



kehillath shalom newsletter

קהילת שלום

February 2023
Shevat/Adar 5783

 **RECONSTRUCTING
JUDAISM**
Deeply rooted. Boldly relevant.

Rabbi's Reflections

A Tree Grows

BY RABBI LINA ZERBARINI



I love Tu BiShevat.
It's about Spring
and
Mysticism
and
Trees.
What could be bad?

“Spring?”, you say, “but it’s February” (or sometimes, even, January)! Tu BiShevat is also about Israel, where winter is rainy and usually short. By this time, trees are beginning to blossom and the desert is beginning to bloom. A well-known Israeli Tu BiShevat song is *The Almond Trees are Blooming* ([listen to it here](#) with video of Israel bursting into spring, and [see the words here](#)). But even for us, here in New York, Tu BiShevat is a reminder that Spring will come. It’s often around the halfway point between solstice and equinox – and maybe that is not a coincidence. Earth-based traditions mark “cross-quarter” days, which fall between seasons: Imbolc is the second of February, as is Groundhog Day – also a spring-anticipating moment.

Tu BiShevat is mentioned first in Jewish tradition in the Mishnah, Tractate Rosh HaShanah:

Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:1

The four new years are: On the first of Nisan, the new year for the kings and for the festivals; On the first of Elul, the new year for the tithing of animals; Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Shimon say, on the first of Tishrei. On the first of Tishrei, the new year for years, for the Sabbatical years and for the Jubilee years and for the planting and for the vegetables. On the first of Shevat, the new year for the trees according to the words of the House of Shammai; The House of Hillel says, on the fifteenth thereof.

The new year for trees – this is essentially a tax day in ancient agricultural society. People were required to offer a percentage of their harvest after the tree was three years old, so they needed to mark the age of the trees. It probably made it easier to give all trees one “birthday” for the year.

Just as Christian holidays were layered onto Imbolc in Europe, perhaps Tu BiShevat was placed

(Continued on page 2)

One link, One Meeting ID#, for MOST KSS meetings!

Meeting ID#: 882 6522 6225

Password: 046 425

By Phone: 1 646 558 8656

or click this link:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88265226225?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88265226225?pwd=MoZVcHRWEZjeElod1VNajJ6UlnzUT09)

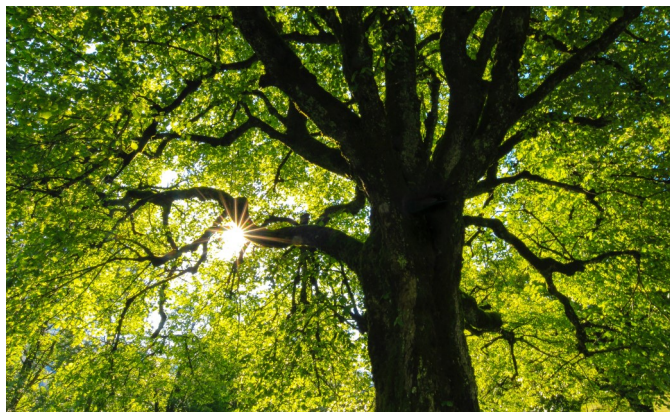
[pwd=MoZVcHRWEZjeElod1VNajJ6UlnzUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88265226225?pwd=MoZVcHRWEZjeElod1VNajJ6UlnzUT09)

A Tree Grows

(Continued from page 1)

here because of its place in the seasonal calendar.

Tu BiShevat evolved (like everything else). In the 1500s, the kabbalists of Safed understood the tree to be a symbol of life itself and of the Divine (which is the same thing). It was they who created the Tu BiShevat Seder, modeled on the Passover Seder, but structured around the seasons and around the fruit of the tree. Each type of fruit has its own spiritual significance, and our conscious eating of it is transformative – of us, of God, and of the earth itself. I am moved by their belief in the possibility of human



impact on the world – for good. What if I *really* believed that my intentions, my prayers, my consciousness made a difference? Kabbalah is the term for Jewish mysticism. Mysticism is the belief that everything is connected within Divine wholeness. Our thoughts and actions are a part of the

whole. Tu BiShevat reminds me both of my responsibility and my possibility.

