

Temple Beth El^{Electronic} News

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Tevet 5769

January 2009

Thank You

- To Randy Sirk and Ruthie Silverberg for hosting the Hanukkah dinner. Randy's wonderful matzah balls and Ruthie's delicious latkes were the perfect start to the Hanukkah season!
- To everyone who braved the weather to attend our Hanukkah service and celebration, especially to Rabbi Stephanie and Eli for coming all the way from Cedar Rapids.
- To everyone who volunteered to work at Murphy Park on December 24: Rebecca Gottlieb, Fern & Jesse Reinstein, Karen & Dick Heer (from Platteville), Sheila & Barry Rudin, Lisa (née Dyrke) & Terry Prindle, Bei Ruetten & her friend Vicki Roza (just arrived from Philadelphia!), and Larry & Ben Goldberg. We helped to raise just over \$4,000 (including one donation of \$1,000) for Hillcrest Family Services. At this year's admission price, that figure represents about 375 cars. While this total does not quite match our largest ever (\$4,200,) and we definitely had fewer cars than in some previous years, it was the most money collected to date (through 12-24) in 2008. Hillcrest truly appreciates our efforts. The volunteers had to brave some of the worst cold and windy weather we've ever encountered at the park-- temperatures were near 0 and it felt much colder due to the wind chill! Special thanks to Rebecca for organizing!!
- Rabbi Stephanie and baby Eli would like to thank the congregation for the very thoughtful Hanukkah gifts. Stephanie is looking forward to her relaxing evening and Eli looks very cute in the adorable Hanukkah bibs.

Sisterhood

The Beth El Sisterhood organizational meeting will be held at the home of Phyllis Garfield on Sunday, January 18. (Tentative time: 1pm.) Please join us to help plan a few events and to have fun. All women affiliated with the Temple are welcome. Contact Rebecca Gottlieb or Phyllis for more information.

From the Board

Don't be surprised in the next month or two if you drive by the temple and see work going on: Thanks to donations from United Jewish Communities, Inc., Jewish Federations in Des Moines and Chicago, and from Rabbi Stephanie's father-in-law's congregants in Tulsa, Oklahoma, drainage tiles and gutter work will begin (weather permitting) to prevent future flooding.

We do not yet have a chairperson for our upcoming Purim Dinner. Please consider hosting or asking someone to co-host with you. Contact Sheila if you would like to host or if you have any questions. It takes all of us working together to keep our Temple alive and active.

Oneg, Rabbi Dinner, and Adult Study Hosts

To host an oneg, contact Fern Reinstein (threeamstamper@yahoo.com)

To host a rabbi dinner, contact Cindy Mikel (mikelcinkc@aol.com)

To host an adult study, contact Rina Sirk (rinadbq@aol.com)

REMINDER: If you have signed up to host an oneg, dinner, or adult study and have to cancel, it is your responsibility to find a replacement host.

From Rabbi Stephanie

As I write, Israel is enduring two regrettable assaults. The first is a military assault – a barrage of rockets which have been continuously streaming into Israeli civilian areas from Hamas-controlled Gaza with increasing intensity. And the second, as predictable as it is regrettable, is the assault of public opinion – international and local organizations, leaders and media calling for unilateral restraint on the part of Israel while glossing over the compelling reasons for her action.

How should we, American Reform Jews, respond? We must respond strongly, for any attempts to single Israel out for blame must raise our guard and unify our voice. Yet even as we cannot presume to dictate proper military action for Israel, we must also exhort her to be diligent in all pledges to protect wherever possible civilian lives on both sides of the conflict – just as we continue to hope that Palestinian leaders would value doing the same.

In that spirit I share with you the statement released by Rabbi Eric Yoffie, President of the Union for Reform Judaism, in response to these events. Permit me then this longer than usual message, but I feel it is tremendously important to share in its entirety.

For the past three weeks, Israel has lived under an increasing barrage of rocket fire from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. More than 80 missiles landed on a single day. Israel's first responsibility, like that of any nation, is to protect her citizens. The military action that Israel launched Saturday morning was clearly intended to do just that.

Israel's action is as tragic as it is necessary and predictable. While we mourn the loss of life, no democratic nation in the world would permit a hostile force on its border to target its civilian centers with constant missile attacks. Israel has demonstrated extraordinary restraint as nearly 8000 rockets have been launched at Israel's cities in the last 8 years. When Israel withdrew every civilian and soldier from Gaza in 2005, the attacks did not stop for a single day.

We believe that military action must always be the last resort. But more and more Israeli cities are now in range of Hamas' rocket-firing army of terror, and we know that the traumatized children of Sderot and neighboring towns can no longer be expected to live in constant fear.

Hamas chose to end the existing cease-fire. Hamas has cynically chosen to use Palestinian civilians as cover for its military operations. Hamas openly declares its commitment to destroy Israel. Hamas, therefore, must bear responsibility for the bloodshed. Hamas, and only Hamas, can make the decision to move beyond this bloody conflict by stopping, once and for all, all attacks on Israel from the territory it controls.

