

Temple Beth El^{Electronic} News

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Kislev-Tevet 5768

December 2007

Hanukkah Dinner

Our temple Hanukkah celebration will take place on Friday, December 7. The service starts at **6:00 PM**, followed by a dinner hosted by Ruthie Silverberg. Ruthie is serving chicken and latkes, so this is a **NON-DAIRY** meal, including non-dairy sour cream. Please bring a vegetable side dish, a salad, or a dessert to share with the rest of our temple community. Dinner will be followed by a group menorah-lighting, so bring your treasured menorahs and five candles for that night.



Alexander Levi Celebration

Karin and Barb have been busy working on the upcoming Alexander Levi anniversary! For the latest updates, visit the blog at

<http://levicelebration.blogspot.com/>

Save the Date

Once again, Temple Beth El is going to volunteer at "Reflections in the Park" on December 24. This mitzvah brings us great community recognition and helps Hillcrest family services. Without our help, they would probably have to close the light show on one of the top money-raising evenings of the year. Rebecca Gottlieb is our temple organizer for this event.

Community Announcements

Mazel tov to Ellie and Lou Landau on the birth of their granddaughter, Miranda Violet Domagalla. We look forward to the joyous opportunity of welcoming Miranda into the covenant of the Jewish people at our Shabbat evening service on January 4th.

Sheila spoke to a literature class at NICC about Judaism.

Randy and Rina donated a stone bench given to them in memory of Randy's father. It is located outside the temple under the tree.

The Beth El community extends our deepest sympathies to Sheila and Barry Rudin and their family on the death of Sheila's mother, Mollie Goldwasser. *Zecher tzaddik livracha*, May her memory be an abiding blessing.

From Rabbi Stephanie

On Tuesday, December 4th, we light the first candles of the Hanukkah menorah and in anticipation of that occasion I share with you the following (from Michael Strassfeld's *The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary*):

"By lighting the menorah, we ignite the flame in our souls, the spark that cannot be extinguished, that will burn not for eight days but for eternity. We place the menorah in our windows to be visible to those passing by, just as our inner light must shine against the darkness of evil and indifference and must kindle the spirits of our fellow humans. The menorah reminds us of the miracle that no matter how dark life may be, there remains a source of light deep inside us. The light in our souls reflects and refracts the light from the One who is all brightness. This light can accompany us on our way and illumine the darkest path. We need not walk through life's paths stumbling over obstacles as though we were blind. The plague of darkness is all around us, but the light is there for those who continue to fan it into flame.

"Rabbi Jose said: 'I was long perplexed by this verse: *And you shall grope at noonday as the blind gropes in darkness* (Deut. 28:29). Now what difference does it make to a blind man whether it is dark or light? Once I was walking on a pitch black night when I saw a blind man walking with a torch in his hands. I asked him, Why do you carry the torch? He replied, As long as the torch is in my hand, people can see me and aid me.' (Megillah 24b)"

This Hanukkah, may the light of the Hanukkah candles illumine not only our homes, but our hearts and souls, as well. May it dispel any darkness that may have seeped in and provide us with brightness along our journeys. And as we are warmed and comforted by the flames, may we then reach out to others. "No matter how dark life may be, there remains a source of light deep inside us." This Hanukkah, may we each discover the light within, and may we find, too, numerous ways to share it with others.

L'shalom,
Rabbi Stephanie Alexander

Upcoming Activities

- **Saturday, December 8th, 2:30 @ the temple – Conversational Hebrew**
- **Saturday, December 8th, 3:30 pm @ the temple – Book Discussion: *The Case for Peace: How the Arab-Israeli Conflict Can Be Resolved*, by Alan Dershowitz**

In the wake of the recent gathering of Mideast leaders in Annapolis, MD—not to mention Dershowitz's recent visit to Cedar Rapids—this month's book discussion could not be more timely. (And, as always, please note: you need not have read the book to join us.)

From the publisher: "In this important book, Harvard Law School professor Alan Dershowitz sets out a practical, realistic road map for Arab-Israeli peace, rigorously analyzing all the tough issues surrounding the conflict and pointing the way toward a secure and equitable two-state solution. From the division of Jerusalem and Israeli counterterrorism measures to the security fence and the Iranian nuclear threat, he identifies twelve geopolitical barriers to peace, explaining how to move around them and push the process forward.... Dershowitz's analyses are clear-headed, well-argued, and sure to be controversial." So, let's read... and discuss!

- **Saturday, December 8th, 7:00 pm – Adult Study**

And now for something completely different (and significantly lighter)...

Sixty-one years ago (give or take a Hanukkah or two), the University of Chicago held its first “**Great Latke-Hamantash Debate**,” featuring distinguished Jewish faculty who debated the merits and faults of these two iconic Jewish foods according to the principles and values of their respective disciplines. The entertaining program has been replicated at numerous prestigious universities since—including Wisconsin, Michigan, Princeton, Yale, Penn, Bryn Mawr, Brandeis, Cornell, and Indiana—and, of course, the tradition has continued at the University of Chicago, as well. During this adult “study”, we’ll discuss the interesting sociological factors that prompted the powers-that-be at the University of Chicago to initiate this program in the first place, evaluate some of the more salient (and bizarre) arguments that have been put forth to promote either the latke or the hamantash, and conclude with our own mini-take on the great debate: **The First** (to my knowledge) **Great Latke-Hamantash Caucus**. Hope you’ll join us!



Service and Mitzvah Schedule for 5768

(Updated 12-02-07)

NOTES:

- Rabbi Stephanie has brought a new dimension to our temple by offering a slew of activities on the weekends she is here. The schedule below does NOT include those specific activities (such as conversational Hebrew class, book discussion). Refer to each newsletter for the specifics of an upcoming weekend.
- Shabbat Services start at 7:00 PM, unless otherwise indicated.

Friday, December 7...**6:00pm** Hanukkah Service (dinner hosted by Ruth Silverberg and menorah lighting to follow)
Saturday, December 8...7:00pm adult study dinner: Gottlieb, study: Kirk & Gottlieb

Monday, December 24 REFLECTIONS IN THE PARK

Friday, January 4, 2008...7:00pm Shabbat service dinner: Landau, oneg: Landau
Saturday, January 5...7:00pm adult study dinner: Pritikin/Wrubel, study: Pritikin/Wrubel

Friday, February 1...7:00pm Lay Shabbat service oneg: Mikel

Friday, February 29... Visitor's Night Service with Rabbi Lane Steinger Group oneg
Lecture starts at 6:30pm; service starts at 7:30pm

Saturday, March 1...7:00pm adult study dinner: TBD, study: TBD

Friday, March 21...**6:00pm** Purim Service (dinner hosted by Faye Wrubel and Karin Pritikin to follow)

April 11 SPECIAL MUSICAL SHABBAT IN CEDAR RAPIDS with visiting artist Dan Nichols

April 13 Spring Congregational Meeting, 10:00 AM at the Temple

Saturday, April 26... A Saturday Morning Service during Passover. Time TBD.
Saturday, April 26...7:00pm adult study dinner: TBD, study: Dyrke

Friday, May 16...7:00pm Shabbat service dinner: Dyrke, oneg: TBD
Saturday, May 17...7:00pm adult study dinner: TBD, study: TBD

Friday, June 6...7:00pm Shabbat service dinner: Alexander, oneg: Alexander
Saturday, June 7...7:00pm End-of-Year Adult Social (who would like to host?)