

January Bridge

Beth El Congregation

A Message from our Rabbi

Bridging the Divide in Troubling Times

By Rabbi Jeffrey Kurtz-Lendner

This is a difficult article to write and I usually don't like writing difficult articles. My problem is that I want to avoid conflict and it's important for me to discuss matters that bring people together, not divide us.

Some of you may have seen the DNR article about my conversations with leaders in the local Muslim community. Our congregation was invited to the Mosque as I spoke to the community there, and we will be looking to plan reciprocal events, inviting their community to participate with us and their Imam to speak to us.

I'm not sure it's wise to completely ignore the conflicts that come up in the world that divide us. This past October saw another conflict in the Middle East that became the

source of a sore point between members of different communities around us. I am certain that all of us have been troubled by these events, saddened by what we saw, heard or read in the news, and disheartened by the loss of life. We all share that. But I am also certain that if we try to have conversations with members of the Harrisonburg community we will find ourselves to be in disagreement with some.

One of the things I like to remind people is that despite the fact that sympathies may diverge, there is not really anything any of us can do about the decisions made by politicians and leaders in other parts of the world. I may have my primary sympathies, but that does not mean that I agree with everything the leaders are doing. And that does not mean that I don't have compassion for suffering on both sides. And while each of us can decide upon whom the primary blame falls, at the same time we can also find fault with the leaders on the side with whom we sympathize, leaders upon whom we have no influence.

But more important than that, I believe it is supremely important for our communities here in America to remain connected even

during times of trouble. My first job out of rabbinical school was as Rabbi at a college. In November of that year Israeli Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin was assassinated. There were two profound events that occurred personally during that time. One was an Algerian professor who came to visit me to tell me how much of a loss he believed it was for the world with his death. The second was that in our personal lives the babysitter for our daughter was an Egyptian Muslim woman. She came to babysit the next week and was telling us how sad she was for the loss of that Prime Minister.

Then, several years later, still at that college, we launched a discussion group among Jews and Muslims on campus. The leader of the Muslim group was a Palestinian American student. This group began meeting during the period of time when there was a great deal of violence between Israel and the Palestinians in the West Bank. I asked him how he could be working towards community conversations when he had family facing violence every day. He responded that this violence was the reason more than ever for communities not directly experiencing that violence to form relations with each other.

And finally, in 2006 I established the first ever Muslim Jewish conversation between our communities in the county where I lived in Louisiana. The first meeting had been scheduled for weeks and ended up taking place just days after the summer 2006 war began between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon. The local media became particularly interested in our conversations not merely because it was the first time ever in our county but because we did not cancel the meeting after the war broke out. And leaders on both sides said the same thing—communication is most important during times of conflict to keep our communities talking and finding commonalities during difficult times.

As I write my article I hope and pray for peace, tranquility and success for all of the parties who have been involved in the conflict. And while I have no influence over the leaders who make the decisions influencing the future of events in that part of the world, I can keep open the lines of communication here in Harrisonburg to encourage our communities to retain our friendships and lines of communications in good times as well as bad.

A Message from our President

I hope everyone had a great month and a happy and healthy New Year!

I feel that 2023 was a good year for our communal home. I hope that 2024 brings a year of happiness and good health to all of us.

I will continue to stress in the upcoming year that “it takes a village” for our temple to operate smoothly and that Beth El is our communal home. We all should be proud of our home and the impact we have on our community at large. Besides the Ashburns and the Rabbi, everyone else is a volunteer.

I hope that 2024 will be the year of volunteerism. I would like to see every congregant volunteer in one way or another to serve our community during the upcoming year. There are big jobs like volunteering to serve on our temple board or leading one of our many committees or smaller venues like volunteering to sponsor a Friday night Oneg. Our temple simply cannot succeed without your help. Volunteering comes in many ways. You can volunteer to serve on a committee or something as simple as volunteering to be part of our Friday night services by lighting

candles, by simply opening and closing the arc doors during our Torah service, or having the honor to recite an Aliyah during the Torah service. For everyone who currently volunteers to sponsor an oneg or in any other capacity, thank you. Please think about volunteering in 2024. There is always a need that you can fill.

My other hope is that every congregant will try to attend at least 4 Friday night services during the year and be part of our communal celebration of Shabbat. Bring the family. I will not be taking attendance or even keeping track of those who attend. We are a family and as such, we should welcome the chance to share in our weekly celebrations of Shabbat. I certainly hope to see you on Friday night as we welcome Shabbat. There is always an oneg following the service whether it is sponsored or simply a “mini oneg” of whatever is in the kitchen. I know many of you bring a small nosh to share for the non-sponsored onegs and I hope this continues throughout 2024.

