

AZOY

"Is that so?"

JANUARY 2016

Tevet / Shevat 5776



**UNION for
REFORM JUDAISM**
האיחוד ליהדות רפורמית

SERVING REFORM CONGREGATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA

The Monthly Newsletter of Temple B'nai Israel

The Reform Jewish Congregation of Bay County

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Religious School Chanukah Luncheon by Cynthia Gingold

This year's annual Chanukah Party was fantastic!

On Sunday, December 6, the children of our religious school, parents, and congregants had a marvelous time. The children began the party making abstract, collage menorahs. Shira Moskowitz, our ISJL fellow, played a game with the children, based on the game of Chutes and Ladders, to review the story of Chanukah. They cheered for their teams – boys vs. girls. They giggled. They smiled like crazy.

Then the children performed "The Golden Slippers," a story from Chelm. Chelm was a town in Poland, remembered in many tales

that were created to make people laugh. This one was told how the wisest men in Chelm were identified by the golden slippers they wore on their ears. The children got the humor, as did the adults.

Joshua Alter was marvelous as the Motley Fool. He has a fabulously developed sense of humor and this is well evident by his performance. Someday, you will see him on TV as he receives a Tony, Oscar, or Emmy. The rest of the children read their parts with expression and confidence. They were fabulous! Three of our children are first graders – Lizzie and Jackie Sternlicht and Ari Amromin – and they did an excellent job. Ethan Alter showed much

growth in his reading. Pearl Amromin showed that she has excellent acting skills.

Parents of the children, Tammy Marimuzzi and Pavel Amromin, Amber and Matt Alter, and Lynette Sternlicht provided the jelly-filled doughnuts, cookies with symbols of Chanukah, water, and fruit salad. Lisa Rahn and Steve Theberge brought doughnuts, Ed Nagler brought professional looking cookies made by his wife, Diana. Many thanks to all.

The fearless team of chefs, Alvin Gingold and Matt Alter, made a variety of latkes, potato, carrot, zucchini, and garlic herb potato. Everyone stuffed themselves!



photo by Cynthia Gingold

❧ The President's Message ❧

Many of you have signed up to work on a committee at the Temple. Members of the Board, including me, are delighted that you are willing to participate in improving our Jewish home and community. As the new year begins, we will make a concerted and renewed effort to engage members of each committee in the work that needs to be done. I will notify each of you this month with plans for a first meeting and the contact info for the others who have signed on to the same committee.

Let's continue to build our community, to make it stronger with your ideas and efforts. I wish each of you a happy, healthy and prosperous 2016 filled with joyful adventures.

L'shalom - Sarah

JANUARY CALENDAR

SAT	01/01		<i>Happy Two Thousand and Sixteen, y'all</i>
SUN	01/03	9:30 am	Religious School
FRI	01/08	6:00 pm	Shabbat Dinner
		7:00 pm	Shabbat Service with Rabbi Baroff
SAT	01/09	6:00 pm	Yiddish Class with Rabbi Baroff
		5:00 pm	Havdalah with Rabbi Baroff at Oaks by the Bay Park in St Andrews <i>followed by dinner out at a local eatery</i>
SUN	01/10	9:30 am	Religious School
		NOON	Stump the Rabbi over Lunch
WED	01/13	6:00 pm	Monthly Temple Board of Directors Meeting
SUN	01/17	9:30 am	Religious School
WED	01/20	6:00 pm	Sisterhood Meeting
FRI	01/22	7:00 pm	Lay-led Shabbat Service with Judith Scott and Sarah Farkas
SUN	01/24		No Religious School this week Tu B'Shevat starts at sunset
MON	01/25		Tu B'Shevat
SUN	01/31	9:30 am	Religious School

On December 7, Polly Kelly, mother of Marsha Kraselsky, passed away in Colquit, GA with family surrounding her. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Marsha as we keep her in our thoughts and prayers.

Shabbat Candle-Lighting Times for January 2016

Take a break from the hectic work week and mark the Day of Rest with lighting of the candles.

01/01 | 4:35 pm 01/08 | 4:41 pm 01/15 | 4:46 pm 01/22 | 4:52 pm 01/29 | 4:59 pm

"I think that I shall never see a poem lovely as a tree." is the beginning of a poem – *Trees* – by a young man named Joyce Kilmer a century ago. The poem's end is equally famous: "Poems are made by fools like me, but only God can make a tree."

Trees are plentiful, almost ubiquitous. Like most things which are plentiful in our lives we take them for granted. But what a marvelous and vital phenomenon is a tree.

This woody branched plant, usually large and enduring, has been instrumental to the development of life on earth and to human civilization. Within our culture and language there are of course metaphorical trees.

