



# kehillath shalom newsletter

# קהילת שלום



RECONSTRUCTING  
JUDAISM  
Deeply rooted. Boldly relevant.

January 2024  
Tevet/Shevat 5784

## Rabbi's Reflections

# Charity and Justice

BY RABBI LINA ZERBARINI



A parable:

Two people are walking by a river when they notice babies floating down the river. One runs to the bank and starts grabbing the babies out of the river, while the other runs upstream.

The first asks, "Where are you going?! I need your help to save these babies!" and the other replies, "I'm going to stop whoever's throwing babies in the river."

This is a tale of charity and justice.

Charity cares for the babies in the river – pulls them out, dries them, clothes them, feeds them, comforts them.

Justice stops babies from ending up in the river in the first place.

The word "charity" is derived from the Latin word "caritas" meaning love, fondness, and caring. These are much needed qualities, and the grounds of many of our faith traditions. The Hebrew Bible says: love your neighbor as yourself (Lev. 19:18).

But a discussion in the Talmud (*Jerusalem*

*Talmud Nedarim 9:4:2-4*) debates whether this is the most important verse in the Torah. Rabbi Akiiva says it is, but Ben Azzai quotes a different one, from Genesis, that begins: "these are the descendants of Adam." That sounds very prosaic – how could that be more important than "love your neighbor as yourself"?

**The Hebrew Bible as a whole is about creating a just society. It is not as much about individual behavior.**

Ben Azzai is pointing to another value: this verse underlines that we are all the descendants of the very first human being, and so both equal and related. We can invent no hierarchy as we all come from the same source.

might feel it or  
foundation for justice.

Love is a feeling, and one might not. Equality is a foundation for justice.

We use the word *tzedakah* when we make donations; we say we give *tzedakah*, or tell our students to bring in money for *tzedakah*. *Tzedakah* is derived from *tzedek*, meaning justice.

The difference in these words suggests something significant in intent: charity is about the motivation of the giver; *tzedakah* is about how society should be.

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**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=MoZVcHRWEZjeElod1VNaJ6UINzUT09)**

**[pwd=MoZVcHRWEZjeElod1VNaJ6UINzUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88265226225?pwd=MoZVcHRWEZjeElod1VNaJ6UINzUT09)**

# Charity and Justice

(Continued from page 1)

The Hebrew Bible as a whole is about creating a just society. It is not as much about individual behavior. I understand the heart of the text, the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, as a kind of constitution. While the book of Genesis is about family stories, Exodus begins with the liberation of a community and its transformation into a people. The rest of it is about what kind of society this people should create.

As my colleague and teacher Rabbi Sidney Schwarz wrote,

Jewish existence was to be based on bringing *tzedek* and *mishpat*, righteousness and justice, to all God's children. The covenant forged at Sinai committed the Jewish people to a life of ethics and values. It was the spiritual/moral genesis of the Jewish people, and it was powerfully connected to the Jewish people's understanding of what God wants of them. The Torah's teachings about acting with compassion (*chesed*), protecting the stranger in one's midst (*ahavat ger*), and pursuing peace (*shalom*) and truth (*emet*) shaped the Jewish notion of how one should live in the world. Sinai consciousness is at the root of the Jewish understanding that to live true to the covenant that God established with the Jewish people at Sinai is to live a life of social responsibility. ("Can Social Justice Save the American Jewish Soul?", *Judaism, Justice, and American Life*, p. 4-5)

When the Torah says: "Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that Adonai your God is giving you," it's not speaking to an individual. The *people* are going into the Promised Land and will only thrive if they pursue justice.

Many people think that religion is about personal behavior, but it's really about community and society.

I'm a staunch advocate for the separation of church and state. This means that the state shall not establish a particular religion or promote or inhibit religion. But that is not to say that our values should be practiced only on our Sabbaths and

behind the closed doors of our congregations or in the privacy of our homes.

My faith gives me a mission, which is, as our liturgy guides us at the end of every single prayer service, which is three times a day, to repair the world through divine sovereignty.

We understand that the world we live in is broken – and always has been, since the beginning. As human beings, created in the image and likeness of the Divine, which doesn't mean that God looks like us, but that we have the capability of creativity, to partner with God in creation. To create a just world.

It has been said that the measure of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. Jewish tradition holds up one community as particularly evil. So much so, that it was destroyed in a hail of fire and brimstone. Perhaps you've heard of Sodom?

But it wasn't destroyed for the reason most think. Rabbinic legends about Sodom describe an area of unusual natural resources, precious stones, silver and gold. Every path in Sodom, say the sag-

***The rabbis held up Sodom as what not to be. And I fear that we are not far from Sodom.***

es, was lined with seven rows of fruit trees. Eager to keep their great wealth for themselves, and suspicious of outsiders' desires to share in it, the residents of Sodom agreed to overturn the ancient law of hospitality to wayfarers. They even passed

legislation prohibiting giving charity to anyone.

One legend claims that when a beggar would wander into Sodom, the people would mark their names on their coins and give him a *dinar*. But then, no one would sell him bread. When he perished of hunger, everyone would come and claim his coin.

And there was once a maiden who secretly carried bread out to a poor person in the street in her water pitcher. After three days passed and the man didn't die, the maiden was discovered. The townsfolk covered the girl with honey and put her atop the city walls, leaving her for the bees. Hers was the cry that came up to God, the cry that inaugurated the angelic visit described in Genesis and its destruction.

The rabbis held up Sodom as what not to be. And I fear that we are not far from Sodom. A rab-

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# Charity and Justice

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binic text describes four temperaments among people: the one who says “what is mine is mine, and what is yours is yours”—that’s an [average] temperament. And there are some who say that is the temperament of Sodom (*Avot 5:10*).

