



February 2016 Newsletter

CONGREGATION
B'NAI ABRAHAM

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FROM THE DESK OF THE RABBI

Throughout American history, many leaders have been reluctant to speak out on behalf of the working poor. Far fewer have sought to challenge the status quo by offering support beyond social service alone. Fortunately, such caution and silence is not universal.

Certain courageous members of the Reform rabbinate in America have sought to appeal to our prophetic call for justice. One rabbi, Emil Hirsch, who lived at the turn of the twentieth century, was particularly dedicated to the challenge of improving the lives of those impacted by society's ills. He implored employers to look beyond mere profits to the services rendered to them by their employees.

Hirsch underscored the centrality of justice as a normative and unifying focus for the earliest Jewish reformers. He crafted the plank of the Reform movement's platform of its time that read:

"In full accordance with the spirit of Mosaic legislation, which strives to regulate the relation between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve, on the basis of justice and righteousness, the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society."

An ideological foundation underpinned Rabbi Hirsch's advocacy. In a philosophical sermon entitled, "Economic Freedom," Hirsch preached how human beings, despite our sublime confidence in political theory that "*men are created equal*," are, in fact, not created equal for consumption or for production. Laws, he argued, should be enacted to eliminate the inequities of economic life and to exclude the exploitation of man. Hirsch declared, "*Whatever its basis no system of ethics but recognizes that production and social service alone confer moral title to property. In other words, property is ours not for selfish, but for social ends. You are the owner of what you have produced, if in your use of what is yours you look not merely to your advantage but to the advantage of all.*"

There were many who did not support Barack Obama's presidency. Still, we could all be proud as Americans that less than a generation after Martin Luther King, an African American became our president. Similarly, there are many who do not care for the politics or the candidacy of Bernie Sanders. No matter our political persuasion, we should all be proud that the focus of Bernie Sander's message emanates from an important religious tenet of Judaism. Our faith reminds us that we are not merely commanded to give to the poor, but to speak up on matters of economic injustice.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On the day following the enormous snow storm, I was once again reminded of the importance of a caring community. My neighborhood is one block long with about 20 houses, and this being a small town, it's not unusual when you meet someone to find you have at least one acquaintance in common.

Sunday following the storm came with brilliant sunshine, and the work of digging out brought everyone out of doors. The sound of scraping shovels and snow blowers was background music to our greetings and conversations. As the work was progressing, we noticed that things were awfully quiet at the home of an elderly widow on the block. No one had spoken with her for a couple of days, so it didn't take long to clear a path to the front door. The first to arrive saw that her little dog was inside but saw no sign of Miss Donna. To everyone's relief she popped into the doorway exclaiming with great surprise, "My, what are you all doing here?"

Neighbors able to help folks less able were generous with their efforts, and by mid-afternoon it looked like most everyone had at least the driveway cleared and one car freed from its snow cocoon. And, in the bargain we had caught up on the local news.

Fortunately, this is not an uncommon occurrence up on "The Hill." It's a little like Mayberry where you know your kid has done something wrong before he even gets home. Neighborliness is a culture that has been nurtured from the time the houses first started being built in the '60s.

Knowing that, although you might not see each other regularly, someone will have your back and be pleased to be with you is an important aspect of community. It's something I often see at B'nai Abraham, too. And unlike a once-in-a-century snowstorm, we get those opportunities at least once a week for Shabbat and more with the religious school, learning sessions and holiday celebrations.

One of those holiday occasions is right around the corner – *Tu B'Shevat*, the New Year for the Trees – on Friday, January 27. Our version is a happy celebration with samplings of the Seven Species* and the mixing of red and white wines. The details are in the flyer further on in the newsletter.

Looking ahead, there is a weekend-long celebration of *Purim March 18-20*. *Megillat Esther* readings, a carnival and the Corned Beef Cabaret. This is a time you can participate in many ways; certainly by joining in the celebrations, but also by volunteering to assist with an event or two. Incidentally, volunteering is another great way to get to know each other.

