

# Koleynu



December 2013—5774

Dear Friends,

“What do I do now? It’s December and Chanukah is almost over! What do I do for the rest of the month?! What happened to my “December Dilemma?” Chanukah’s so far away from Christmas I don’t know whether to be angry or relieved or nonplused. Tension and stress in the Jewish DNA isn’t it? Maybe I can keep doing extra days of Christmas so there’ll be some kind of conflict! Hey, if Christmas is completely separated from Chanukah this year, maybe no one will notice, or even care, if I do a little Christmas!”

The common proximity of Chanukah and Christmas usually makes the differences between “I Have a Little Dreidel” and Handel’s “Messiah” both stark and frustrating. We want the holiday of Chanukah to somehow “compete” with Christmas, to have thematics in common, something besides presents. After many years of struggle, we come to realize that Chanukah can’t compete with Christmas... and shouldn’t.

So *this* year is really an opportunity. We’ll finish celebrating Chanukah before the first week in December is through and then we can reposition ourselves and our attitude about Christmas. In some ways, I’ve had an interesting proximity to Christmas because of an internship I had when I was still training to be a rabbi and later when Temple Shir Shalom, before the merger that created Beth Shir Shalom, was in the basement of St. Bede’s Church.

The internship was with a congregation that was renting space from a church. That relationship had been going on for several years by the time I spent my year with them. When Christmas time arrived and the church began to decorate and do other kinds of preparations, I was a bit flummoxed. Rabbinical school has a tendency to limit one’s horizons. There was no class called “Being a Rabbi Renting Space from a Church during Christmastime.” Fortunately the rabbi and members of the congregation for which I was interning mentored me and modeled for me. I saw and heard them saying “Merry Christmas” to the pastor and members of the church, often accompanied by a merry-Christmas hug. Most importantly, it was *real*; it was *sincere*. The rabbi and synagogue members *really wanted* the minister and members of the church to have a *merry* Christmas.

*That* is our opportunity this year. *This* year, in particular, we have the opportunity to help our Christmas-celebrating neighbors celebrate their Christmas. In fact, we’ve created an opportunity for us all to do just that. We’re renewing a program from several years ago called “The Giving Tree.” Here’s how it works: In cooperation with Macedonia Baptist Church (our partners for Martin Luther King’s birthday weekend) we are going to purchasing small Christmas trees to give to those who otherwise couldn’t afford them. Then, we’ll infuse our celebration of Tu B’Shevat (the Jewish new year of the trees) into of our celebration of Dr. King’s birthday on Sunday the 20<sup>th</sup> at Macedonia and go around the neighborhood and help plant the trees! Please be a sponsor of one of the trees (see “Mitzvah of the Month”). Thanks for praying with your legs – and a shovel!



Rabbi Neil



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## Presidents' Message Mark Litvack

One of the things I like about writing my Koleynu article is it lets me introduce you to other people in our community. I write to tell you about two – Michael Stearn and Jude Kantor – each of whom add that special something to us.

First, I want to tell you about Michael. For years Michael has dedicated his time and talent to our community making many of our services – including our High Holy Day Services – more fulfilling by providing his musical talent to it. First as a TishTone, and now as a soloist, Michael has shared his talent for years. A few years ago Michael lost his wife, Judy, and took this sad event and turned it, to the extent humans can do so, in a way that allows good to come out of it. Let me tell you more.

Truly, our temple is one of the least expensive temples for members to join throughout West LA. However, even at the very modest dues and fees we charge, the burden is too great for some in our community – often because of a temporary change in their economic circumstances. Unfortunately, the losers in this are sometimes the children, because their family cannot afford to be a member of our community and/or cannot afford to send their children on those extra events that add to their religious education, like camp, retreats, NFTY conferences and trips to Israel. Though the Temple works with all such families, sometimes there remains a gap – a gap that Michael has lead a drive to fill. Specifically this man has started a fund, the Judy Stearn Memorial Scholarship Fund, to honor his wife and to help religious school and NFTY students whose families need a little financial help. For the last couple of years, the Judy Stearn Fund has helped students with trips to Israel, with NFTY conference registration fees, with JCA Shalom religious school retreats and most recently with help for school fees. On behalf of those children, and our community, I thank Michael and thought you should know about his generosity – his Tzedakah to our community.