Once again, I want to wish everyone a Happy New Year and hope that 2024 is the best year ever for you and our communal home.

Les Mintzer, President

January Yahrzeits

Bertha Hammer - January 01
Margaret Stein - January 01
Isadore Pfeffer - January 01
Dora Brill - January 01, 1966
Sadye Goldberger - January 01, 2007
Bertha Wise - January 02, 1887
Samuel Clayman - January 02, 1980
Eleanor Stoloff - January 02
Samuel Ney - January 03, 1902
Lester Kahn - January 03
Karen Vanderhoof - January 03, 2009
Mary Helbraun - January 04
Emma Hirsch Isaacs - January 05, 1962
Leopold Wise - January 06, 1885
Max Hirsch - January 06, 1955
Elsie K. Cohn - January 06
Richard Banker - January 06
Leonard Hirsch - January 08, 1909
Rosa Isaacs - January 08
Lillian Hamburg - January 08
Baby Spiro - January 09, 1917
Helen Rotkin Levinson - January 09, 1965
Shirley Baron - January 09
Paul Miller - January 10, 1944
Anna Weiss - January 10
Dee Goldstein - January 10, 2007
Pearl Loewner Gravely - January 11
Isadore Iseman - January 11, 1948
Verne Slater - January 11, 1934

Baby Klingstein - January 12, 1887
Elaine Schreiber - January 12, 2018
Bruno Stein - January 13
Gerald Greenfield - January 13
Rose Levine - January 14, 1992
Hulda Ney Iseman - January 15, 1960
Sam Weiss - January 15
Sadye Robinson - January 16, 1941
Beatrice Winoker - January 17
Marjorie Lichtenstein - January 17
Harry Weiss - January 19
Sophia Wurzberger - January 20, 1943
Beulah (Bootie) Klingstein - January 23
Fannie Wise - January 24, 1877
Nathan Gelman - January 24
Harry Clayman - January 25, 2007
Leroy Loewner - January 26, 1953
Henry Robinson - January 27, 1978
Iris Maxine Perkins - January 27
Abe B. Zindler Sr - January 28
Jay Funston - January 28, 1997
Joan E. Strauss - January 28, 2023
William Stein - January 29
Minnie Zindler Finger - January 29
Ruth Rogers - January 29, 2001
Vera Levine - January 30, 1998
Lessie Hirsch Baum - January 31, 1942
Shirley Goodman Saletan - January 31
Estelle Robinson - January 31, 2020

Recent Donations

Bill & Leslie Ney – Yahrzeit, Alfred Ney

Mona Wolf – Yahrzeit, Sophie Miller

Starr R. Johnson – In memory of Saul Joseph Robinson

Edward & Ellyn Goldberg – Donation to the Weinbach Religious School Fund

C & N Fruchter – Donation to the Dale Weinbach Educational Fund

Allan Poster – Yahrzeit, Edward Poster

Steve Stein (Realty Asset Management Inc.) – Donation for the Rabbi Discretionary Fund

Louis & Carol Schepp – Yahrzeit, Estelle Robinson

Sam Driver (from the estate of John and Nancy Stewart)

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

At large member: Dr. Rebecca Brannon

Sisterhood President: Sherri Alt

Men's Club President: Lester Mintzer

Religious School Principal: Liz Webb

BETH EL CONGREGATION

JANUARY 2024

**ALL SERVICES LED BY RABBI AND LIVESTREAMED
UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED
PLEASE CHECK WEEKLY SCOOP FOR ANY UPDATES**

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	01	02	03	04	05	06
	New Year's Day		Ethics Class 12:00 pm Zoom		Shabbat Services Sponsored Oneg 7:30 pm	Torah Study 10:30 am Zoom
07	08	09	10	11	12	13
Religious School 9:30 am Torah Tots 9:30 am			Ethics Class 12:00 pm Zoom		Shabbat Services 7:30 pm	Rabbi K-L out of town
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Religious School 9:30am Rabbi K-L out of town	MLK Day Rabbi K-L out of town	Rabbi K-L out of town	Rabbi K-L out of town	Rabbi K-L out of town	Shabbat Services Sponsored Oneg 7:30 pm	Torah Study 10:30 am Zoom
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Religious School 9:30 am			Ethics Class 12:00 pm Zoom	Board Meeting 6:30 pm Also Zoom	Shabbat Services 7:30 pm	Torah Study 10:30 am Zoom
28	29	30	31			
Religious School 9:30 am Tu B'shevat Seder Temple House of Israel, Staunton Details in Scoop			Ethics Class 12:00 pm Zoom			