And...trees! Trees are beautiful, nourishing and keep us alive. It is a wonderful opportunity to really consider them and our relationship with them. We use trees as commodities – paper, lum-

ber, food, medicine, etc. – but they actually keep us alive through the oxygen they release. And in recent years, we have learned that they communicate with each other and may be communal beings. This sounds a lot like the mysticism of the connection of all things.

The fifteenth of the month of Shevat will be

on the evening of February 5th and the day of the 6th. We will celebrate Tu BiShevat with our annual Seder on **Shabbat morning, February 4th at 10 am**. Please join us as we explore Spring and Mysticism and Trees! ❖

A close-up photograph of a tree trunk and branches with green leaves. The text is overlaid on the image.

Tu BiShevat Seder

Tu BiShevat is: Trees
Tu BiShevat is: the Environment
Tu BiShevat is: Israel
Tu BiShevat is: New Life
Tu BiShevat is: Fruit of the Tree and Fruit of the Vine

Tu BiShevat Service & Seder
Shabbat, February 4@10 am

Tu B'Av -- An Alternative to Valentine's Day

BY BEVERLY MANNIX

Last year, when I wrote my February article for our newsletter, I focused on how February is the shortest month with the most holidays. This year I would like to comment on the “Hallmark” holiday of Valentine’s Day.

So, who was Saint Valentine? There were actually at least three saints by that name, all of whom were martyred. The Valentine for whom the day is named is believed to have been a priest in third century Rome. Legend says that when Claudius II outlawed marriage for young men, he was hoping to groom better soldiers. Valentine continued to perform marriages in secret. When he was discovered, he was put to death. Given its Roman roots, it is not surprising that the icon of Valentine’s Day is Cupid. Cupid is the son of Venus, the Roman goddess of love.

Most folks view this holiday as an opportunity to express their love to someone close to them, buy gifts, such as flowers, jewelry, lingerie, candy, and stuffed animals. Sending cards has become a large part of Valentine’s Day, thus the reason I call it a Hallmark holiday.

Technically it is not a Jewish holiday and many orthodox and conservative Jews would not even think about celebrating it in any way. But what’s the Torah’s alternative to Valentine’s Day?

The Gemara tells us that one of the most important and happiest days in the Jewish calendar is the 15th of Av (or “Tu B’Av”). This is the night of a full moon, which in many ancient and modern cultures is associated with romance, love, and fertility. So, what happened on that day? A number of joyous things occurred on Tu B’Av, in stark contrast to the tragedies of Tish’a B’Av, the 9th of Av.

In the Torah portion of *Pinchas*, we are told that the daughters of Tzelafchad complained to Moses that the daughters of a man with no sons did not appear to have inheritance rights. God replied to Moses that the daughters would have inheritance rights, but only if they married men

from the same Tribe. (This ensured that land belonging to one Tribe of Israel would not be inherited by another Tribe.) This restriction on the dating pool was lifted after the Jews were settled in Israel. The date it was lifted was the 15th of Av.

In the time of the Judges, a man and a woman traveling in the area occupied by the Tribe of Benjamin were accosted by the locals in a manner identical to the way the inhabitants of Sodom had acted. The woman was abused and killed by men from the Tribe of Benjamin, resulting in a civil war. The other Tribes of Israel did not permit their daughters to marry men from the Tribe of Benjamin. But the matter was settled and the ban was lifted on the 15th of Av.

How was the 15th of Av celebrated? On that day unmarried girls would put on white dresses borrowed from one another. This way, people would not focus on the girls’ financial means, as nobody knew whose dress belong to whom. The girls would dance and they would call out to the young men not to look at their physical beauty, but at their character and upbringing.