I certainly hope to catch up with everyone during these holidays. Will *you* see a long-time friend you haven't seen since the fall? Will *you* seek to deepen your relationship with those you know slightly? Will *you* seek out a member you don't yet know and begin to forge a new friendship? In all of these, there is time to deepen our congregational relationships and build a community where we take care of each other and no one feels left out.

Shalom,

Rachel

* *The seven types of fruits and grains named in the Torah (Deut. 8:8) as the main produce of Eretz Yisrael.*



DONATIONS

Endowment Fund

In memory of Charlotte Levine from Sydell Thrope
 Happy Birthday to David Handler from Marlene & Jerry Falke

SAVE THE DATE

May 1, 2016 is the date of our annual fundraiser. Having successful fundraisers allows us some flexibility in our annual support. This year's theme "90 for 90" was inspired by Michèle Jacobs to honor our beloved Jeanne's 90th birthday. The committee has been hard at work to make sure the celebration of Jeanne's birthday will be fun.

The event will be at the Temple from 5-8 pm on May 1. Chef David Rosenthal will prepare French-inspired heavy hors d'oeuvres. The menu he has prepared is amazing and we are certain that you'll enjoy the food.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you'll see an article from the Silent Auction Committee asking you for items. Our success depends upon your support and generosity.

You will receive your tickets for purchase in the middle of March at the same price as last year. In the envelope with the event tickets will also be some raffle tickets that we are depending upon you to sell.

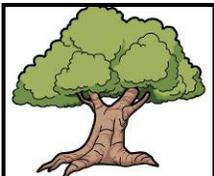
If you know of anyone who is not a member of the Temple who might want to come to help honor Jeanne, please let Monda 240-291-6983 or Sandi Gagliardi 301-797-1198 know.

LIFELONG LEARNING

Saturday February 13 Movie Night 7:30 pm Baer Room
 The movie: *THE OUTRAGEOUS SOPHIE TUCKER*

Sunday February 28 Books & Bagels 1:30 pm Location TBA
 The book: *FATHER SON STONE*

In order to save a tree or two, printed calendars are only available upon request.
 Contact Michelle in the office to arrange to pick up a copy.



MIRACLE WORKERS OF THE MONTH

Steve Slavick, Jerry Falke and Ben Chlebnikow installed the first of several high definition security cameras at the front door of the religious school building with an accompanying DVR. We will add the remaining interior and exterior cameras to both buildings shortly.

Leon Seidman repaired the molding in the social hall and Donald Wingfield touched up the walls with paint.

Jerry Falke and Vic Kronstadt installed new fluorescent bulbs with plastic safety covers for the ceiling lights in the kitchen.

Let's all say "Thanks" to these workers next time you see them.

Buildings & Grounds Committee

SHARE YOUR TALENTS

Organization is underway for our third Purim Cabaret. We're looking for performers of all kinds: singers, dancers, poets, magicians, whatever. The Corned Beef Cabaret is being held Saturday, March 19. Don't be shy! There will only be one group rehearsal. Contact Syd Machat: (301) 432-8859 or sydmachat@msn.com

THE POTTER'S BOWL IS MOVING

The 2016 Potter's Bowl has a new date. This year it will be held on November 6, 2016. Tickets will go on sale in October.

Please save the date and tell all of your friends about this change. We hope to see you all there for another wonderful evening.

Remember: All proceeds benefit the Community Free Clinic.

"90 FOR 90: A Tribute to Jeanne Jacobs" GALA

Mark your calendar! May 1, 2016 Congregation B'nai Abraham will be hosting a Gala to celebrate our beloved congregant, Jeanne Jacobs on her ninetieth birthday. There will be delicious food, drinks and special entertainment.

Additionally there will be exclusive auctions (live and silent) to help raise funds to support our synagogue. We are asking members of the congregation to donate items for the auction that will help us to raise money for the sustainability of our synagogue.

