



The Scribe

Congregation Beth Am

510 Claremont Avenue, Teaneck, New Jersey 07666
(201) 836-5752

Affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations

5770

JANUARY 2010

Tevet-Shevat

RABBI'S MESSAGE

As you know, Beth Am has begun "dating" other synagogues in search of the best merger partner. We confront this challenge with ambivalence. We accept the prognosis that merging is the best option for Beth Am. Yet, carrying out the work of merging is a bitter pill to swallow. We enjoy each other's company and would like to preserve our group as much as possible, but merging seems to imply the end of what we have achieved.

Though we may have mixed feelings about this process, we may actually find getting to know other communities enjoyable and spiritually renewing. In our synagogue's past we too often lived our communal lives isolated from the wider Jewish community. To increase the probability of a successful merger we will need to break through some of the fences that separate us from other communities. I have found our joint programs with the other synagogues in Leonia, River Edge and Teaneck, enjoyable and worthy the effort.

When confronting difficult circumstances, the Jewish tradition expressed the belief in the possibility of spiritual renewal. The rabbis pondered the mystery of the future; only God would know what good might emerge from the struggles of individuals and communities.

Even God's insight was limited because human beings were created with free will. Perhaps merging may lead to the preservation of what we have achieved and also provided a framework for future growth and satisfaction.

Painful or not, we must complete this responsibility. The decisions that we make in the next few months will be important in preserving the current communal dynamic and legacy of our synagogue.

Rabbi Harvey Rosenfeld

January 1, 2010 we will have combined services with Temple Emeth.
Services will be at Congregation Beth Am, beginning at 8 PM.

We hope that you will join us.

Jan 15, 2010 – Martin Luther King Service

Jan 22, 2010 – Installation of Beth Am Officers and Trustees

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In character as Louis XVI in his movie 'History of the World, Part 1', Mel Brooks proclaims "It's good to be king!" In a similar spirit of exuberance I would like to say "It was good to be your president!" I want to thank the officers, trustees and members of Beth Am for their cooperation, dedication and efforts; it has truly been a collaborative effort over these past three years. And thank you Rabbi Rosenfeld, Cantor Cohen DeStefano and Robert Maidhdoff for enriching our spiritual experience. Words fail me at expressing my appreciation of our office secretary Nancy Gennaro who does so much to ensure our congregation runs smoothly.

The parshot over the coming weeks closes the book of Genesis with the passing of Jacob and Joseph. We then open the book of Exodus with the story of our next leader Moses. Perhaps it is no coincidence that installation of our new congregational leadership occurs at this time of year when our parshot transition to a new period in our biblical history. We should all feel blessed as if by Jacob for continuing as a congregation. Now it's a new chapter for our congregation. Our new slate of officers and trustees under the capable leadership of Shelley Burnston will skillfully guide us through a challenging transition in the next two years.

There is much to celebrate in January and I hope you will join us. Of course there is our installation of officers service scheduled for Friday January 22. On the preceding Friday, January 15, we will be honoring the memory of Martin Luther King during our Shabbat service. We will be joined by Temple Adas Emuno of Leonia and three local churches of Teaneck.

Best wishes for a healthy and happy 2010.

Shalom,
Paul Seitelman

Rabbi Michael Rosenfeld will speak about **Jewish life in England** on **Sunday morning January 10th at 10 AM**. Rabbi Rosenfeld has been the rabbi of the Kingston & Surbiton District Synagogue in Surrey, England, The discussion will be held at the home of Rabbi Harvey and Barbara Rosenfeld, 851 Williams Avenue, Teaneck, NJ. RSVP to the synagogue office.