That is certainly true nationally, when the legislation of Sodom is literally enacted: a few years ago, a number of people were convicted for leaving food and water in the desert in Arizona for migrants so that they wouldn’t die of thirst. Luckily, their convictions were overturned.

But we do not need to go to the other side of the country to see parallels:

Just six months ago, I was at the Huntington Town Hall for a Town Board meeting for a public hearing on a bipartisan bill to allow people to create legal and safe basement and garage apartments. Some of the comments:

***There are 291 communities on Long Island; most Black people live in just eleven of them.***

“You can’t afford to be here? Oh, well.”

“I just want to make sure that there will be no migrants, pedophiles, or criminals moving in, because that’s what I’m afraid of.”

Another spoke about preserving the “complexion of this beautiful community.”

Sounds like Sodom to me: we got ours, that’s what matters.

Housing seems to me a foundational issue here on Long Island. Long Island was designed for inequity: the highways that led to communities built with restrictive covenants (no Blacks or Jews) and the banks that wouldn’t lend to Black folks and the GI Bill that enabled the growth after WWII but didn’t apply to Black veterans.

This isn’t just history. *Newsday* published a shocking investigative report a few years ago about just how much steering still exists in real estate, and recently reported on the newly created Long Island Zoning Atlas, that shows how zoning limits affordable housing:

- Single-family housing can be built on 89% of Long Island’s land area, excluding environmentally protected zones.
- Local governments allow two-family homes on about 8.5% of zoned land either as-of-right or require a public hearing.
- Housing for three families or more, including

apartment buildings, is allowed on just 3.6% of land. That means apartment buildings are prohibited on more than 96% of the zoned land on Long Island.

Back to the Torah, which reads: If your brother becomes impoverished and his hand (assets) become shaky among you, you must strengthen him, [so too] the stranger and the sojourner, [so] that they shall live with you. (*Lev. 25:35*)

Poverty and segregation go hand in hand. Long Island is one of the most segregated suburbs in the country. There are 291 communities on the Island; most Black people live in just eleven of them.

And our housing structure impacts education, and just about everything else.

Last month, an article announced a food truck is coming to Walt Whitman High School – not the cool kind of food truck that makes tacos or donuts, but

one that will give boxes of food to those who need. When I read about this, my response was: this is a *shanda*, a shame and a disgrace. Not to mention the weekly food giveaway by Community Solidarity that has an hours-long line every Tuesday night around the corner from my home. Not that these aren’t loving acts – but that we should need this here.

I’m not naïve, but sometimes, I’m just so disappointed in us. It is a *shanda* that there are so many in our wealthy community who don’t have enough. That our society is structured in such a way that food pantries and giveaways are part of people’s regular support system. There shouldn’t be babies in the river!

On Yom Kippur, our most solemn holy day of the year, Jews all over the world hear a reading from the book of Isaiah:

Is such the fast I desire,

A day for people to starve their bodies?

Is it bowing the head like a bulrush

And lying in sackcloth and ashes?

Do you call that a fast,

A day when GOD is favorable?

No, this is the fast I desire:

To unlock fetters of wickedness,

And untie the cords of the yoke

To let the oppressed go free;

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# Charity and Justice

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To break off every yoke.  
It is to share your bread with the hungry,  
And to take the wretched poor into your home;  
When you see the naked, to clothe them,  
And not to ignore your own kin.

When the Torah says: “Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and occupy the land that Adonai your God is giving you,” it’s not speaking to an individual. The *people* are going into the Promised Land and will only thrive if they pursue justice.

As Rabbi Israel Salanter was known to say: “My neighbor’s physical needs are my spiritual responsibility.” Our religious obligation is to build a society that cares for people.

A 1200 year old Jewish text reads:

If a person of learning participates in public affairs..... they give stability to the land... But if they sit in their home and says to themselves, “What have the affairs of society to do with me?... Why should I trouble myself with the people’s voices of protest? Let my soul dwell in peace!”—if they do this, they destroy the world. (*Midrash Tanhuma, Mishpatim 2*)

***It can be easier to care for the babies in the river because that’s not “political,” but how the babies get there, that is. And it is political, as in policy.***

This means engaging in civic society.

It means voting, of course. But our obligation as citizens, and as organizations, goes beyond. We need to stand up for the kind of society we believe in and work to make that happen. That means advocacy. And this is hard. It can be easier to care for the babies in the river because that’s not “political,” but how the babies get there, that is. And it is political, as in policy.

It’s not political to donate food, or for a congregation to run a food pantry, but it is political to advocate for increased SNAP benefits. It’s not political for a congregation to host a shelter, but it is political to work for affordable housing.

Many congregations and organizations struggle with this, and as the polarization of our society has increased and hardened, it’s only gotten more difficult. It’s a challenge even at KSS.

Some of this difficulty stems from the self-sufficient, pull yourself up by your bootstraps, orientation of this country. This approach leads to the use of the language of individual rights: for example, “housing is a human right.” This is very different from a Jewish approach.

Rabbi Jill Jacobs teaches:

Instead of speaking in the language of rights, Judaism speaks generally in the language of obligation. The practical difference in this choice of words is that the language of obligation shifts focus to those responsible for providing for the

poor. If I speak of my “right” to something, it is not always clear who has the responsibility for ensuring that I enjoy this right. If, however, I speak of someone’s “obligation” to provide me with something, then it is clear where the responsibility lies. By saying that housing is a basic human need, included in the category of *tzedakah*,

we simultaneously say that individuals and the society as a whole are obligated to provide housing to those who need it.

(*There Shall Be No Needy: Pursuing Social Justice through Jewish Law and Tradition*, pages 140-141).

We have obligations. That means caring for people in need, charity – feeding, clothing, housing, loving people – but it also means doing the work so that people do not fall into poverty. It means creating a just society.

In 1972, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote: “Morally speaking, there is no limit to the concern one must feel for the suffering of human beings. Indifference to evil is worse than evil itself, [and] in a free society, some are guilty, but all are responsible.”