The second person, Jude Kantor, is a special person in our community – who has repeatedly dedicated her time and her energy to our community. She (and her wonderfully warm husband) yearly donate their home to our community, inviting many a lucky one of us into their home and feeding us and feeding us and feeding us. Dayenu. For these efforts alone would have been enough. But this woman does not quite get that concept. She also supports two other programs. The first is Turning Point, a project of OPCC (Ocean Park Community

Center). Residents who were formally homeless can stay at Turning Point up to 9 months while they work on the problems which led them to the streets, find jobs, save money for housing and attend support meetings. The goal of Turning Point is to turn homeless peoples' lives around and create productive self-sufficient people..

Jude also supports brunch at the outpatient Aids clinic at County USC hospital. When a month contains five Thursdays (about 3 or 4 times a year) we prepare sandwiches the Wednesday night prior and serve them at the Outpatient Aids clinic in East LA on Thursday. Jude and her group meet at the temple kitchen at 7PM Wednesday and prepare sandwiches. It usually takes one to two hours depending on how many people volunteer. The following morning she loads the sandwiches and drives to County USC to serve brunch. Many of the outpatients are homeless so the sandwiches are very much appreciated.

I truly believe that we are a reflection of the people we keep company with. As a community we are a reflection of the people who are in our community. Michael and Jude make our congregation better – and rightfully prouder. I urge any and all of you to reach out to them to support them in their very worthy efforts. Donations can be made to the Judy Stearn Memorial Scholarship Fund. And if you'd like to learn how you can participate in Jude's feeding programs, call our office at [310.453.3361](tel:310.453.3361). As we reach the time of year when our days are shorter – as a community perhaps we can bring a little more light into the lives of others.



*Mike Stearn playing at an MLK Shabbat.*



## A note from Cantor Diane

I just finished a Biblical Hebrew textbook that teaches Hebrew through the study of the book of Genesis. I really had a terrific time working through this book. Truly. Once one understands what each word of the Hebrew means, and can read it in the original language, the stories really come to life. There is so much

anguish, love, pain, drama, deception, violence, fear, selfishness, giving, passion and redemption. And that's only in the first book!

The end of my Hebrew textbook offered passages about Joseph and his brothers. Joseph, the favorite son of Jacob, is now a very powerful man in Egypt after first being a slave and a prisoner. He interpreted the Pharaoh's dream correctly, and thus saved the people from famine. As you can imagine, he is now high up in the ranks of Egypt, a favorite of the Pharaoh... powerful, confident and strong.

Enter Joseph's brothers who, by the way, sold Joseph into slavery some years back because they thought he was arrogant, because he dreamed of ruling over them, and because he was their father's favorite son. Originally they were going to throw him into a pit and kill him, so selling him into slavery and telling their father he was eaten by a wild animal was an improvement! Of course, now in Egypt, the brothers weren't expecting to run into Joseph, and they certainly weren't expecting him to be a "father to Pharaoh." But he was. And they stood before him, in fear and in shock.

So, what do we have here? A typical dysfunctional family. The brothers are jealous of Joseph, and with good reason. How would you feel if one of your siblings was not only the serious favorite of your father, but he kept telling you about his dreams that implied that he would someday rule over you. Annoyed? Angry? I mean, Joseph was a little arrogant. He could have kept his dreams to himself, but he kept talking. Okay, but if you are jealous and annoyed and angry, does that give you the right to kill the guy? No. Does that give you the right to sell him? No. Does that give you the right to lie to your father? No. But still, we can sympathize with the feeling that someone else gets all of the "good stuff"... colored striped coats and what not. And guess what! In the end, Joseph's dreams were real! He did become a ruler. He just didn't have the social graces to keep that to himself or at least between him and his father. He had to blab about it and make it worse for himself... too arrogant to see why that would be painful for his brothers.

Okay, back to Egypt. The brothers are standing astonished before Joseph. Joseph is a seriously powerful dude now. Does he call for their

death? Nope. Sell them to slavery? Nope. Hit them? Scream at them? Claw at them? Nope, nope, nope. Joseph tells them not to be afraid, not to mourn the past. He tells them to come near, embraces them, and weeps. He let's them off the hook, saying that it was God who sent him to Egypt in order to save the people (and now his own family) from this famine. He tells them that they didn't sell him to slavery. God sent him into slavery so he could be in Egypt to preserve life.

Woah. That's not what I would do or say. He forgave them. He saw the positive in what had happened. He wanted his family back. He wanted to protect them and care for them. He saw the art and beauty of his winding path.