YARTZEIT

Shabbat Service for January 1

Seymour Winterfield
Isidore Ekelchik
Louis Cuperman
Lottie Brownstein
Reuben Berger

Father of Harvey Winterfield
Father of Aaron Ekelchik
Father of Murray Cuperman
Mother of Irwin Brownstein
Father of Jo-Ann Winterfield

Shabbat Service for January 8

Charlotte Sturmthal
Arnold Steinberg
Louis Berger
Esther Levine

Cousin of Walter Moser
Husband of Lillie Steinberg
Uncle of Jo-Ann Winterfield
Sister of Helen Strickler

Shabbat Service for January 15

Jean Paulvin

Aunt of Phyllis Betancourt

Shabbat Service for January 22

Dr. Meyer Molinsky

Uncle of Charlotte Eth/
Great-Uncle of Hilary Eth

Shabbat Service for January 29

Marian Distler

Judith Breus
Steve Glaser
Herbert Cohen

Sister of Edgar Distler
Aunt of Walter Distler
Mother of Ruth Seitelman
Dear friend of Susan Cohen DeStefano
Father of Susan Cohen DeStefano



SOCIAL ACTION

Bright Lights for Bright Side Manor

By Anna Szterenfeld

Lighting of the Menorah, traditional Hanukah stories and songs, and refreshments and Hanukah gifts—these were all shared on December 13th by Jewish residents of Bright Side Manor, an assisted living facility in Teaneck, thanks to the generosity of volunteers from Congregation Beth Am.

For nearly six years, members of the congregation have been giving their time and their enthusiasm to celebrate the holidays or just visit with Bright Side residents, many of whom have no family or few visitors.

“It feels good to be with people who don’t have any other connection with Jewish life,” said volunteer Marilyn Shapiro. “It makes them feel part of the Jewish community.”

Beth Am’s collaboration with Bright Side, a non-profit facility for low to moderate income seniors, began around September 2005. Members of the synagogue, a small family-oriented temple in Teaneck, sought to expand their social action programs and reach out to the elderly in long-term care facilities.

“We wanted to bring some Jewish life into their world,” says Connie Garcia, who organized the program together with Bright Side’s administrator, Elizabeth Davis. About ten volunteers from Beth Am rotate to visit with the residents on a biweekly basis and on major holidays.

This time they were joined by the temple’s gifted cantor, Susan Cohen DeStefano, who led the storytelling and singing. She also interjected just the right amount of humor to make the residents laugh and keep the occasion fun and lively.

“It’s great to be able to do something for them, It makes me feel good, too,” said Walter Moser, a regular volunteer. “It’s a tough life,” he added, referring to how difficult it can be for elderly people without much family life.

Elderly people are often alone and shut off from Jewish life. “They are the forgotten ones,” said Mrs. Garcia. But thanks to the mission of Beth Am to embrace Jewish families and individuals in need, the small group of Jewish residents of Bright Side Manor can still benefit from the warmth and friendliness of caring volunteers, and have fun during the holidays.

“The relationship between Bright Side and Beth Am is a good model for community activism and philanthropy,” said Mrs. Davis. Everyone benefits, she believes, from Bright Side’s resident Holocaust survivor to the synagogue’s members to the non-Jewish residents of the facility.

“We don’t expect recognition or a reward from the residents—sometimes afterwards they just go off and play bingo,” said Mrs. Garcia. “I know they appreciate us, but I think we get even more out of it than they do.”

**INTERFAITH COMMUNITY WORSHIP SERVICE HONORING
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING TO TAKE PLACE IN TEANECK
Friday evening, January 15, beginning at 8:00 PM.**

Cantor Kerith Spencer-Shapiro, Rev. Marilyn Monroe Harris, Rev. Gloria Tate and the Rev. Gary C. LeCroy III will join Rabbi Harvey Rosenfeld and Cantor Susan Cohen DeStefano in an Erev Shabbat service featuring readings from several of Dr. King's well-known speeches. Members of the choirs of the guest congregations will join the Beth Am Song Circle in music by Noah Budin, Mary Feinsinger, Doug Mishkin, Rachelle Nelson, Erik Contzius, Harry Belafonte and Robert Freedman – songs in the spirit of peace and justice that were the goals of Dr. King's life and work.

"I believe that everyone who participated in our first Martin Luther King celebration last year came away with a sense of excitement and inspiration," said Cantor Cohen DeStefano. "Even in the face of the challenges of the past year, worshippers of many faiths can come together to remember the sacrifices that were made in the name of freedom and equal rights for all the citizens of this country."

An Oneg Shabbat will follow the service – a social hour at which light refreshments will be served.