Here are some suggestions of what you might donate:

- Restaurant gift certificates
- Bed and Breakfast gift certificates
- Wine tasting gift certificates
- Theatre tickets
- Sporting event tickets
- Original artwork, framed paintings, photographs, sculptures and pottery
- Hand-knit items such as scarves, afghans, baby sweaters, etc.
- Judaica items
- Themed gift baskets such as wine, food or pet
- Spa/beauty certificates
- Designer handbags, totes or travel bags

Thank you for helping with this important fundraiser. If you would like to discuss your donation, please contact: Robbie Greenberg, [301-797-7265](tel:301-797-7265) robbieg56@gmail.com
or Barby Weiss, [301-791-6098](tel:301-791-6098), Barby@myactv.net

We will be happy to discuss your generous contribution. Items may be dropped off at Robbie Greenberg's house.

Yahrzeits

February 5, 2016

- * Abraham Barbanell
- Robert N. Schiff
- * Celia Heisler Klein
- * Max Ruben
- Jerome Macht
- * James Brener
- Bertha Goldblatt
- * Lawrence Sharpe
- * Bernard Louis Cohen
- Dora Henry
- Goldie Snyder

February 12, 2016

- * Lillian Geber
- * Annie S. Kaplan
- * Jack Levine
- Leonard Freed
- Dora Honig
- Edith Suls
- * Moses S. Grossman
- Elaine Kirson
- * Benjamin Blumenthal
- Ruth Berkson
- Herman Rosenbloom
- Miriam Blitzer
- Elenor Rubinstein
- * Frieda Kronstadt
- * Edith Novenstein
- Joseph Kramer
- James Neveil
- Ida Schiffman

February 19, 2016

- * Max Lyon
- * Edward Selkow
- Dr. Leo Bernstein
- Robert Falke
- Marion Saville
- James Michaux

February 26, 2016

- * Rose Taylor
- * Leopold Selis
- Lou Margolis
- * Saul Levin
- Bernice Leighton
- Charles Markley
- * Hilde Shapiro
- Max M. Gerber
- * Hannah Greenwald
- Meyer Greenberg
- Mary Leitz
- * Samuel Kramer

* Denotes
Yahrzeit Plaque
in Sanctuary

DATES TO REMEMBER

Saturday	February 13	Movie Night	7:30 pm	Baer Room
Sunday	February 28	Books & Bagels	1:30 pm	Location TBA

KVELLING

Mazel tov to Jessica & Sassan Shaool on the birth of their daughter, Vida Ani on January 11, 2016. Proud grandparents are Janet & Mansoor Emral Shaool.

Susan & Alan Levin have become grandparents to a boy, Dean Levi Bode; Hebrew name is Eliezer. Parents are Michelle & Greg. Born Monday, January 4th. The bris was on Monday, January 11th

NOTES FROM THE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

January 2016 taught us a lesson about Tu B'Shevat, the day we celebrate as the birthday of trees. Maryland is definitely not Israel.

While we have had to postpone the Family Activity Program due to Winter Storm Jonas, we plan to have another opportunity to celebrate our Jewish connection with trees.

JEAN LAFFITE - ENIGMA & LEGEND by Cindy Vallar *(Reprinted with permission of the author)*

Jean Laffite first appeared in New Orleans in 1803, but where was he born? Marseilles, Bordeaux, St. Domingue? No one knows, because he told different stories to different people. He was the son of aristocrats guillotined during the French Revolution. He fled the slave revolts on the island of Haiti. Yet his instinctive familiarity with the marshes and bayous from New Orleans to the Gulf of Mexico and his ability to converse in French, Spanish, English, or Italian suggest that he grew up in the region where he plied his trade.

In 1803 New Orleans became part of the United States, but it was settled by the French, sold to the Spanish, and then returned to the French before Napoleon sold the territory to Thomas Jefferson. In spite of these changes, New Orleans retained its French customs and language. Americans, including the new governor — William C. C. Claiborne — were not welcomed, partly because they considered the citizens of New Orleans to be lazy and lawless. They were aghast at the Creoles' toleration of smuggling, which hindered merchant trade.

Things came to a head between Claiborne and Laffite in 1813 when the governor issued a \$500 reward for the privateer's arrest. Within a week of the posting of those notices, new wanted posters appeared, offering \$1,000 to anyone who delivered Governor Claiborne to Baratavia. They were signed, Jean Laffite.