They would quote the verse from *Proverbs* (31:30), “Grace is false and beauty is meaningless; a woman who is dedicated to G-d is the one to praise.” This verse is part of the “Woman of Valor” passage, *Proverbs* 31:10-31. Even though Tu B’Av is not known by many Jews, it is still a holiday today.

There are numerous Jewish quotes extolling views of love, marriage, and companionship. Here a few that I would like to share with you.

Gravitation is not responsible for people falling in love. – Albert Einstein

It is not good for man to be alone. – *Genesis* 2:18

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife and they shall become one flesh. – *Genesis* 2:26

A person should always be careful about

(Continued on page 4)



Tu' B Av — An Alternative to Valentine's Day

(Continued from page 3)

the honor of his wife, for blessing is found in a person's home only due to his wife – *Talmud, Bava Metzia 59a*

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your love is better than wine. – King Solomon, *Song of Songs 1:2*

If a person has known love, has felt and given love, that person's life has made a difference – Harold S. Kushner, *Living a Life that Matters*

When a man buys his wife fine clothes and jewelry, he should have in mind that he is beautifying the Divine Presence, represented in this world by none other than his wife. – Rabbi Yeshaya Horowitz

You can't force anyone to love you or lend you money. – Jewish Proverb

I am for my beloved, and my beloved is for me. – King Solomon, *Song of Songs, 2:16*

A man should eat and drink less than his means, clothe himself according to his means, and honor his wife and children beyond his means. – *Talmud, Chullin 84b*

Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, 'I will

work for you seven years... So Jacob worked seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him a few days because of his love for her. – *Genesis 29:18-20*

"Love your neighbor as yourself" (*Leviticus 19:18*) – **this is a fundamental principle in the Torah.** – (Rashi quoting Rabbi Akiva on *Leviticus 19:18*)

The real opposite of love is not hate, but indifference. – Elie Wiesel

Love is many things, none of them logical. – William Goldman, *The Princess Bride*

Love is space and time measured by the heart. – Marcel Proust

What has God been doing after creating the world in six days? The Holy One has been making matches. – Rabbi Yose bar Halafta

So should we Jews celebrate Valentine's Day on February 14th? That is for ancient Romans, Catholics, and greeting card companies. If you want a holiday that celebrates authentic Jewish concepts of love, celebrate Tu B'Av this year on August 2nd. ❖

KSS WANTS YOU!

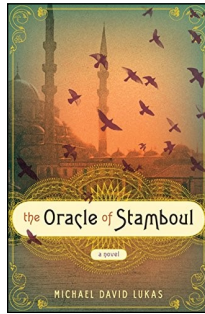
We are seeking volunteers for all of our committees. Whether you have been a member for many years, or have just joined us recently, we can use your help in many different capacities to ensure Kehillath Shalom meets all of our members' needs. Would you like to be a part of our board? We currently need a Recording Secretary to finish out this year until July 31, 2023. Longevity is not required. If you have ideas about rituals, including Shabbat services and holidays, fundraising, and the operation and security of the building, your assistance would be greatly appreciated. Other committees include Membership, Programming, and Torah School. We also have a Committee for Racial Justice, and Israel Connections and Jewish Affairs. As it has been said, "It takes a village," or in this case a congregation. Feel free to contact Bev (631-806-5124, bevydc@aol.com) or Gail (516-508-1978, GailatKSS@gmail.com). We would love to hear from you.



bagels & books

Our January selection, *The Choice*, by Edith Eva Eger, received mostly high marks from our readers. Described as “a cross between a Holocaust memoir and a psychological self-help book,” it touched many of us in different ways and provided much to relate to.

Our February 19 selection is *The Oracle of Stamboul*, by Michael David Lukas. In this magical tale of loss, love, and redemption, Lukas delightfully captures a young girl’s awakening curiosity about the world around her, her joyous discovery of the books and reading that transport her to other worlds, and her coming of age in the turbulent times of the late 19th century Ottoman Empire.