*This article is adapted from a talk given at a December Abraham’s Table Conference: Don’t Blame Poor People: A Conference Addressing the Structural Causes of Poverty on Long Island and in New York State...A Call for Understanding and Action. Charity and Justice*

# Isabel's Interviews: Dalia Rosenthal

This month, I had the pleasure of speaking with Dalia Rosenthal. I think you will learn a lot about this very special person. When you meet her at KSS events, I have an idea that you might have some questions of your own to ask her.

ISABEL: How long have you been associated with KSS?

DALIA: I was a teacher at KSS for 42 years and the Educational Director for the last 25 years. I have a lifelong membership. Now that I'm retired, one of my favorite activities is relaxing with a good book and discussing it at the Bagels & Books meetings.

ISABEL: Where did you spend your childhood years?

DALIA: I was born in Tel Aviv, Israel. I lived in Israel until I was 16. I'm a fifth generation Israeli from my maternal grandfather's side. My grandmother went to Palestine from Hungary when she was twelve. During the pogroms, my paternal grandfather, who had a knitting factory in Warsaw, immigrated with his wife and children to Tel Aviv, where they opened another knitting factory. A shidduch was arranged for my parents to marry, while they were quite young. They opened their own knitting business and worked into their late 80's. I was the youngest of three children.

When my brother was wounded in one of the wars and decided to attend Philadelphia Textile Institute, my parents owned a clothing manufacturing business in Israel. While in the States, my brother fell in love and married an Israeli who happened to be in the States. She was a teacher in a religious school in Philadelphia. My entire family took the trip to the United States to attend the wedding. This included my mother, father, and sister. It was my first trip to America. I was only 16 and very excited. I finished high school in Israel and enrolled at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York and earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts at F.I.T.

ISABEL: How did you meet your husband?

DALIA: During my college years, I went on a skiing trip at Lake George. My skiing instructor became my future husband in 1965. We lived in Woodside for four years, found a plot of land in Huntington, and designed our own house; fifty-eight years later, Marv and I are still together.

ISABEL: Did you and your husband go on skiing vacations?

DALIA: Yes, we did. We continued after the kids were born.

ISABEL: Do your kids know how to ski?

DALIA: Oh, YES!!!

ISABEL: How many children do you have?

DALIA: I have three children. My daughter lives in Red Hook, NY; one of my sons lives in Oregon, my other son lives in Sarasota, Florida. I get to visit him when I go to Florida where we have a second home. We also have six grandchildren.

ISABEL: How did you use your education?

DALIA: I was a Jewish educator for over fifty years, devoting countless hours to the community and synagogues in Nassau and Suffolk counties. I've led Friday night services at

the Carillon Nursing & Rehab Center and was the creative consultant for the Salute to Israeli Day Parade in NYC. I was involved in Jewish Education as Religious School Director at KSS.

ISABEL: I've heard that you have won some awards. Care to boast?

DALIA: I've been the recipient of the 2008 Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award for Excellence in Jewish Education. I received the Four Chaplains' award from the VA and UJA Federation for Recognition of Service and Dedication to the Jewish Community. SAJES honored me with a Recognition Award for my devotion and dedication to Jewish education. I was also the chairperson of the Suffolk County Principals' Council.

ISABEL: I'm very impressed. Is there anything else that you would like to people to know? I don't want to leave anything out.

DALIA: I do cooking demonstrations at religious schools and private cooking events, both on Long Island and in Florida. I post pictures of my finished products on Facebook.

ISABEL: I always end my interviews with these final two questions: What is your least favorite sound?

DALIA: Snoring.

ISABEL: What is your favorite sound?

DALIA: Laughter. ❖



# UPDATE FROM MOSHAV GE'A

BY JUDY DAVIS

The eyes of American media are focused on the war in Gaza and the tragedy of the hostages.

But what do we know about ordinary Israelis, struggling to cope and rebuild lives shattered by the barbaric assaults of October 7? They are doing so even as Israel is still under bombardment from Hamas, Hezbollah and even Yemen.

We invited Omer Gil to give us a picture of his experiences as a resident of Moshav Ge'a, five miles from the Gaza border.

On December 2, Omer spoke to us by Zoom to describe life in Ge'a since October 7. That morning, the moshav was awakened by the sound of alarms, bombing, aircraft overhead, and the booms of Iron Dome. Initially, there was great confusion because the bombing and the alarms did not stop as quickly as they usually did. Residents were told to go into their safe rooms and remain in their homes. Later, they learned of terrorist infiltrations of nearby moshavim and kibbutzim. However, it took several days before a true picture of what was happening emerged.

Since the attack, about half the moshav members evacuated to the north. There are also thousands of residents of the border towns closer to Gaza who have fled to other parts of Israel and don't know if they will ever return.

At Moshav Ge'a, the remaining members volunteered to guard the moshav day and night. People have been very frightened that terrorists would return. One of the moshav's decisions has been to develop a First Response Team. Team members have been in the army and know how to use weapons. However, only about twenty moshav residents had guns. Once the Team was in place, members began to return. The Team patrols the moshav at night and guards the kindergarten during the day.

They are building the Team "for the day after the war. If anything happens, we can take care of ourselves." Omer stressed that most people have day jobs (he is a civil engineer) and need to rely on one another, not expect outside help. The government will provide some training. However, they will have to purchase most needed equipment themselves. (They estimate their costs at about

\$450,000. You can make a donation at: <https://tinyurl.com/IsraeliDefenseNow>)

Their immediate goals are to buy protective gear, identify people within the moshav with medical training and equip them with supplies, build a secure fence around the community, establish and equip a control room/communication and command center.