Baratavia lies on the Gulf of Mexico about 100 miles south of New Orleans. It was home to buccaneers and fishermen, but Jean Laffite organized them into a company of privateers and smugglers. He built a house, cottages, warehouses, *barracoons* (stockades that held slaves awaiting auction), a cafe, gambling den, and brothel. His men numbered one thousand, came from many countries, and included navigators, gunners, carpenters, cooks, sailmakers, and riggers. He devised laws to protect the men and their women from lawless rampages. Retribution was swift: cast adrift for molesting a woman, hanged for murdering a Baratavian. He prized the American Constitution, believing in its freedoms. He prohibited his men from attacking American ships, naming death the penalty for violation of this rule. His ships sailed under letters of marque from Cartagena, a republic of Columbia fighting for its independence from Spain. (A letter of marque allowed privateers to legally plunder ships of the country at war with the country who issued the letter of marque. Pirates attacked any ship without this legal document.) They plundered cargoes of Spanish and English ships for slaves, silks, spices, jewels, furniture, household goods, art, food, and medicines.

Two years after the United States declared war on England in 1812, a boat was lowered from HMS Sophia and sailed into Baratavia under a white flag. Aboard were two British officers, Captain Lockyer and Captain McWilliams. They sought Laffite's help in infiltrating the bayous and capturing New Orleans. They offered him land, gold, and a commission in the Royal Navy. Laffite told them he would give them his answer in two weeks, but once the officers returned to their ship, he forwarded the letters to Governor Claiborne. The governor believed in the authenticity of the letters and sought to postpone a planned naval assault on the smuggling enclave, but the majority of his council voted to carry out the attack as planned. While Jean waited for the governor's response, more ships appeared off Baratavia. Since they flew the American flag, the Baratarians greeted them with enthusiasm, but the Americans destroyed Laffite's fleet and stronghold, then captured fifty of the smugglers, including Dominique Youx.

In spite of this, Laffite sought out Andrew Jackson, the Tennessee soldier who came to protect New Orleans. Although initially against any offer from the "hellish banditti," Jackson reassessed his decision after Laffite offered him two things he desperately needed: 7,500 flints with powder and 1,000 fighting men. Although the Battle of New Orleans was fought after the treaty to end the war was signed (but not ratified), there was little doubt the British would have captured New Orleans had Laffite and his men not

(continued on next page)

fought under Jackson. The two batteries manned by Baratarians cut large swathes in the enemy's ranks. British casualties were enormous, but Jackson lost only thirteen men. President Madison pardoned Laffite and his men for their bravery.

For the next two years, Laffite tried through legal means to regain his property and ships confiscated when the Americans attacked Barataria, but he was forced to purchase them at the auction block. New Orleanians became less accepting of smugglers plying their trade. They wondered why a hero would violate the law. Jean felt betrayed and, in 1817, he sailed from New Orleans and established a new colony on Galveston Island. The colony prospered, but Laffite failed to prevent the influx of fugitives who defied his laws. In 1821 the American Navy delivered an ultimatum: leave or be blown to bits. Under cover of darkness, Laffite slipped away after setting fire to his stronghold.

Therein lies the final mystery of Jean Laffite. What happened to him? Did he die of fever in the Yucatan? Was he killed fighting pirates while at sea? Did he retire and raise a family, then die a quiet death in Illinois? No one knows. In death Jean Laffite continued to be what he'd been all his life -- a legendary enigma.

Editor's Note:

In an article written by Prof. Bernard Glick sent to me by Jeff Pearlman and posted on our CBA website entitled "*Jean Lafitte (sic), the Jewish Pirate*", the professor related a serendipitous encounter with a Sephardic Jew from Geneva on a flight from Atlanta to Norfolk. The gentleman's name was Melvyn J. Lafitte — a direct descendant of Jean Lafitte.