For the rest of the year, we will read:

March 19 — *Plunder: A Memoir of Family Property and Nazi Treasure*, by Menachem Kaiser

April 16 — *The Other Einstein*, by Heather Terrell

May 21 — *The Vanished Collection*, by Pauline Baer de Perignon

June 25 — *A Bend in the Stars*, by Rachel Bar- enbaum

As of this writing, we are undecided as to whether we will be in person or Zooming, so be sure to watch TWAKS and email for info. ❖



AmazonSmile to Be Discontinued

Amazon has decided to discontinue AmazonSmile, the charitable giving program through which Amazon donated a tiny percentage of your purchases to KSS (or your designated charity, which we hope was KSS). They will be giving each enrolled charity a donation equal to one-quarter of last year’s earnings, and purchases through February 20 will accrue earnings as before. Then the program will end.

We thank all our members and friends who supported KSS through AmazonSmile for the past few years, and hope you will continue your support however possible. ❖

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Do You Zelle?

KSS can now receive payments through Zelle, the quick, convenient, no-fee online payment system used by Bank of America, Capital One, Chase, Citi, and many other banks.

Make donations, pay for special events, pay dues — no checks, no stamps, no fees. Log into your bank account, find Zelle, and send to kehillathshalom@optonline.net.

Note: Do NOT Zelle to the office phone! It won't work!

Easy as aleph, bet, gimel! ❖

The Gifts Received

GENERAL FUND

LOIS HASS, in memory of DOTTIE MACMILLAN

AUDREY TEICH, in memory of DOTTIE MACMILLAN

LOIS LEWI

BEVERLY MANNIX, in honor of the Bat Mitzvah of TALIA AGUIRRE

KATHY & MIKE SOLOMOWITZ, in memory of his grandfather, DAVID NATHANSON

VICKI & DAVID SCHWARTZ, in memory of DOTTIE MACMILLAN

JEFF NECKONOFF

BEVERLY MANNIX, in memory of DOTTIE MACMILLAN

JUDY DAVIS & MORT KISSEN, in loving memory of daughter JENNIFER KISSEN

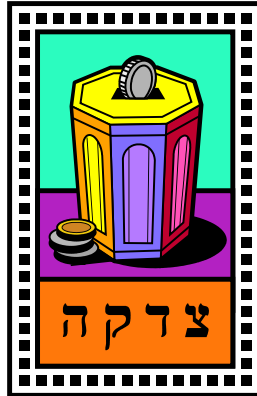
BUILDING & LANDSCAPING

DOLORES WEINBERG

Special thanks to Dolores for her very generous gift!

RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

JANE KÜNSTLER & CLIFF BROFFMAN



Committee on Racial Justice

An update (with thanks to Rabbi Lina):

On November 17, 2022, at a congregational meeting, KSS voted to approve Reconstructing Judaism's Resolution on Reparations. Ileen Koenig, KSS's representative at the Plenum, the movement body that represents the voices of affiliated synagogues, joined with 46 other congregations to approve the resolution at the Plenum's December meeting. No congregations voted to not approve; there were twelve abstentions. (Most of the abstentions were from synagogues with bylaws prohibiting the taking of stands on political issues.)

The Board of Governors of Reconstructing Judaism reviewed the Resolution, as well as comments and questions that arose during the discussion, and then voted to approve it on January 22. See [here](#) for details on the Resolution and the process that led to its adoption.

What's next?

Save the Date – **Tuesday, March 23 at 7:30**, join us by Zoom for a panel discussion featuring our member Hedva Lewittes, Rabbi Ariel Naveh from Bend the Arc, and other guests to be announced. The topic: "What are we really talking about when we talk about crime?"