The tree is also a religious symbol around the world. In Judaism the Torah is called *Etz Chaim* – the Tree of Life. In Jewish mysticism the *Etz Chaim* is an upside down tree, whose roots are in heaven but whose branches and fruits are here in our world to pick.

The birthday for trees in the Jewish calendar is the 15th day in the month of *Shevat* – *Tu B'Shevat*. This year *Tu B'Shevat* is celebrated January 24 and 25. It is known as *Chag Hailanot* – the festival of the trees. This is the Jewish Arbor Day.

The Mishnah recognizes various new year celebrations or commemorations for different purposes: there is *Rosh Hashanah* for spiritual renewal, the first of Elul for the tithing of cattle, and the beginning of the month of *Aviv* (Spring) for the setting of the *Chagim* – the festivals – in the calendar. *Chamisha Asar B'Shevat* (15th of *Shevat*) is the day for the tithing of the trees in ancient Israel. It is the time of the year there when the sap often rises in the tree.

Much later in the 1500s the mystical rabbis of Safed were inspired by the Passover Seder thus creating by analogy the *Tu B'Shevat* Seder. There is a Haggadah and four cups of wine. The special foods here are the fruits of *Eretz Yisrael*, rather than the symbolic foods on the Passover Seder plate.

The Jewish National Fund has made Israel much greener than it was a century ago. The JNF has transformed the landscape in a way which has slowed the Jewish state to flourish. One great way to honor *Tu B'Shevat* is to plant trees in Israel.

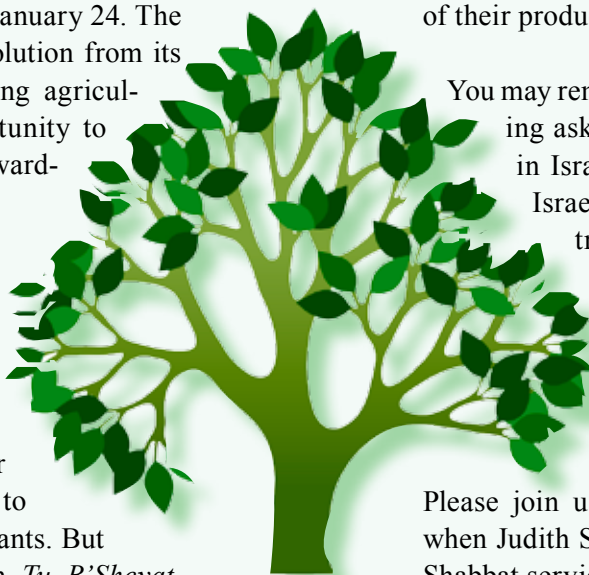
For "only God can make a tree," but we can plant many of them – thus extending God's work.

- Rabbi Richard Baroff

Tu B'Shevat – The New Year for the Trees

The New Year of Trees, also known as *Tu B'Shevat* begins at sunset on January 24. The holiday has undergone an evolution from its original purpose – recognizing agricultural progress – to an opportunity to practice environmental stewardship today.

In the era of the Temple in Jerusalem, agriculture was of paramount importance. Farmers planted crops and orchards, fig trees and nuts. It was said that the first four years of growth were meant to be maturation years for the plants. But after the fourth year and on *Tu B'Shevat*, farmers could reap the benefits of their plant-



ings. They were also asked to tithe one tenth of their produce as a tax for the government.

You may remember from your childhood being asked to fund the planting of trees in Israel. And, if you've ever been to Israel, you can see the multitude of trees that have helped to "green" the Holy Land. Today, some folks hold a Seder similar to a Passover Seder but with grains, nuts and fruit as the centerpiece of the meal.

Please join us 7:00 pm Friday, January 22, when Judith Scott and Sarah Farkas will lead Shabbat services and pay special tribute to *Tu B'Shevat*.

TEMPLE B'NAI ISRAEL IN THE COMMUNITY

Members of Temple B'nai Israel have been asked to speak to various groups about Judaism and being Jewish. And we are happy to comply.

Lisa Rahn and Steve Theberge presented a program on Chanukah and Shabbat to 25 people at the Grief and Loss Service of NW Florida on December 4. The group was learning about holiday traditions of different cultures. The presentation was very well received with thoughtful questions asked by several participants. While preparing for this outreach event, Lisa and Steve were unable to locate their box of holiday decorations. Stephen Sickerman saved the day by lending them the family menorah and oversized dreidel candle – which wife Carolynn fortunately placed in plain sight on the fireplace mantel – to serve as visual aids for the presentation; see photo on the right.