When Omer's program ended, I asked if we could remain in touch. I contacted him recently to find out what's been happening on the moshav since his talk. Here is his WhatsApp response:

"Over here in the Moshav we are more than two months after the war and most people got used to the situation that we hear the artillery corps shooting all day and all night, the windows of our houses are trembling.

"We got an update that schools are open from next week to full days. It

feels strange to return to normal when our soldiers are here in the Moshav (we are hosting about 100 of them in our club buildings) and they go in and out from Gaza every day...

"Me and another friend in the first response team are still guarding around the kindergartens during the day. During the night almost everyone here volunteers to patrol around the Moshav with their car.

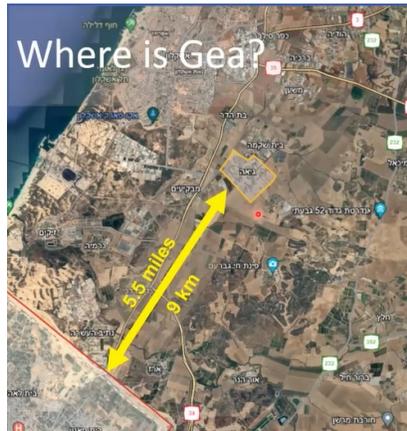
"Some people that work as teachers teach on Zoom, because schools in Ashkelon are still learning online.

"I want to talk a little bit about a neighbor of mine who works with artists around the world that come to perform in Israel, but now everyone cancelled their shows until February and she is unemployed. They don't know when they will get people back here from abroad, so she is doing all kind of volunteer work to help in the Moshav and with the soldiers.

"Everyone here has a story and if it's ok, I can write a short sentence about someone else."

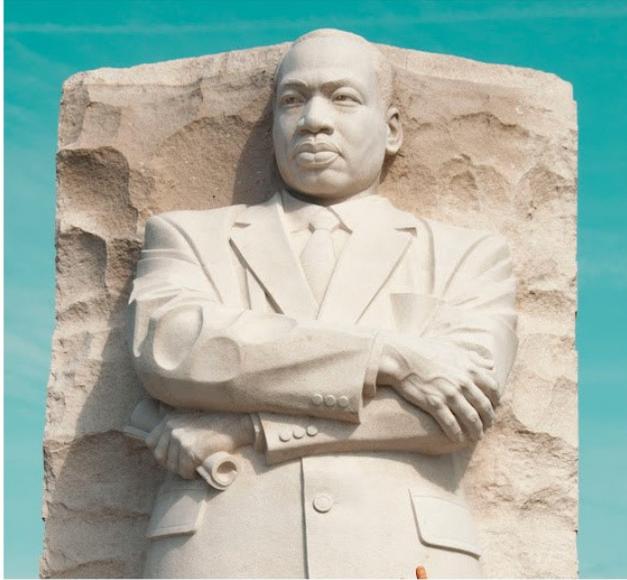
I assured Omer that we'd love to hear more stories of life in the Moshav and, of course, I will share them with you. ❖

*If you missed it, video of Omer's talk to KSS is available [here](#), starting around 57:45. It is preceded by Nissim's talk on the situation in Israel as of December 2.*



Moshav Ge'a is above the upper arrow, outlined in orange. Gaza is below the diagonal at lower left.

Screenshot from Omer's PowerPoint.



# Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service

Monday, 1.15@10 am



**MLK Day was established to be a national day of service: “a day on, not a day off.”**

**Join us at KSS to learn and to do.**

**We will prepare soup, sandwiches, and cupcakes for Helping Hands Rescue Mission’s Tuesday lunch program.**

**RSVP to Rabbi Lina.**

**Children and adults welcome.**

## COMMITTEES AND CONTACTS

### MEMBERSHIP

Barbara Heller  
Audrey Teich

[bjhdm1@aol.com](mailto:bjhdm1@aol.com)  
[aktcsw@aol.com](mailto:aktcsw@aol.com)

### RITUAL

David Schwartz  
Abby Pariser

[sailrman@optonline.net](mailto:sailrman@optonline.net)  
[abbyparis@aol.com](mailto:abbyparis@aol.com)

### FUNDRAISING

Abby Pariser  
Scott Ash

[abbyparis@aol.com](mailto:abbyparis@aol.com)  
[ashs3@verizon.net](mailto:ashs3@verizon.net)

### ISRAEL CONNECTIONS & JEWISH AFFAIRS

Judy Davis  
Cliff Broffman

[JDavis4727@aol.com](mailto:JDavis4727@aol.com)  
[cliffbroffman@gmail.com](mailto:cliffbroffman@gmail.com)

### HOUSE

Alan Wachtel

[alanwac1@gmail.com](mailto:alanwac1@gmail.com)

### SECURITY

Judy Avidor

[javidorkss@gmail.com](mailto:javidorkss@gmail.com)

### RABBINIC LIAISON

Deborah Globus

[DeborahGlobus@hotmail.com](mailto:DeborahGlobus@hotmail.com)

### PROGRAMMING & COMMUNICATIONS

Scott Ash

[ashs3@verizon.net](mailto:ashs3@verizon.net)

### STRATEGIC PLANNING

Eileen Gruber

[Eileen.Gruber@gmail.com](mailto:Eileen.Gruber@gmail.com)

### RACIAL JUSTICE

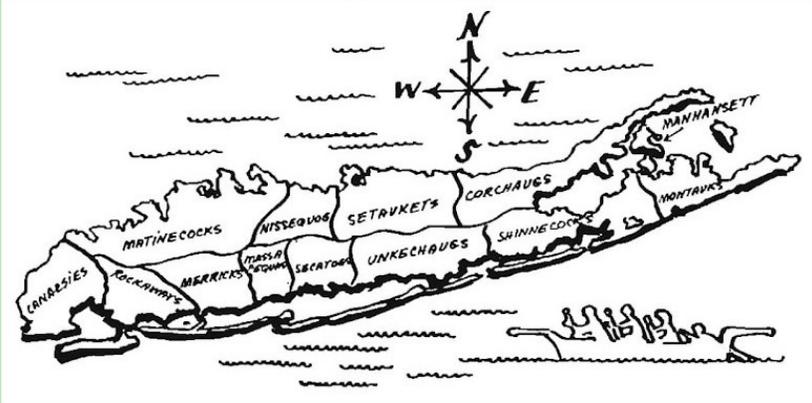
Roberta Israeloff

[rsis@optonline.net](mailto:rsis@optonline.net)

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. ❖

# Lunch & Learn: Indigenous Long Island



**Begins  
12.14.23@12:30  
by Zoom**



Who lived on this land before we did?