Hope to see you there. ❖



**Nedaber Ivrit!
Let's Speak Hebrew!**



**Conversational Hebrew group forming
All levels welcome**

**Contact Dinah if you would like to participate
dinahmark4@gmail.com**

Wednesdays @ 1 pm in person only

SHABBAT SERVICES

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3

Soup Shabbat 6:30 pm

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4

Tu BiShevat Seder 10 am

Torah Portion: *B'shalach, Exodus 13:17-17:16*

The parting of the Sea of Reeds. The *Song of the Sea*. God provides manna, including double portions for Shabbat.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Candlelighting on Zoom 6:30 pm

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Torah Study (Prophets) 10 am

Tefilah 11:15 am

Learners' Service

Torah Portion: *Yitro, Exodus 18:1-20:23*

Moses sets up a system for settling disputes, relieving himself of some of the burden of moral guardianship. The Israelites arrive at Sinai. God tells Moses and Aaron to ascend the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Welcoming Shabbat Service 6:30 pm

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Torah Study (Prophets) 10 am

Tefilah 11:15 am

Torah Portion: *Mishpatim, Exodus 21:1-24:18*

Moses ascends Sinai, spending forty days and nights there, and receiving the law. Many important laws are mentioned in this section and the holidays of Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot are established.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24

Candlelighting on Zoom 6:30 pm

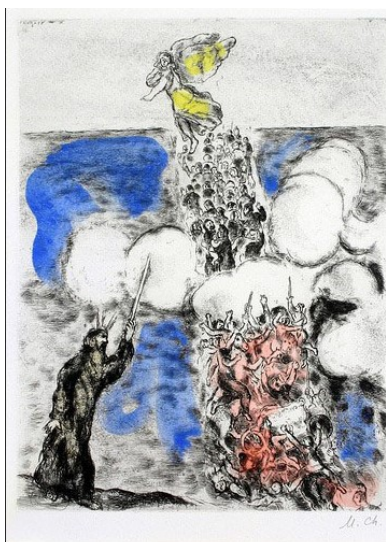
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25

Torah Study (Prophets) 10 am

Meditation Service 11:15 am

Torah Portion: *Terumah, Exodus 25:1-27:19*

God orders the building of a temple to hold the Ten Commandments and gives detailed instructions for it. ❖



The Crossing of the Red Sea,
Marc Chagall, 1958

**How does
Moses make
his tea?**

Hebrews it.

Lunch & Learn

**Jewish Humor:
From Then to Now**

Begins 2.9.23@12:30 by Zoom





Meet our Neighbors! Kehillath Shalom & Masjid Noor Sunday, February 12@11 am

Stranger/Sister is the story of two ordinary women, one Muslim and one Jewish who dare to believe they can join hands to stop the wave of white supremacist hate surging across the US. With both their communities threatened, they overcome a long history of distrust between their two religions, and build a movement that turns strangers into sisters. Intimately following women from Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom chapters in Austin, Chicago and across the Nation, the Sisters build a powerful network of hope in a time of chaos and hate, challenging our assumptions about how to fight hate in America and perhaps around the globe.

Now, with horrific violence unfolding in the Middle East, the bonds of Sisterhood are being tested, but that is why the filmmakers and the Sisterhood themselves think that the core values of the movement are essential and provide a model for courage and engagement to communities everywhere.