We all have families. Probably all with some level of dysfunction (after all, isn't dysfunction what actually makes us "normal"?). We are all part of communities (temple, school, office, book club). Aren't they also, on some level, families? And aren't they all a little dysfunctional, just like Joseph's family? The question is what we do with our family dynamics. If I believe I have been wronged by someone, do I have the guts to still show that person kindness and compassion? If someone "says the wrong thing," do I have the strength to address it with peace in my heart and resolution as the goal? If I watch another behave in a way I wouldn't behave myself, am I brave enough to approach that person with the best of intentions of figuring out why that action was taken and understand the full story? Am I aware enough to realize when it is me who was in the wrong?

The answer: Sometimes. Sometimes not.

I love when "heat" is translated as "anger" in the Torah. I wish for myself cooler internal temperatures so I can hear and see and interpret with kindness in my heart. I wish to go into situations remembering that everyone always believes he or she is trying to do what is best. I wish to stay cool enough to see my part in it. I wish that for you, too.



## *Invitations From the Rabbi*

Turkey or Latkes, just come Spin it off.....

### **First Annual Beth Shir Shalom Latke Burn at Revolution**

**December 1, 2013 at  
3:30 pm.**



**Friday, December 6**

**Shabbat is a Picnic at 5:30 pm**

**Followed by Shabbat Celebration for all  
6:30 pm.**

**Thursday, December 19**

**Book Club Chavurah**

**Potluck 6:30 pm**

**Discussion: 7:00 pm**

**"Huckleberry Finn" by Mark Twain.**

**Discussion will be led by Robert Ginsburg.**

**No need to have read the book.**

**All are welcomed!**

### **Winter Vacation**

**The ECC and JELLI are closed  
from**

**December 22, 2013 thru**

**January 4, 2014**

**JELLI resumes January 5**

**Josh Barzilai**

**Becomes a Bar Mitzvah**



**Saturday, December 7, 2013**

**4:00 pm.**



# Mitzvah of the Month

## Mitzvah of the Month – Times Two!

**Mitzvah #1 – The Giving Tree Project** – As mentioned in the rabbi’s column, we will be purchasing trees for families in surrounding neighborhood of Macedonia Baptist Church who can’t afford a tree of their own (and planting them on Sunday, January 20<sup>th</sup>!). The trees cost only \$18! Please purchase one. Our goal is 50 trees! Please make your check out to Beth Shir Shalom and write “Giving Tree Project” in the note space. Thanks for praying with your legs!



**Mitzvah #2** – Also in conjunction with Macedonia Church, we’re purchasing **Christmas turkeys** for distribution to those in need. Last year the church distributed over 500 Christmas dinners. Please help us contribute to this year’s effort! We’re asking for a donation of \$18. Once again, please make out your check to Beth Shir Shalom with “Christmas Turkeys” in the note space and thanks again for praying with your legs!



## Birthdays

David Lee  
 Andrew Rose  
 Sheri Stegall  
 Scott Choate  
 Susan Quentin-Gabrich  
 David Alper  
 Wendy Villarreal  
 Joshua Katzman  
 Ken Ohashi  
 Jim Bernstein  
 Bailey Field  
 Arlene Schneir  
 Ilsa Glanzberg  
 Arlene Garelick  
 Judy Wolfenstein  
 Elaine Armour  
 Susan Schuster Bacon  
 Howard Welinsky  
 Anne Grimaldo

Michael Miller  
 Barbara Siegel  
 Bob Packham  
 Julia Sevy-Biloon  
 Zelda Brown  
 Jude Kanter  
 Lillian Willis  
 Tanya Brooks Lopez  
 Bijan Cohenmehr  
 Peter Mezza  
 Brian Grossman  
 Rob Lempert  
 Michael Jaffa  
 Barbara Oisboid  
 Jefferson Schierbeek  
 Keetgi Steinberg  
 Anastacio Vigil  
 Toby Comess-Daniels  
 Marla Kraus



Danny Mordujovich  
 Suzanne Prince  
 David Aframian  
 Susan Fleischman  
 Ava Friedman  
 Nancy Martinez  
 Vadim Volovik  
 Hamid Hannani  
 Steve Wiener  
 Lizabeth Baker-Wade  
 Dr Leonard Rothman  
 Marlene Sadan  
 Lauren Devillier  
 Katherine Steinberg-Bluth  
 Reneé Diamond  
 Holly Ghilotti Sloop  
 Patti Oblath

## Anniversaries

David H. Weiss & Andrea Kahn  
 Lewis Roth & Karen Graham  
 Marvin Goodfriend & Tina Fasbender-Goodfriend  
 Irwin and Rachel Levin  
 Andrew & Nancy Wender

Jeffrey Jacobs & Joanne Altschuler  
 Alex & Irina Stavchanskiy  
 David & Susan Reznick  
 Nicholas & Tamami Rucka  
 Jim & Cheryl Rosenthal



# Temple Manager: Gaye Lowenstein



For those of you who attended this year's Muslim-Jewish Twinning, thank you! For those of you who didn't, you missed one of the most moving and seminal Beth Shir Shalom events of the year. The music, the camaraderie, the love, the communication, the understanding was all apparent and abundant.