Join us to learn about the history and cultures and current realities of the peoples who preceded us on “fish-shaped Paumanok.”

Begins 12.14.23.



Friday, January 12, Candlelighting @ 6 pm

Saturday, January 13, Torah Study @ 10 am,  
and Shabbat Service @ 11:15 am

Sunday, January 14, Dinner @ KSS with Denice  
Evans-Sheppard, 5 pm

Monday, January 15, MLK Day of Service, 10 am



## **Assemblyman Steve Stern (10<sup>th</sup> A.D.)**

**To join us on January 6**

**For Torah Study (10 am) and Shabbat Services (11:15 am)**

Assemblyman Stern is visiting congregations in his district; there will be no formal presentation. It would be lovely to have a well-attended gathering to welcome him and have conversation over Kiddush.

**Please make every effort to attend!**

## **Dinner & Forum Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**



**Speaker:**

**Denice Evans-Sheppard  
African-American History on  
Long Island**

**Sunday, January 14@5 pm**



**KEHILLATH  
SHALOM  
SYNAGOGUE**

Join us for dinner and a conversation with Denice Evans-Sheppard, Denice currently serves as the Executive Director of the Oyster Bay Historical Society in which she loves to engage the community in culture, history and education. She lives in Pine Hollow, one of the oldest descendant communities in Oyster Bay, where, since the 1800s, her family has owned property that has been passed down throughout generations. Denice currently resides in the home that her great-great-grandfather, David Carll, who had served in the USCT [United States Colored Troops] 26<sup>th</sup> Regiment, built in 1865.

She will share the history of her family and other African-Americans on Long Island.

RSVP to Rabbi Lina by Friday, January 12.

Rabbi Lina is cooking; contributions are welcome.

# No Matter What Israel Does...

BY JUDY DAVIS

We know what's coming. We've seen it before. Each time that Israel has been forced—this word is deliberately chosen—forced to defend itself, regardless of the circumstances leading to the absolute need for self-defense, Israel has been vilified.

Israel will win this war with Hamas. It will not be “victorious” or “triumphant.” Jews are a people who eschew reveling in another's misfortune. We are exhorted by our religious traditions, “If your enemy falls, do not exult; If he trips let your heart not rejoice.” Even when we smite our enemies, we must never forget that they too are human beings whose lives cannot be taken with impunity.

And yet pundits, like Thomas Friedman in his column, “The 9/11 Lesson That Israel Needs to Learn,” counsel Israel “not to embark on a journey of revenge” or “act out of blind rage” in its goal of “wiping Hamas from the face of the earth.”

Friedman and other Americans who have issued similar warnings would be hard pressed to find an Israeli leaving for battle with anything but a heavy heart, a heart filled with sorrow for their own country and the knowledge that in order to defend it they will be taking innocent lives. The IDF is filled with sober soldiers who know they will pay a price with their own souls, that they cannot take another person's life and be untouched by it. The “gung ho” revenge-filled warrior eager to make his first kill is an American “ideal” of “bravery.” Superimposing this Hollywood fantasy on Israeli soldiers simply doesn't fit.

We have seen Israelis interviewed about the war: IDF spokesmen, officers and foot soldiers. We have seen Israeli families whose loved ones have been taken hostage by Hamas. Have you heard any of these family members express a desire for revenge? You would think the hostage families would be first in line. No, they just want the hostages to come home.

Israel has no choice. No matter how much they'd prefer to simply go about their lives and ignore Hamas, and to their peril, they did just that for too long, sooner or later the enemy will force their hand. What happened on October 7 can never happen again. That is why Israel is at war. In the

Middle East, if you allow your enemy to defile your home without retaliation, you are asking for a repeat performance. Indeed, Hamas has promised exactly that.

One of the criticisms against Israel as articulated by Friedman and others is that Israel rushed into war with Gaza. In fact, at the United States' urging, Israel waited three long weeks after October 7, knowing the hostages were being well hidden, knowing Hamas was using the time to better hone their murderous preparations. Meanwhile Israel used this time to offer Gazans multiple opportunities to flee before the war began. Not exactly the rash behavior of a bloodthirsty mob of revenge seekers.

What warnings did Hamas issue to Israelis before they began their barbaric rampages?

There are complaints that Israel has not formulated an end game for this horrible conflict. So far, no one—no world leaders, diplomats, media wonks—has proposed any

solutions. Neighboring Arab states have made it clear they will not accept Gazan refugees.

Israel, despite having been hideously assaulted, and while still under daily air attacks, is expected to somehow fight this war in a manner never expected of any other country on this planet. Although Hamas is willing to sacrifice its own Gazan “civilians,” Israel is expected to protect them. And to do so while, at the same time, finding and rescuing Israeli hostages.

Furthermore, Israelis are expected to conduct war “surgically.” The entire Hamas war machine is wrapped around schools, hospitals, homes and mosques. No one has come forth with a single example of a “surgical” method of warfare.

The world demands Israel allow “humanitarian aid” to Gaza. Israel is reeling from October 7 and ongoing attacks. It too is a country of refugees. Over 200,000 people have been evacuated from their homes, suffering psychological and material deprivation. The economy is shaking, people are losing jobs, the crops are rotting.