We welcome the words of Israel's Defense Minister Ehud Barak that every effort will be made to limit casualties among the civilian population of Gaza. We welcome as well the words of the Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who emphasized in her statement that "while confronting Hamas, Israel continues to believe in the two-state solution and remains committed to negotiations with the legitimate Palestinian Authority in the context of the peace process, launched at Annapolis."

We note, with sadness, the predictable chorus of those in the international community who call for Israeli "restraint." These critics offer no solution to the suffering of Israel's citizens, and in the face of rockets terrorizing their own children, would not be talking of restraint and proportionality. They would be demanding that their governments put an end to the attacks.

We share concerns expressed by our government and by others that food, medicine and other humanitarian assistance be allowed to reach Gaza. We note that Israel has permitted humanitarian aid to pass through the Gaza crossings, and we call upon Israel,

western governments, and international aid groups to do everything possible to avoid a humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

We thank the Government of the United States, which has been a voice of reason in responding to Israel's actions. We hope that the Palestinian leadership will demand an end to missile fire and a return to the path of peace and the negotiations begun in Annapolis. And we pray that the Palestinian people will strengthen the hand of all who are prepared to make peace a reality.

Amen and amen.

L'shalom,
Rabbi Stephanie M. Alexander

Upcoming Activities

- **Saturday, January 10th, 12:00 -2:00 pm @ University of Dubuque – “Trembling Before God”**

Bring a lunch and join us for a viewing of this ground-breaking film, followed by a discussion. (Cookies, coffee and tea will be provided – thank you, Alan!)

“Trembling Before God is an unprecedented feature documentary that shatters assumptions about faith, sexuality, and religious fundamentalism. Built around intimately-told personal stories of Hasidic and Orthodox Jews who are gay or lesbian, the film portrays a group of people who face a profound dilemma - how to reconcile their passionate love of Judaism and the Divine with the drastic Biblical prohibitions that forbid homosexuality. As the film unfolds, we meet a range of complex individuals - some hidden, some out - from the world's first openly gay Orthodox rabbi to closeted, married Hasidic gays and lesbians to those abandoned by religious families to Orthodox lesbian high-school sweethearts.

“Many have been tragically rejected and their pain is raw, yet with irony, humor, and resilience, they love, care, struggle, and debate with a thousands-year old tradition. Ultimately, they are forced to question how they can pursue truth and faith in their lives. Vividly shot with a courageous few over five years in Brooklyn, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, London, Miami, and San Francisco, Trembling Before God is an international project with global implications that strikes at the meaning of religious identity and tradition in a modern world. For the first time, this issue has become a live, public debate in Orthodox circles, and the film is both witness and catalyst to this historic moment. What emerges is a loving and fearless testament to faith and survival and the universal struggle to belong.”

- **Saturday, January 10th, 7:00 pm @ Bei Ruetten's home: Adult Study**

Following up on the rabbi's message earlier, our timely topic this Saturday evening will be **“Advocacy by Necessity.”** The events unfolding between Israel and Gaza may be many miles away, but the conflict is once again felt intimately here at home. And while we may feel unprepared—even reluctant—suddenly we are called upon as Israel's advocates. How do we monitor media coverage in the newspapers and on TV? How do we respond to rallies in the name of “peace?” When does a presentation or speaker cross a line and what should we do when it happens? These are questions I have heard repeatedly from so many throughout the past 2 ½ years, and they are regrettably relevant again. On Saturday night we will share our own experiences and concerns, brainstorm appropriate responses and learn from instructional resources how to be the advocates Israel so needs at this moment in history.



Service and Mitzvah Schedule for 5769

(Updated 01-03-09)

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. Refer to each newsletter for the specifics of an upcoming weekend.

Friday, January 9, 2009...7:00pm Shabbat service	dinner: Goldberg-Scheinman, oneg: Ruetten
Saturday, January 10...7:00pm adult study	dinner: TBD, study: Ruetten
Sunday, January 18: Sisterhood Organizational Meeting at the home of Phyllis Garfield. Tentative start time is 1pm.	
Friday, January 30...7:00pm Lay Shabbat service	oneg: Goldberg-Scheinman
Friday, February 13...7:00pm Shabbat service	dinner: Mikel & Pearce, oneg: Garfield
Saturday, February 14...7:00pm adult study	dinner: TBD, study: Garfield
Friday, March 6...6:00pm Purim service with dinner to follow	(need a Purim Dinner host)
Saturday, March 7...7:00pm adult study	dinner: TBD, study: Gottlieb
Friday, April 3... Passover and Visitors' Service.	Details for the weekend to follow
Saturday, April 4...7:00pm adult study?	dinner: TBD, study: Garfield
Friday, April 24...7:00pm Lay Shabbat service	oneg: Aidenbaum
Spring Congregational Meeting—Details to follow	
Friday, May 8... 7:00pm Shabbat service	dinner: TBD oneg: Dyrke
Saturday, May 9...7:00pm adult study	dinner: Dyrke, study: TBD
Friday, June 5...7:00pm Shabbat service	dinner: TBD, oneg: Alexander
Saturday, June 6... time TBD	End-of-Year Adult Social hosted by the Alexanders