

# December Bridge

*Beth El Congregation*

## A Message from our Rabbi

Will the Real Hanukkah Please Stand Up?

*Rabbi Jeffrey Kurtz-Lendner*

There are two stories of Hanukkah.

The first story of Hanukkah can be found in the books of I and II Maccabees. These books do not appear in the Jewish bible.

Rather, they are part of what is known as the “Apocrypha” – seven books which are written in Biblical style that are part of the Catholic Old Testament but not a part of the Protestant Old Testament or in the Jewish Bible.

In this description of the story of Hanukkah, the history of the politics involved and the military campaign are described. The oppression of the Greeks was not so much a malevolent imposition of Greek philosophy and theology among conquered nations. Rather, the crux of the battle was a dispute between the Hellenizing Jewish political party who wanted to influence Jewish life

with Greek culture versus the traditionalist Jews who wanted the Jewish religion free from external influence. The Hellenizing Jews, closely allied with the Greek government, sought to impose Greek culture on all Jews within Judaea. The infighting between the two political factions led to Greek intervention to support the party aligned with their own government, i.e. the Hellenizing Jewish party. To back their allies, the Greeks sent in troops and imposed Greek rituals onto the entire population, prohibiting the observance of Jewish tradition.

The Hellenizing Jewish party continued to ally themselves with the Greeks and the battle for control of Judaea was not merely a battle of the Jews against the Greeks but more so a civil war between the Hellenist and traditionalist Jews. The traditionalists, led by the Maccabees, ultimately prevailed, reconquering the Temple and dedicating it back to God.

Historically, in all likelihood, the first “Hanukkah,” i.e. the first “rededication” of the Temple was a delayed observance of Sukkoth which could not be observed in its normal time that year due to the war. Consequently the eight day holiday of

Sukkoth was observed late, and that celebration ultimately led to the eight day celebration of the reconquest of the Temple, leading to the development of the holiday of Hanukkah.

What about the oil? The story of the oil is nowhere to be found in the books of I and II Maccabees.

The story of the oil can be found in the Talmud. In tractate Shabbat 21b it states:

What is [the reason for] Hanukkah? For our Rabbis taught: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev [commence] the days of Hanukkah, which are eight on which a lamentation for the dead and fasting are forbidden. For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils therein, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against and defeated them, they made search and found only one cruse of oil which lay with the seal of the High Priest, but which contained sufficient for one day's lighting only; yet a miracle was wrought therein and they lit [the lamp] therewith for eight days. The following year these [days] were appointed a Festival with [the recital of] Hallel and thanksgiving.

Notice that in the rendition of the story in the Talmud, the "Hasmonean dynasty" (i.e the

Maccabee family) is mentioned only functionally, (i.e. "when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed...."). The main idea in the story in the Talmud is not that the Maccabees won (who, by the way, are not mentioned by name in the Talmud), but when they won God executed the miracle of the oil. The apocryphal books do not mention the oil but emphasize the military victory; the Talmudic story does not mention the Maccabees, refers to the victory only peripherally and then focuses on the importance of the miracle of the oil.

The rabbis of the Talmud, I believe, chose to emphasize the miracle of the oil so as to put in perspective the military victory. It was not the military might of the Maccabees, according to the rabbis, that gave the Jews glory. Rather, it was the devotion of God to the Jewish people that allowed us to prevail militarily. That is, while military victory is critical to survival, it is not that victory that is to be glorified. Rather, military victory is a necessary gift from God so that God's will and Torah can prevail.

# A Message from our President

I hope everyone had a great month.

November was a great month for our congregation. For the first time that I can remember, we had two B'Nai Mitzvahs in one month. The synagogue was filled with congregants, family, and friends. It was a joy for me to be a little part of the service. I was very impressed with both Stephan and Leo and the job they did not only in leading service, but also in their reading of the Torah. Well done to both of you.

Our Temple choir did us very proud in their singing at an interfaith event held at the Asbury Methodist Church. The event was well attended by our diverse Harrisonburg community. Thank you choir for your volunteerism on behalf of Beth El.

