRECTLY FROM ISRAEL

Do you want to find out about what's really happening in Israel? Go to the following internet sites to get the latest news and information from Israel:

Jerusalem Post – www.jpost.com

Y Net – www.ynetnews.com

Ha'aretz – www.haaretz.com

Israel Broadcast Authority TV News – www.iba.org.il/world

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THANK YOU TO OUR KIDDUSH SPONSORS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

December 4	The Congregation
December 11	Jill Clark in memory of Barbara Bertman
December 18	The Congregation
December 25	The Congregation

EVENTS IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Jewish Federation's Israel Series Kicks Off

The Jewish Federation will be sponsoring a new series of speakers on Israel, titled Israel 2011. The kickoff speaker will be Acting Consul General of Israel in New York Ido Aharoni who will speak at Temple Beth El on Sunday, January 23rd at 7 pm. He will be followed by Dr. Yarden Fanta-Vagenshtein who will appear on Thursday, February 17th, at 7 pm at Temple Beth El. She is a post-doctorate fellow at Harvard's Graduate School of Education who did not know how to read or write when she immigrated to Israel from Ethiopia in 1985 and who subsequently became the first Ethiopian Jewish woman to earn a doctoral degree in Israel. Her area of expertise is immigrants' transitions, literacy and technical knowledge. The final speaker in the series will be Bret Stephens, the foreign affairs columnist of the *Wall Street Journal* and former editor of the *Jerusalem Post*, who will speak on Wednesday, March 16th at 7 pm at Temple B'rith Kodesh.

See Israel with Other Members of the Rochester Jewish Community

The Jewish Federation is organizing a mission to Israel from May 1-11, 2011 with an optional add-on side trip to Prague May 11-15. The mission will be in Israel for Yom Ha-Atzmaout (Israel Independence Day). For more information contact Jay Podolsky by phone at 461-0490 x224 or by e-mail at jpodolsky@jewishrochester.org

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So far our *TOPS* Gift Card fundraiser has been quite successful. Remember, *TOPS* Gift Cards are now available through BHBI in \$50 denominations. To purchase *TOPS* Gift Cards, contact Stan Schaffer at 473-8072 or by e-mail at stanschaffer@frontiernet.net

OFFICE: The synagogue office is checked regularly for mail and messages. The synagogue phone is 244-2060. For urgent issues, call Steve Teitel at 473-5741 or Stan Schaffer at 473-8072. You can also e-mail us at BHBI@frontiernet.net

WANT TO REMEMBER OR HONOR SOMEONE OR A SPECIAL OCCASION?

Consider sponsoring a kiddush or making a donation to any one of our funds (General Operating, Kiddush, Library, Torah, Rabbi Aaron Solomon Scholarship, Our Youth, Special Events, Rabbi Fund or the Sam Malina Memorial Fund). Please indicate which fund you would like your donation to go to and we will send out an acknowledgement card as you indicate and print an announcement in this bulletin. A standard sponsored kiddush at BHBI costs just \$40 while a larger enhanced kiddush is just \$50.

BULLETIN CONTENT

What do you enjoy reading in the BHBI Bulletin? Is there something that you would like added (or taken out)? If so, please let Stan Schaffer know. We always appreciate feedback.

DID YOU MISPLACE YOUR BULLETIN?

Don't worry. BHBI Bulletins going back 5 years can now be found on our web page: www.BHBIRochester.org

WANT TO GET YOUR BULLETIN HOT-OFF-THE-PRESS? Consider having us e-mail it to you!

Contact Stan Schaffer at: stanschaffer@frontiernet.net

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