According to Melvyn Lafitte, "*Our family, originally named Lefitto, lived in the Iberian Peninsula for centuries. When Ferdinand and Isabella reconquered Spain and expelled the Muslims and the Jews in 1492, most of the Jews fled to North Africa. Others went to the Balkans or to Greece and Turkey. But some Sephardic Jews, my ancestors among them, crossed the Pyrenees and settled in France, where Jean was born in about 1780. He moved to French Santo Domingo during the Napoleonic period. However, a slave rebellion forced him to flee to New Orleans. Eventually, he became a pirate, but he always called himself a privateer because that label has a more legal ring to it.*"

"*In 1814, the British sought his aid in their pending attack on New Orleans,*" he continued. "*However, he passed their plans to the Americans and helped General Andrew Jackson beat them in 1815. A grateful Jackson, not yet President, saw to it that Lafitte and his family became American citizens. And by the way, did you know that there is a town of Jean Lafitte, as well as a Jean Lafitte National Historical Park in Southwestern Louisiana?"*

ONEGS - FEBRUARY SCHEDULE

- Friday February 5 Rachel Nichols, Chair; Buck Macht
- Friday February 12 Priya & David Kurtz, Chairs; Lauren & Richard Kramer
- Friday February 19 Aline Schelling & Shelly Fischman, Chairs; Dan Greenwald, Renee & Fred Kramer, Mary Money & Paul Waldman
- Friday February 26 Betsy Rosenthal & Pete Sherman, Chairs: Mike Armel

CARING COMMITTEE

The Caring Committee provides care, companionship and assistance to members of our congregation and their immediate families in need due to ill health, age or non-financial crisis or catastrophe.

- Chair: Sharon Metzner - receives initial calls from the rabbi: sharonmetz@aol.com (301) 739-2972
- Robbie Greenberg - for meals, as needed: robbieg56@gmail.com (301) 797-7265
- Barby Weiss - for transportation needs: barby@myactv.net (301) 791-6098
- Sharon Wagshal - for home visits or outings: sharwag@aol.com (301) 797-3220

MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TODAY

Donations to the Congregation are a meaningful way to congratulate friends on Simchas or to show that you care in times of sorrow.

Contributions may be designated to any of our funds (see below). If a specific fund is not designated, the money will go into our General Fund.

For a minimum contribution of \$10.00 a printed card is sent. An individually hand-calligraphed card will be sent for any contribution of \$18.00 or more.

The minimum contribution to the Endowment Trust Fund is \$10.00

To make contributions to ANY FUND, including the CHAI CAMPAIGN, please mail or call:

*Mrs. Renee Kramer
1102 Oak Hill Avenue
Hagerstown, MD 21742
(301) 733-2093*

General Fund, Endowment Fund, Cemetery Fund, Rabbi's Discretionary Fund, Young Adult Fund, Harold & Jeanne Jacobs Fund, Youth Group Fund, Sharon Wagshal Religious School Fund, 'Tree of Life', and the Adolph & Hannah Baer Trust Fund

PLANT A TREE IN ISRAEL



Planting a tree in Israel is the perfect way to show you care. You can plant trees for all occasions and help green the land of Israel while sending a special gift to a friend or loved one. For each order, a beautiful certificate of your choice is mailed to the recipient with your own personal message. Plant trees for all of these occasions: birth, Bar or Bat mitzvah, graduation, wedding, birthday, get-well wish or in memory of someone special. Over the past 100 years, JNF has planted over 250 million trees in the land of Israel. The cost per tree is \$18 with the check made out to Congregation B'nai Abraham. We have an EZTree account at JNF and Carrol will place the order for your tree(s).

For more information & to order a tree, contact Carrol Lourie at: (240) 818-7555 (cell phone) or email her at: cglourie@gmail.com

Contact Rachel Nichols to learn how you can plan a self-sustaining gift to B'nai Abraham. (240) 308-1740 or HRDNichols@centurylink.net

REGULAR OFFICE HOURS: Monday, Tuesday, Friday 8:30am - 1:30pm

Michelle Jardine, Office Administrator Email: bnaiabraham1@verizon.net Office phone: (301) 733-5039

DIRECTORY - WHO TO CALL

CONTRIBUTIONS

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terrace708@myactv.net

PULPIT FLOWERS / TREES

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DOR L' DOR

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