Two themes that I always talk about is that Beth El is our communal home, and it takes a village to keep it running as smoothly as it does. One of the things I loved about the Bar Mitzvahs was the way our sisterhood volunteered to help out for both Bar Mitzvahs. Thank you. You don't have to be a member of the Sisterhood or Men's Club to

volunteer. There are several events in December that you can volunteer to help and be part of.

First, on Thursday December 7th, there is a meeting of the VIA (Virginia Interfaith Action) at the Church of the Brethren in Bridgewater at 6:30 PM. Volunteer just to go and make our delegation larger.

Second, on Thursday December 14th, we are cooking lunch at the Catholic Church as part of our commitment to the Friendship House Ministries. We will be providing a hot luncheon for those less fortunate than us. Volunteer your time to help us for a few hours in serving lunch. I believe this is a true Mitzvah. Be part of it.

Third, we are once again partnering with the mosque on Country Club Road to serve 4 dinners and 4 breakfasts to those with no other place to go to sleep and stay warm. Volunteer your time to help prepare and serve any of the meals at the Mosque. This is a great way to show community spirit. In Harrisonburg, you have Muslims housing those unfortunate enough to need a warm place to sleep. Then you have us (the Jews) going to the Mosque to help feed people who are either Christian or non-denominational. Isn't this the way religion should work? This

is a great way to help serve our community at large.

I hope to see many congregants volunteer to help during December.

I want to wish everyone a Happy Hanukkah and a happy and safe New Year.

Have a great month.

*Les Mintzer, President*

## December Yahrzeits

Sadie Spiro - December 01, 1953  
Alfred Ney - December 03, 1954  
Mona Weiss - December 04, 2014  
Anna Bloom - December 05, 1932  
Sebastian Goldsmith - December 06, 1929  
Albert Klingstein - December 06, 1957  
Mollie Katzen - December 08, 1986  
Max Frankel - December 09, 1980  
Elaine Trubitz - December 09, 1983  
Rabbi Jacob Schvanenfeld - December 12  
Barnett Nelson - December 12  
Molly Feig - December 12  
Bertha Schvanenfeld - December 13, 1948  
Roselea Kohen - December 13, 1998

Shirley Merlin - December 13, 2014  
Simon Wender - December 14, 1976  
Agnes Moore - December 16  
William A. Loewner - December 16, 1980  
Simon Oestreicher - December 16, 1918  
Carl Ney - December 17, 1967  
Louis Hamburg - December 18  
Rhoda Mintzer - December 18  
Esther Derechinsky - December 21  
Sarah Rabinowitz - December 22  
Gladys Ney - December 22, 1984  
Rabbi Burton Padoll - December 22, 2004  
Albert H. Ash - December 23, 1946  
Nace Cohen - December 24  
Irma Nemoytin - December 24, 2018  
Theresa Hirsch - December 25, 1952  
Amelia L. Figgatt - December 26, 1980  
Mal Mintzer - December 26  
Joshua Rader Stein - December 26  
Annie Robinson - December 27, 1949  
Josephine Metzger - December 28, 1928  
Pearl Rachel Katzen - December 29  
Joseph Howard Rubin - December 29, 1988  
Eddie Ney - December 30, 1940  
Doris Kalman - December 30  
Bertha Hammer - December 30, 1957  
Lenora Myerberg - December 31, 1997  
Sarah Miller - December 31, 1989

# Recent Donations

*Bill & Leslie Ney – Yahrzeit, Anie Ney*  
*Ron Rubin – Mazel Tov Stephen Wright on his Bar-Mitzvah*  
*Ron Rubin – Mazel Tov Leo Goldberg on his Bar-Mitzvah*  
*Lenore Stallard – General Donation*  
*Michael & Nancy Clayman – Yahrzeit, Ruth Clayman*  
*Paula Max-Wright – Donation to Rabbi Discretionary Fund honoring Stephen Wright's Bar Mitzvah*  
*Susan & Shawn Dilles – Donation in thanks to Dan Bly for his wonderful book*  
*Rainer Vidale – General Donation*  
*Ron Rubin – Yahrzeits, Mona Weiss (sister); Joseph Howard Rubin (father)*  
*Bo & Sandi Rose – Donation in honor of the Bar Mitzvahs of Stephen Wright & Leo Goldberg*  
*Pamela Ungar – Yahrzeits, Ben Klein; Marge Klein*  
*Jeannette Ornstein – General Donation*  
*Heidi Lasser – Roof Fund Donation*