On the last Sunday in November, Judith Scott and Sarah Farkas presented a program on “Judaism 101” to folks at the Unitarian Universalist Society. They explained some of the similarities and differences between the two faiths. They also described the Jewish Year in terms of Jewish holidays, clearing up some common misperceptions, such as Chanukah being the “Jewish Christmas.” Some traditional items from Jewish ritual were also made available - yarmulkes, tallit, siddur, menorah, etc. The program was well received judging by the questions asked and the interest shown in attending a future Shabbat service and Passover Seder.

A third community “event” was the coverage of Chanukah in the local newspaper, *The Panama City News Herald*; see <http://www.newsherald.com/article/20151212/lifestyle/151219674/0/search>. Rabbi Richard

Baroff explained the reason for the holiday, as he lit the sixth candle on the menorah on December 11. Since it was also Friday evening, the Rabbi spoke about Shabbat and its importance in Jewish life.



Nate Mewhinney, on right, participated in the Panama City Veteran's Day parade, November 11, 2015.

JANUARY JOYS & REMEMBRANCES

Y A H R Z E I T S - T H E I R M E M O R I E S A R E F O R U S A B L E S S I N G

01/10	JANET SUTTON - MOTHER OF PAM SUTTON
01/10	MARVIN EUZENT - HUSBAND OF MARGE EUZENT
01/12	BRENDA KELLY - SISTER OF MARSHA KRASELSKY
01/13	MARY GELMON - WIFE OF JOSEPH GELMON
01/14	SANDRA FLAX - MOTHER OF CHERYL FLAX-HYMAN
01/23	ROSE MILLER - MOTHER OF NATHAN MILLER
01/28	LAUREN BIDLEMAN - GRANDDAUGHTER OF JUDITH SCOTT & SARAH FARKAS
01/	EDNA EARL WILLIAMS - MOTHER OF KAY STRIPLING



BIRTHDAYS

01/08	CYNTHIA GINGOLD
01/09	McKENNA HYMAN
01/12	PAUL ZIPES
01/13	RABBI RICHARD BAROFF
01/15	NATHAN MILLER
01/15	NORM GULKIS
01/19	BRIAN HUMBOLDT
01/22	SUE GULKIS
01/24	MIKE STARKMAN
01/29	LISA RAHN

ANNIVERSARIES

01/01	ROBERT & JOANNE GOETZ
01/26	RON & SARAH FELDSTEIN
01/26	NORM & SUE GULKIS

If your Joy or Remembrance is missing or incorrect please e-mail
The AZOY Editors at theazoy@gmail.com
and let Sarah & Stephen know about it ASAP!

Soul Food: What's Your Favorite Jewish Recipe?

The editors of the Azoy want to know what your favorite soul food recipe is...Jewish Soul Food, that is!

Do you love your grandma's cholent, your mom's chicken soup, or latkes? How about the best brisket you ever had! Or maybe a dessert like rugalach or strudel?

We want you to submit your

favorites. The editors will chose one to publish in each issue for the remainder of the year. Please send us recipes that do not already appear in the TBI cookbook (which, BTW, is still available for sale in the Judaica Shop). We're looking for newer recipes to expand our repertoire.

Send your recipes to our email address, theazoy@gmail.com or you

can mail it the old fashioned way by post to: TBI Soul Food Recipes, PO Box 65565, Panama City, FL 32406.

We'll publish them with credits and in a size that will fit your recipe box. At the end of the year we may issue a challenge to actually cook the recipes and judge the results. So go ahead and tempt us. We dare you!

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Shira Moskowitz
ISJL Education Fellow



One of the best parts of my job as an Education Fellow at the Institute of Southern Jewish Life is visiting communities across the south. I had such a wonderful time on my recent visit to Temple B'nai Israel. My visit began with Shabbat services on Friday night. As someone who grew up in the Reform Movement, praying with your community truly made me feel at home. Together, we sang many of the melodies I love from my time at URJ Camp Eisner and discussed the weekly Torah portion.

On Sunday, I was fortunate enough to attend religious school and the Chanukah luncheon. The students

and I played a fun Chanukah version of chutes and ladders, complete with challenges, such as creating a team cheer and writing an acrostic poem, like the one found on the dreidel. We then played a special version of Chanukah Madlibs, which involved the Chanukah story happening in the Panama City Mall.

After our morning of games and Chanukah learning, I had the privilege of watching the students perform a fun and silly play. They were quite the talented bunch! My visit ended with some delicious homemade latkes and other Chanukah treats. It was a perfect start to Chanukah.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this visit a success and who graciously welcomed me into your community. A special thank you to Cynthia and Alvin Gingold for hosting me during my time in Panama City.

I am already looking forward to my next visit – April 15 - 17, 2016 – and to working together throughout the New Year. Have a happy and healthy new year!



photos by Cynthia Gingold



photo by Cynthia Gingold





photos by Stephen Sickerman