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sarayasmine@hotmail.com



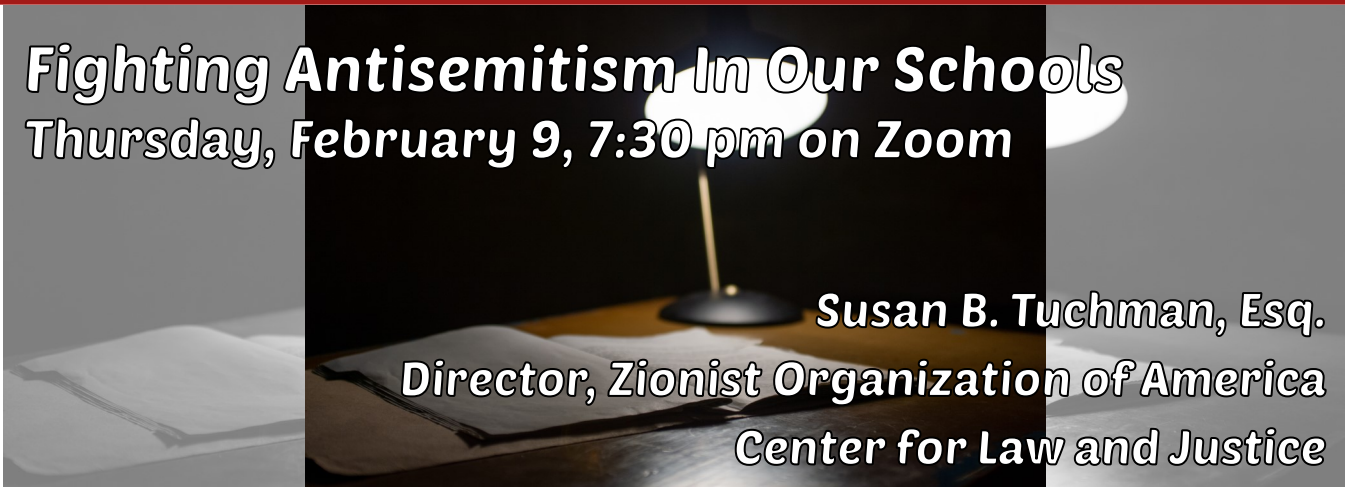
A second gathering with our Muslim neighbors.

Film screening and discussion of *Stranger/Sister*, about the development of the movement of the Sisterhood of Shalom/Salaam.

RSVP to rabi@kehillathshalomsynagogue.org for location.

Sunday, February 12, 11 am

Fighting Antisemitism In Our Schools Thursday, February 9, 7:30 pm on Zoom



Susan B. Tuchman, Esq.
Director, Zionist Organization of America
Center for Law and Justice

We all know that antisemitism is rampaging through our colleges and universities, disrupting our children's educational experiences.

On this evening we will hear from Susan B. Tuchman, Esq., Director of the Zionist Organization of America's Center for Law and Justice. *The Jewish Forward* newspaper named Susan one of the "50 most influential members of the Jewish community" based on her legal work on behalf of Jewish college students.

Susan will discuss the problems that many Jewish students are facing in their schools and on their college campuses, and how, after a six-year battle led by the ZOA, Jewish students are now protected from antisemitic harassment and intimidation under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. ❖

The MEGILLAH of OZ

Monday, March 6
6:30 pm



MOVIES & MUNCHIES

The Cakemaker

Wednesday, February 15

7:30 pm

On Zoom

The Cakemaker, Israeli-born filmmaker Ofir Raul Graizer's 2017 debut, is the moving story of a Berlin pastry chef named Thomas. Barriers are broken as the film explores themes of sexual identity and religion. *The Cakemaker* segues from a love story to a mystery regarding Thomas' secret past. Israeli life today, including the friction between religious and non-religious Jews, is carefully and sensitively explored, as are the differing ways that Israelis interact with a German in their midst. Winner of eighteen prestigious film festival awards, *The Cakemaker* is "... a tale of emotional journeys and trials and the challenge of starting anew after tragedy." Log-on info to follow; watch TWAKS and your email.

Watch the trailer [here](#).