# Beth El Board

*Rabbi: Jeffrey Kurtz-Lendner*  
*President: Lester Mintzer*  
*Vice President: Carol Schepp*  
*Treasurer: Ron Rubin*  
*Recording Secretary: Phil Renick*  
*Corresponding Secretary: Ben Nissely*  
*Trustee: Lester Mintzer*  
*Trustee: Eric Rynar*  
*Trustee: Ron Ornstein*  
*Past President: Amanda Friss*  
*At large member: Leeanne Shepherd*  
*At large member: Gail Clemons*  
*Sisterhood President: Sherri Alt*  
*Men's Club President: Lester Mintzer*  
*Religious School Principal: Liz Webb*

# BETH EL CONGREGATION

## DECEMBER 2023

### ALL SERVICES LED BY RABBI AND LIVESTREAMED UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					01	02
					Shabbat Services Sponsored Oneg 7:30 pm	Torah Study 10:30 am Zoom
03	04	05	06	07	08	09
Religious School 9:30 am  Torah Tots 9:30 am	Men's Club Dinner 6:00 pm		Ethics Class 12:00 pm Zoom	Valley Interfaith Action Bridgewater Brethren Church 6:30 pm Details in Scoop  1st Night of Hannukah	Sisterhood Hannukah Dinner 6:00 pm Details in Flyer  Shabbat Services 7:30 pm 2nd Night of Hannukah	Torah Study 10:30 am Zoom   3rd Night of Hannukah
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Religious School 9:30 am  [Note: Hanukkah Dinner moved to 12/8/23]  4 <sup>th</sup> Night of Hannukah			Ethics Class 12:00 pm Zoom  7 <sup>th</sup> Night of Hannukah	Friendship House Ministries Spaghetti Meal Catholic Church Details in Scoop 8 <sup>th</sup> Night of Hannukah	Religious School Shabbat Services Sponsored Oneg 7:30 pm	Torah Study 10:30 am Zoom
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
NO Religious School			Ethics Class 12:00 pm Zoom  Open Doors, Serving Dinner @ Islamic Center (IASV)	Board Meeting 6:30 pm Also Zoom  Open Doors, Serving Breakfast & Dinner @ IASV	Shabbat Services 7:30 pm  Open Doors, Serving Breakfast @ IASV	Torah Study 10:30 am Zoom
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
NO Religious School			Ethics Class 12:00 pm Zoom  Open Doors, Serving Dinner @ IASV		Lay-led Services 7:30 pm No Livestream  Open Doors, Serving Breakfast @ IASV	Torah Study 10:30 am Zoom
31						
NO Religious School						



BETH EL SISTERHOOD

~~HANNUKAH~~

~~CHANNUKAH~~

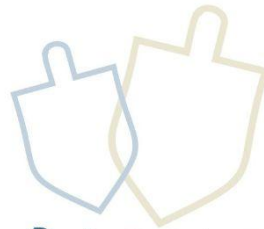
HANUKKAH?

DINNER AND FUNDRAISER

DECEMBER 8TH AT 6:00PM

BETH EL SOCIAL HALL  
SERVICES WILL START AT 7:30PM

Traditional Meal of  
vegetable soup,  
brisket,  
green beans w/almonds,  
applesauce, latkes,  
jelly doughnuts and  
more.



Gift Shop will be  
open

50/50 Raffle

Bring your menorah and  
candles. we will light  
them together



RSVP BY DECEMBER 1ST IN PERSON TO  
BETH EL OR BY MAIL  
(PO BOX 845, HARRISONBURG VA 22803)



Adults x \_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_ Children x \_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_

Pay by cash, check or venmo @Beth El Harrisonburg  
Sisterhood

SUGGESTED PRICE OF \$20 FOR ADULTS, \$10 FOR CHILDREN,  
6 AND UNDER FREE.