Who is demanding “humanitarian aid” for Israel?

***Israel, despite having been hideously assaulted, and while still under daily air attacks, is expected to somehow fight this war in a manner never expected of any other country on this planet.***

(Continued on page 11)

# TU BISHEVAT SEDER & LUNCHEON

Saturday, January 20 @ 10 am

Tu BiShevat is: Trees

Tu BiShevat is: the Environment

Tu BiShevat is: Fruit of the Tree and Fruit of the Vine

Tu BiShevat is: Israel

Tu BiShevat is: New Life

Tu BiShevat is: For Everyone who Loves Trees & Spring & the Earth

**Shabbat Celebration & Tu BiShevat Seder  
Seder, Song, Sowing, and...Food!  
We'll Share Lunch Together - Please Bring a Dish  
RSVP to [rabbi@kehillathshalomsynagogue.org](mailto:rabbi@kehillathshalomsynagogue.org)**

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## No Matter What Israel Does...

*(Continued from page 10)*

The international community, the UN, the Red Cross, the International Criminal Court, quick to blame Israel on multiple false charges, all are turning their backs on Hamas's atrocities. The Israeli Ambassador to the UN, Gilad Erdan, held a meeting at UN Headquarters to "highlight the hypocrisy and double standards of UN Women and other UN agencies that completely abandoned Israeli women assaulted by Hamas." The hashtag #MeTooUnlessYou'reAJew accurately summarizes the betrayal of Israeli women by the women's movement.

If this despicable, dehumanizing violence against women is met with silence because those women are Jewish, and if we are watching a rising tide of antisemitism engulfing even the best minds, supposedly, at our "elite" universities, what can we expect after the war?

The world hates Jews most when they are victorious. And yet Jewish survival depends upon solving this puzzle: how to defeat our enemies and still retain our values...while turning a deaf ear to the world's vilification. ❖

*Israel Affairs Committee Chair Judy Davis is a regular blogger for [The Times of Israel](#), one of Israel's leading news websites. This essay appeared there on December 8. Click [here](#) to read Judy's previous blog posts.*

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# SHABBAT SERVICES

*We will continue our Torah Study of Prophets, with 2 Samuel. How far we get each Shabbat depends entirely on how the discussion goes.*

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 5

Candlelighting 6 pm

## SATURDAY, JANUARY 6

Torah Study 10 am

Shabbat Service 11:15 am

Assemblyman Steve Stern will be joining us for study and worship.

Torah Portion: *Shemot, Exodus 1:1–6:1*

The enslavement of Israel; birth and early life of Moses, up to his return to Egypt to free his people.

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 12

Candlelighting 6 pm

## SATURDAY, JANUARY 13

Torah Study 10 am

Shabbat Service 11:15 pm

Torah Portion: *Vaera, Exodus 6:2–9:35*

God tells Moses and Aaron



to free the Israelites. The first eight plagues.

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 19

Candlelighting 6 pm

## SATURDAY, JANUARY 20

Tu B'Shevat Seder and Luncheon 10 am

Torah Portion: *Bo, Exodus 10:1-13:16*

The last two plagues: locusts and the slaying of the first-born. The first Passover and the departure from Egypt.

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 26

Candlelighting 6 pm

## SATURDAY, JANUARY 27

Torah Study 10 am

Meditation Service 11:15 am

*Shabbat Shirah*

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. ❖

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## TU B'SHEVAT AND FEEDING THE BIRDS

*One of the joys of editing the KSS Newsletter is that I learn things I had never known before.*

*Such as this. — AF*

Every year, the Torah reading of the crossing of the Sea of Reeds coincides with Tu b'Shevat, the onset of the blossoming of trees in Israel. This Shabbat is known as *Shabbat Shirah*, the Sabbath of Song, because the Torah reading includes the *Song by the Sea*, sung by the people of Israel in celebration of their redemption from the pursuing army of the Pharaoh.

Others also sing. We have a custom to feed birds just prior to Shabbat Shirah because they also offered praise to God for the miracle of the crossing of the Sea of Reeds. Since the chirp of song is the special talent of birds, we acknowledge this gift by giving them food.

Another tradition links the feeding of the birds to the description of the manna mentioned in this Torah selection. Moses had said there would be a double portion of manna on Friday, but none on Shabbat.