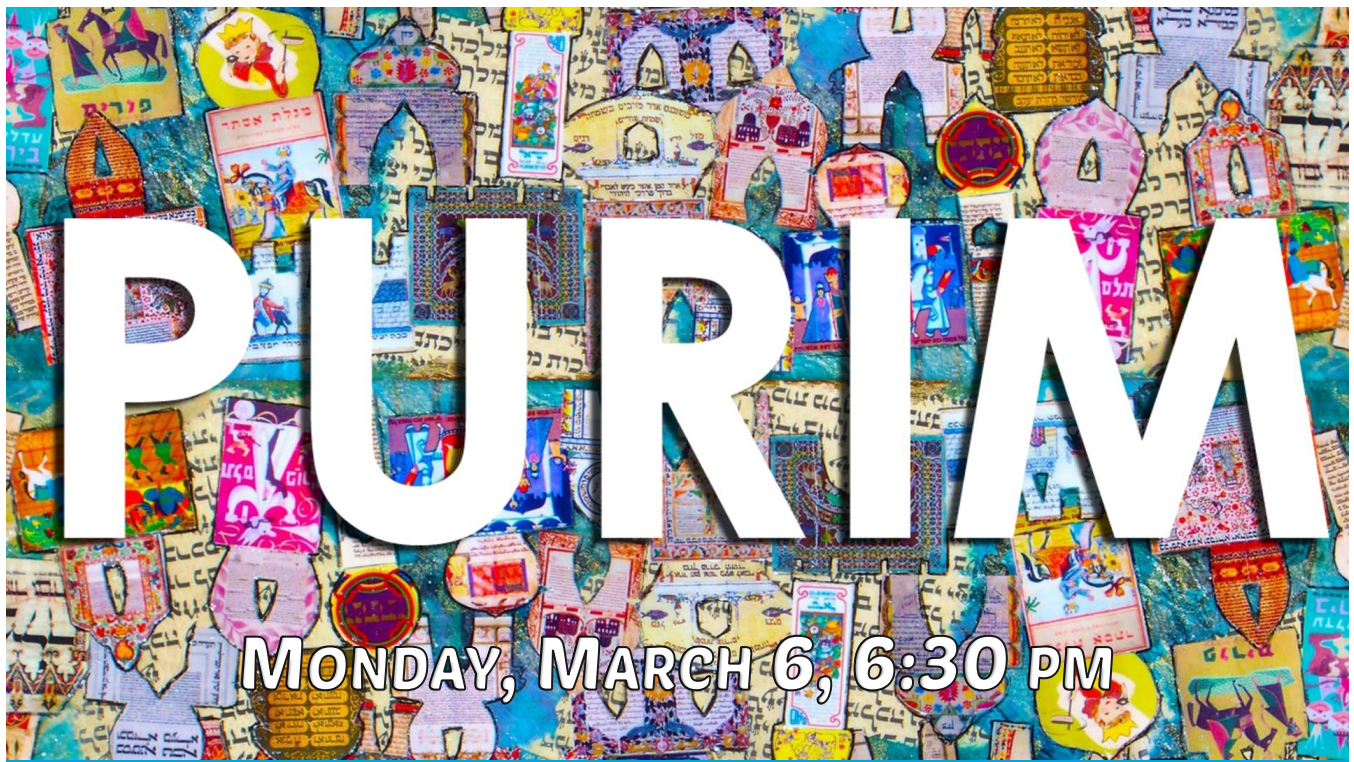
The DVD is available in Nassau and Suffolk county libraries, and also for purchase for \$2.99 on Amazon. Watch at home at your convenience and then join us on Wednesday, February 15 at 7:30 pm for our discussion.

RSVP LoisH4@aol.com, 516-364-0265 or DoloresW324@aol.com, 631-643-2645. ❖



MLK Weekend: "Ruth and the Green Book" And Making Lunch for Helping Hands





PURIM

MONDAY, MARCH 6, 6:30 PM

Celebrate the holiday with pizza, crafts, silly service, Megillah reading, songs, a Purimspiel led by our families, and, of course, hamantaschen for all.

RSVP to rabbi@kehillathshalomsynagogue.org
by Friday, March 3.

Soup Shabbat 2.17.23@6:30



**Conversation, challah
friendship & song**

The Israel and Jewish Affairs Committee Presents
A Series of Forums and Discussions
THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL



Memories After My Death: The Story of My Father, Joseph "Tommy" Lapid, by Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid
SUNDAY, November 20, 10 am

Joint Session with **bagels & books**

Israel and the Middle East: What American Media Don't Tell You
Saturday, December 17, Services at 10 am, Forum at 11:15 am

A Special Forum from the Israeli American Council (IAC) Summit 2023 in Austin , TX
Saturday, January 21, Services at 10 am, Forum at 11:15 am

Update and Report from Israel and the Middle East
Saturday, March 25, Services at 10 am, Forum at 11:15 am

Ten Years of Forums: What We've Learned and What's Next
Saturday, April 29, Services at 10 am, Forum at 11:15 am

Moderated by Kehillath Shalom member Nissim Yeheskel, Israeli native and frequent visitor.