This event is so profound and so moving because even though we have different beliefs and traditions, the 'core of our beings' are the same. Those who were present on Friday night know what I'm talking about. We shared a feeling, a sense of understanding and compassion that is sincerely lacking in our world today.

One of our Muslim friends, Jihad Turk, the previous Director of the Islamic Center, shared with us something of which I, along with most of the Jews present, was not aware. Did you know that the Muslims have a holiday called Ashura, in which they fast all day to commemorate the Exodus of the Jews out of Egypt? Yes, that is correct... the MUSLIMS celebrate OUR FREEDOM from bondage! How cool is that?

It really is special when you can put a person – a real person – in place of a 'label'. To know someone as Adila or Mohammed, Joseph or Sa-

rah and not 'Muslim' or 'Jew' is what makes this event and all interfaith events so important.

Thank you to Rabbi Neil and Cantor Diane who were even more amazing than usual in how they brought us all together through their beautiful music and words. They conveyed so eloquently the sense of 'Oneness' that all who were present couldn't help but feel proud to be part of the Beth Shir Shalom community.

Thank you to Alan Pick who spear-headed this event and shared his enthusiasm and joy during and after the service. Thank you to Ellie Schneir and Peter Mezza for sponsoring such a wonderful Oneg through the Matthew Mezza Memorial Fund. Although bitter-sweet, it is a wonderful way to share Matthew's vision of promoting dialogue and relationships between Muslims and Jews. Thank you to Joe Safier and Fern Avidon-Safier for all of your help in putting this event together. And again, thank you to our congregants who helped to make this an evening to remember!



## Marsha Newstat, Ecc Director

As December marks the end of the secular New Year, many people reflect on the past and make resolutions. I have already started the reflection process focusing on the question: Did I make a difference at Beth Shir Shalom Early Childhood Center? I am not thinking of the physical changes, such as The Gan & Outdoor Classroom and adding the Caterpillar and Geshar classrooms to our school.

Did I make a difference in the lives of our families and children are what I think about. We now offer an 18 month old Toddler program and a Transitional Kindergarten. We have attained NAEYC Accreditation for the last 10 years and are working on 5 more years; our philosophy is that children learn through play in our Developmental Pre School. We show respect for the child in many ways inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy. All of this looks easy, but it takes years of teacher training and parent education for it all to gel.

As I tell families on the tours I give: "We are standing in the Lobby of our Synagogue. What do you hear?" They always answer the same thing. "Happy sounds of children!" I also point out that they are not hearing children crying or loud voices of teachers.

This is not just a Pre School. It is also a community. So many of the children and families who started their journey at Beth Shir Shalom Early Childhood Center have continued on in our community and have become

B'nai Mitzvahs and joined Youth Group. Several of the Board Members through the years have come out of parents in the ECC.

So where are my reflections taking me? When I read the above and think about our school, it all comes down to one main reason it is so successful. That is THE TEACHERS! We have a very low turnover in staff. These are individuals who have dedicated their lives at this time to the betterment of children. The trainings, conferences, workshops and continuing education we offer allow our Teachers to be at the cutting edge of best practices for early childhood education.

To reflect is to also look forward. Although I will not be here next year, I am confident that our teachers will carry on the great tradition and reputation of BSS ECC. I think the most important gift I've given is RESPECT. Respect for the children, the families, the teachers and the Synagogue community. I look forward to 2014!