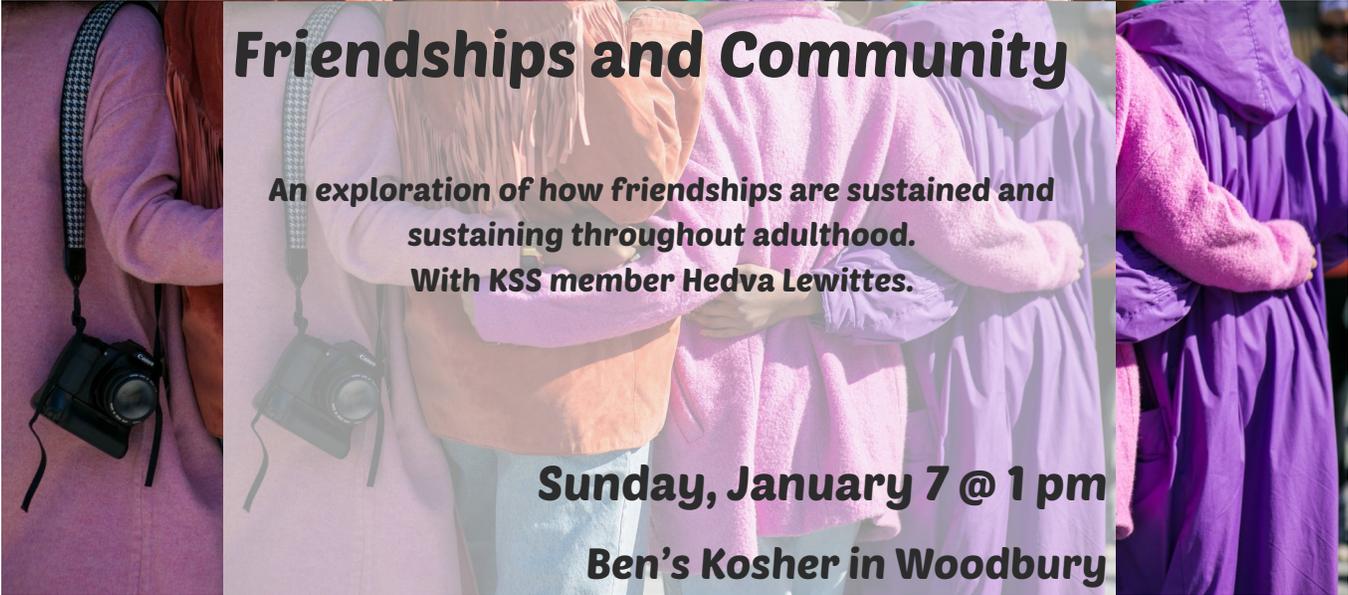


Two agitators, Datan and Aviram, scattered some manna late on Friday and told the Israelites that they would find manna in the fields on Shabbat. But the birds consumed the manna. Moses' leadership was confirmed and the birds are rewarded on Shabbat Shirah.

I imagine that this custom originated with the annual migration of millions of songbirds and cranes, warblers and raptors from Africa along the Red Sea and up the Sinai. They fly north through the Arava desert and Jordan Valley to Turkey and Europe. Witnessing these birds would have impressed generations of Jews who might have associated this migration with the Exodus from Egypt.

On the wilderness trek and later in the Land of Promise, the migration of birds may have inspired a memory of that first crossing from Egypt and Africa. Then Miriam and Moses, along with the Israelites and the birds, sang together.

Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl  
*The Canadian Jewish News*



# Friendships and Community

**An exploration of how friendships are sustained and sustaining throughout adulthood.  
With KSS member Hedva Lewittes.**

**Sunday, January 7 @ 1 pm  
Ben's Kosher in Woodbury**

You are cordially invited to join us on Sunday, January 7, when KSS member Hedva Lewittes will explore how friendships are sustained and sustaining throughout adulthood. She will consider how community creates a space for friendships to develop and how these relationships in turn build community.

Dr. Lewittes is a Professor Emerita at SUNY Old Westbury where she taught Psychology and Education. Her article, "Just Being Friendly Means a Lot," appeared in the journal *Women and Health*. Recently she presented "Women's Friendships" at an International Conference on Aging and Social Change. Her personal essay, "In Transition, Not Seeking for Now," was published in the 2023 book *Gray Love*. She received her Ph.D. from Stanford University.

Come join us and invite your friends for food for thought and food to enjoy.

Ben's Kosher Deli, 7971 Jericho Turnpike, Woodbury

January 7, 2024, 1 pm

Soup, sandwiches, all the trimmings (or salad) , coffee/ tea and rugelach

Prix fixe \$25

## The Gifts Received

### GENERAL FUND

MIKE SOLOMOWITZ, in memory of SHIRLEY SOLOMOWITZ

JOEL AGLER, in honor of all the volunteers who assist in bringing the KSS Community together, and RABBI LINA for her spiritual insights and direction

MARGARET ANN LAWN & STEVEN MILLER

GAIL SACHS, in memory of LOIS HASS' brother, PHILIP WERBLE

RABBI LINA ZERBARINI & DINAH MARK, for Hanukkah

EVA & SCOTT ASH, for Hanukkah

BARBARA HELLER, for Hanukkah

GAIL SACHS, for Hanukkah

BARBARA FEDER-MURDOCK, for Hanukkah

MARIE & JACK KORN, in memory of RINA KORN  
12/19/23

JUNE ZIEVE

### RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

LIZ & RON SABO

MARGARET ANN LAWN & STEVEN MILLER, in honor of RABBI LINA

### RABBI'S SALARY SUPPORT

Eva & Scott Ash

*Todah rabah* to all, including:

The anonymous donor who funded our Fall grounds clean-up

RABBANIT DINAH MARK, who picked up the tab for our dinner at the Golden Dolphin Diner

Rabbi Lina Zerbarini/203-915-4786  
[rabbi@kehillathshalomsynagogue.org](mailto:rabbi@kehillathshalomsynagogue.org)

President

Vice-Presidents Judy Avidor/516-449-8521  
[javidorkss@gmail.com](mailto:javidorkss@gmail.com)  
 Alan Wachtel/631-897-5638  
[alanwac1@gmail.com](mailto:alanwac1@gmail.com)

Treasurer Howard Globus/646-752-4620  
[hglobus@it-on-demand.com](mailto:hglobus@it-on-demand.com)

Financial Secretary Barbara Heller/516-671-9571  
[BJHDMT@aol.com](mailto:BJHDMT@aol.com)

Recording Secretary Abby Pariser/631-271-5774  
[abbyparis@aol.com](mailto:abbyparis@aol.com)

Corresponding Secretary Barbara Heller/516-671-9571  
[BJHDMT@aol.com](mailto:BJHDMT@aol.com)

Past Co-Presidents Beverly Mannix/631-806-5124  
[bevycd@aol.com](mailto:bevycd@aol.com)  
 Gail Sachs/516-508-1978  
[GailatKSS@gmail.com](mailto:GailatKSS@gmail.com)

Newsletter Editor Arlene Fell/631-423-3370  
[fell31@yahoo.com](mailto:fell31@yahoo.com)

Office Secretary Pam Fosella/631-367-4589  
[out.n.about@juno.com](mailto:out.n.about@juno.com)

Published by Kehillath Shalom Synagogue  
 58 Goose Hill Road, Cold Spring Harbor NY 11724  
 Office 631-367-4589 Fax 631-367-3167  
[kehillathshalom@optonline.net](mailto:kehillathshalom@optonline.net)  
<http://www.kehillathshalomsynagogue.org>

## Yahrzeit Boards

We are delighted to announce that at long last our three existing yahrzeit boards will be refurbished in the coming month so that all of the lights will be functional.