Rosh Chodesh: Welcoming the Month of Adar!

Jewish Women's Humor

Sunday, February 19 @ 10 am

Welcoming the Month of Adar!

When Adar begins, joy increases!

We will discuss and share Jewish women's humor. Bring your best jokes!

RSVP to rabbi@kehillathshalomsynagogue.org for location.

COMMITTEES AND CONTACTS

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SUBCOMMITTEE OF SOCIAL ACTION

If you would like to know more about a particular committee — what it does, how much time it entails, or anything else — please contact the people above. Asking for more information does not commit you to anything! But it could lead to a rewarding experience, working with others to strengthen and grow our community. ❖

Let's Light Candles Together



Friday evenings, 6:30

(When nothing else is scheduled)

We'll share, sing, and bring Shabbat peace.

Join Zoom Meeting by computer:

<https://zoom.us/j/88265226225>

Or Phone: +1 646 558 8656

Meeting ID: 882 6522 6225,
Password 046 425

We will learn, study, share, pray.
As usual, come for Torah Study or Service or Both!

Join Zoom Meeting by computer:
<https://zoom.us/j/88265226225>

Or phone: +1 646 558 8656

Meeting ID: 882 6522 6225,
Password 046 425

Kehillath Shalom Synagogue



**Shabbat Morning
Torah Study 10 am
Service 11:15 am**

Morning Gathering Stillness, Meditation, Blessings

Morning Gathering: Tuesday & Friday Mornings at 8 am
Establish a strong, centered, calm foundation for the day.
Join Zoom Meeting by computer <https://zoom.us/j/788752335>
or by phone: 1 646 558 8656 US (New York)
Meeting ID: 882 6522 6225, Password 046 425



February 2023

Shevat/Adar 5783



Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

1



2



3



4



Conversational Hebrew with Dinah 1 pm

Lunch & Learn Torah of the Mothers 12:30 pm

Candlelighting 6:30 pm on Zoom

Tu BiShevat Seder 10 am

4:55

5

6

7

8



9



11



Conversational Hebrew with Dinah 1 pm

Lunch & Learn Jewish Humor 12:30 pm
Fighting Antisemitism in Schools 7:30 pm

Candlelighting 6:30 pm on Zoom

Torah Study 10 am
Tefilah 11:15 am
Learners' Service (Religion & Science Week)

5:04

12



13

14



15



16



17



18



Stranger/Sister With Masjid Noor 11 am

Board Meeting 7:30 pm

Movies & Munchies *The Cakemaker* 7:30 pm
Conversational Hebrew with Dinah 1 pm

Lunch & Learn Jewish Humor 12:30 pm

Soup Shabbat 6:30 pm

Torah Study 10 am
Tefilah 11:15 am

5:12

19



20



21

22



23



24



25



Bagels & Books *The Oracle of Stamboul* 10 am
Rosh Chodesh Group 10 am

Presidents Day

Conversational Hebrew with Dinah 1 pm

Lunch & Learn Jewish Humor 12:30 pm

Candlelighting 6:30 pm on Zoom

Torah Study 10 am
Tefilah 11:15 am
Meditation Service

5:20

26

27

28

1



2



3



4



Conversational Hebrew with Dinah 1 pm

Lunch & Learn Jewish Humor 12:30 pm

Candlelighting 6:30 pm on Zoom

Torah Study 10 am
Tefilah 11:15 am
Learners' Service

5:29

5

6



7

8



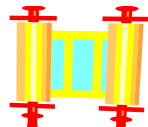
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10



11



Purim Service and Celebration 6:30 pm

Conversational Hebrew with Dinah 1 pm

Lunch & Learn Jewish Humor 12:30 pm

Candlelighting 6:30 pm on Zoom

Torah Study 10 am
Tefilah 11:15 am

5:36