## December 6

Yetta Kraus  
Ludwig Pick  
Irving Yura  
Solomon Vogel  
Sara Blits  
Ida Foreman  
Bella Frankel  
Al Mann  
Emma Lakin Wain  
Jeannette Courey  
Gary Squier  
Emanuel M Stern  
Edward Bacon  
Harry Block  
William Davidson  
Arline Elliott  
Richard Gerendasy  
Sloto Larry  
Jean Ratner  
Frederick Weichman  
Joseph Bercun  
Herbert Willis

## December 13

Nousha Arabian  
Phillip Henry Wain  
Albert Haas  
Michael L Mann  
Sylvia Rosen  
Belle Gottfried  
Irving Schneider  
Jack Schulman  
Rosalind Schulweis  
Sonny" Shirley Rosenbaum"  
Simon Baker  
Athena Baker Bryan  
Fannie Kropman  
Reuben A. Solomon  
Esther Weiss  
Leonard Comess  
Clara Harris  
Edward Levenson  
Bobby Newmyer  
Pauline Stone  
Howard Thaler  
Fred Waldner  
Leonard Jenny

## December 20

Ghodsieh Hakim  
Manuel Manning  
Anna Monovitz  
Rae Katz Raymond  
Norman Davis  
Sadie Dworman  
Eugene Martin Grossman  
Mordechai Hasenfeld

Edward Jacobs  
Sylvan Katz  
Sam Malkin  
Eileen Molchen  
Leo Oblath  
Jack Spector  
Victor Wolfenstein  
Michael Blumenberg  
Rose Shifren Frank  
Lillian Gilbert  
Phillip Davis  
Celia Leimseider  
Jeffrey Neil Pierce  
Honora (Honey) Rapkin  
Paul Jay Diamond  
Morris Hendler  
Rose Pascal  
Isaak Stavchanskiy  
Lena Kenyon Azorin  
Albert Holman  
Morris Meyers  
Ethel Shulman  
Rose Ethel Silver  
Theresa Terris  
Morton Weinberg  
Gar Campbell  
Elaine Rosenbaum

## December 27

Selig Carlip  
Charles Epstein  
Edith Geller  
Helen Kassoff  
Louis Moot  
Samuel Nathan Sachs  
Bertha R Friedman  
Al Joachim Ritz  
Irving Sherman  
Rachel Beil  
Ida Goldstein-Kabakow  
Max Wasserman  
George Cooper  
Rev John Elliott  
Harry Frank  
Bertha Goldstein  
Theodore Paul Goldstein  
Gilbert  
Lillian Stone  
Jeanne Wasserman  
Sylvia Gross  
Esther Neiditch  
Beatrice Agnew  
Joseph Ellenbogen  
Pia Steinberg  
Dorothy Deckelbaum  
Lillian Rosenbaum  
Arlene Schnider

# Tributes

## Matthew Mezza Fund

Stearn, Mike

## Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Gartner, Barbara  
Bacon, Michael & Schuster Bacon, Susan  
In memory of Louis Schuster  
Nightengale, Helen  
In memory of Beatrice Nightengale  
Bacon, Michael & Schuster Bacon, Susan  
In memory of Irwin Weinstock

Oliva, Audrey & Tony

In memory of Elizabeth Hill

Rucka, Nicholas & Tamami

In honor of Officiating our Wedding

Marlane, Judith & Goldman, Ronald

In memory of Samuel Schlein

## Cantor's Discretionary Fund

Rucka, Nicholas & Tamami

In honor of Officiating our Wedding

## Tributes/Yahrzeits

Heller, Gloria

In honor of Nick & Tammami Wedding Vow Re-  
newal

Flieder, William & Naomi

In memory of Stanley Belkin

Cole, Janice

Oneg Sponsorship

Rothman, Juliet & Leonard

In memory of Daniel Maurice Rothman

Rothman, Juliet & Leonard

In memory of Maurice S. Rothman

Sonshine, Rena

In memory of Victor Sonshine

Ginsburg, Robert

In memory of Carol Rosenblum

Rothman, Juliet & Leonard

In memory of Joshua Hirsh Rothman

## Yizkor Fund

Comess-Daniels, Neil & Toby

## Two Special Funds You Should Know About

**The Judy Stearn Memorial Scholarship Fund** has money available for BethShirShalom religious school students and youth group members who need financial help in order to participate in youth group/ jewish educational /extracurricular programs, retreats and trips.

Please contact Gaye Lowenstein or Rabbi Neil to apply.

Matthew Mezza became a Bar Mitzvah at Beth Shir Shalom on June 6, 2009. He was an active member of the youth group and volunteered as an assistant in the religious school with the younger students. In honor of a life that ended much too early, his family has created the **Matthew Mezza Memorial Fund**. **The purpose of this fund is to support BSS's commitment to promote dialogue and relationships between Muslims and Jews.**

Remember our home:  
Beth Shir Shalom

# Year End Giving



1827 California Avenue  
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