In addition, we will be adding a fourth board to accommodate another fifty plaques so that members can memorialize their loved ones who have passed away. The cost per plaque will be \$360.

Watch for further information as to how to purchase memorial plaques. ❖

## Welcome to Our Newest Member...

...who is actually an old member.

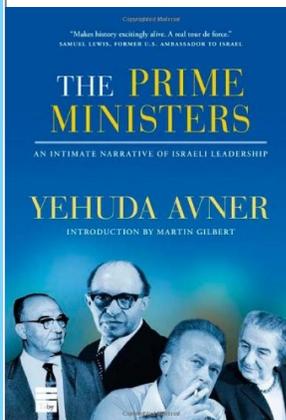
We are delighted to announce the return of ROSALIE SHAFFER, who said she believed it was time to come back.

We are so glad she's here!

## bagels & books

The verdict on our December book, *The Dressmakers of Prospect Heights*, by Kitty Zeldis, was that it was an enjoyable read. Our discussion explored the motivations of various characters, mixed with some memories of times and fashions of the past.

Our January 21 discussion will be about *The Prime Ministers*, by Yehuda Avner, specifically,



the section about Menachem Begin. Although we discussed this portion of this book six years ago, it is worth re-examining in light of current conditions in Israel, and asking, "What would Menachem Begin say about today's Israel and the Likud Party?" This will be our annual joint session with the Israel Affairs Forum, led by Nissim Yeheskel. Nissim suggests that,

for purposes of discussion, participants may read any material/book about Begin.

Our schedule for the rest of the year is:

January 21 — *The Prime Ministers [Menachem Begin]*, by Yehuda Avner

February 18 — *The Thread Collectors*, by Shaunna J. Edwards and Alyson Richman

March 17 — *Catskill Culture*, by Phil Brown

April 14 — *The Living and the Lost*, by Ellen Feldman

May 19 — *The American Way*, by Bonnie Siegler and Helene Stapinski

June 23 — *Signal Fires*, by Dani Shapiro

Watch TWAKS and your email for location and Zoom info, and please join us for any and all books that interest you (Coming just once is fine!), as well as for bagels, lox, coffee, and other goodies, as well as stimulating discussion on a Sunday morning. ❖



The views expressed in by-lined Newsletter articles represent the views of the writers and may not reflect those of the entire Kehillath Shalom Synagogue community.

We welcome the free expression of ideas from different perspectives and will consider all submissions for publication.

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



**Update and Report from Israel and the Middle East**

Saturday, October 21, Services at 10 am, Forum at 11:15 am

**Reasons for Founding the Modern State of Israel**

Saturday, December 2, Services at 10 am, Forum at 11:15 am

***The Prime Ministers***, by Yehuda Avner, pp. 345-695 (M. Begin)

**Sunday**, January 21, 10 am, Joint Session with **bagels & books**

What would Menachem Begin say about today's Israel and the Likud Party?

**Israel and the Middle East: What American Media Don't Tell You**

Saturday, April 6, Services at 10 am, Forum at 11:15 am

**Significant Events Before May 14, 1948 and the Brilliant Israeli Declaration of Independence**

Saturday, May 18, Services at 10 am, Forum at 11:15 am

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

## Let's Light Candles Together



**Friday evenings, 6:00**

(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



# January 2024

## Tevet/Shevat 5784



Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

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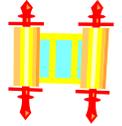
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5



6



Morning Gathering  
Tuesdays and  
Fridays 8 am

New Year's Day

Lunch & Learn  
Indigenous  
Long Island  
12:30—2 pm

Candlelighting  
6 pm

Torah Study  
10 am  
Shabbat Service  
11:15 am  
Assemblyman Steve Stern  
to attend

4:21

7



8

9



10

11



12



13



Friendships and  
Community with  
Hedva Lewittes  
@ Ben's Kosher  
Woodbury 1 pm

Board Meeting  
7:30 pm

Lunch & Learn  
Indigenous L.I.  
12:30—2 pm  
Rosh Chodesh Group  
7 pm

Candlelighting  
6 pm

Torah Study  
10 am  
Shabbat Service  
11:15 am

4:28

14



15



16

17

18



19



20



MLK Dinner and  
Speaker 5 pm

MLK Day of Service  
Martin Luther King Jr.  
Day  
Newsletter Deadline

Lunch & Learn  
Indigenous  
Long Island  
12:30—2 pm

Candlelighting  
6 pm

Torah Study 10 am  
Tu B'Shevat Seder  
and Luncheon  
11:15 am

4:36

21



22

23

24

25



26



27



Bagels & Books  
With Israel Forum  
Menachem Begin  
10 am

Lunch & Learn  
Indigenous  
Long Island  
12:30—2 pm  
Tu B'Shevat

Candlelighting  
6 pm

Torah Study 10 am  
Meditation Service  
11:15 am

4:45

28

29

30

31

1



2



3



Lunch & Learn  
Topic tba  
12:30—2 pm

Soup Shabbat  
6 pm

Torah Study 10 am  
Shabbat Service  
11:15 am

4:53

4



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9



10



Rosh Chodesh Group  
10 am

Lunch & Learn  
Topic tba  
12:30—2 pm

Candlelighting 6 pm  
Rosh Chodesh Adar

Torah Study 10 am  
Luncheon to follow

5:02