

Beth Israel Sinai News

The Monthly Newsletter of Beth Israel Sinai Congregation

February 2021 Shevat / Adar 5781

Rabbi Marty

Dear Family and Friends,

During the age of COVID, PIKUAH NEFESH, the commandment to save a life has never been more important. To paraphrase the Talmud:

Why was man created alone? Is it not true that the Creator could have created the whole of humanity? But man was created alone to teach you that who ever kills one life kills the ENTIRE WORLD. Whoever saves one life, saves the ENTIRE WORLD.

In issues involving medical treatment, from wearing masks to vaccines and ventilators, PIKUAH NEFESH, has become humanity's paramount goal as the world fights to defeat the pandemic. Simply stated, PIKUAH NEFESH, is the rule that virtually any COMMANDMENT in the Torah can be violated in order to save a life. Indeed, the saintly Maimonides says: "You are commanded to break the Mitzvah — it's not a CHOICE." There are only three exceptions to this rule. These are the prohibitions against idolatry, adultery, and murder. In other words, you are not allowed to protect your own life by taking the life of another.

The concept of PIKUAH NEFESH applies broadly to many aspects of daily life. To name a few examples, a person who is ill may not fast on Yom Kippur. A starving individual may eat non-kosher food if necessary for his survival. The prohibition against gossip, LASHAN HORA, may be waived if the information might save a human life. A person who considers tattoos religiously forbidden, must accept them if they are needed for radiation therapy. Indeed, risking your life for a religious ritual doesn't make you a martyr. It makes you a SINNER.

Never has the observance of PIKUAH NEFESH been more urgent than now during the era of COVID 19. People attending large gatherings at religious institutions, life cycle celebrations, and mass public gatherings endanger not only their lives but also the lives of others. Regarding synagogue worship, virtually all rabbis agree that missing a service is preferable to putting yourself and others at risk. A ZOOM has become our temporary SHUL.

As for vaccination, it is clear that NOT VACCINATING yourself is against Jewish law. Resistance to both cancelling worship services and taking the vaccine in a small number of fringe Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) communities is less a problem of Halacha (Jewish Law) than the collapse of truth and the propagation of conspiracy theories in social media.

Commandments like "Do not kill" and "Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor" further justify the requirement for mass vaccination as soon as possible.

IT IS ALL ABOUT PRESERVING LIFE.

SEE YOU IN VIRTUAL SHUL,

STAY SAFE

RABBI MARTY

P.S. I would like to thank everybody who helped me make a minyan for the yahrzeits of my mother and father. Should anyone else require a minyan to say Kaddish, please let me know. Also, I would like to thank everyone who attended the 57th anniversary of my Bar Mitzvah. If you know of anyone else wishing to connect with our vibrant NONDENOMINATIONAL congregation, please ask them to contact me at rabbimartyn@icloud.com or our President Joyce Placzowski at (262) 633-7093, May we continue to grow from strength to strength.

Our new mailing address is **Beth Israel Sinai 3009 Washington Ave., Racine, WI 53405** we no longer will be using the P.O. Box address

Purim will be celebrated on Thursday 2-25-21 at 7pm. We will be reading the Reading of the Megillot Ester. Please have your grogers or other noise makers with. If you would like to borrow a book with the Megillah of Ester please let me know we have some at the synagogue that I will be happy to lend you.

Cemetery Notes

The Racine Jewish Cemetery is five acres located at 612 Lathrop Ave. It is a well maintained, park-like setting. A resting place for all Jews. Donations to cemetery are tax deductible.

There is a Reform section of the cemetery where Jews and their non-Jewish family members can be buried together.

For more information about the purchase of cemetery plots or perpetual care, please call Glenn Gordon 262-639-1924

I hope everyone is taking precautions against the Covid 19 virus. Please check on people who may be isolated and if you know of anyone who is in need let us know, we will try to help.

The Presidents Message

Our mailing address has changed. We are now using our street address. From now on please send all mail to Beth Israel Sinai 3009 Washington Ave., Racine, WI 53405 Please consider joining Beth Israel Sinai as a member even if it is just through zoom. We are very willing to discuss dues with everyone who is interested in joining. People can always join our services without being a member, but a membership gives you a voice when we are making decisions about Beth Israel Sinai. We also have associate memberships for people who would like to join.
President Joyce Placzkowski

Rabbi Adelberg is offering free Hebrew classes to children. Please call Rabbi Adelberg 847-529-1609 to setup appointments. Donations to the Rabbi's discretionary account are always welcome, and tax deductible.

**Manfred Oelsner Shevat 21, 5781—February 3, 2021
May 1, 1907—February 8, 1977**

Manfred Oelsner met Gerda Kuba in Frost-Lausitz, Germany June 26, 1932. They married June 26, 1938. In the meantime, Hitler became Chancellor of Germany and Manfred lost his job running the tobacco concession in a Nazi bowling alley.

The day after Kristallnacht, Manfred was sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp where he convinced an SS officer to give prisoners the leftovers from the guards' supper. It was served without utensils. Manfred didn't eat. The SS officer reproached him furiously. Manfred explained he would not eat with his face in a plate like an animal. The next day the officer gave him sandwiches. Manfred had a brother-in-law who was a friend of the secretary to the Argentinian consul in Warsaw. The consul issued a request to meet with Manfred and his father-in-law, Max Kuba, also a prisoner. They were released February 7, 1939. For years, Manfred observed a fast on February 7. The Sturmfuhrer who supervised the release warned, "The reach of the Gestapo goes around the world." and ordered him to leave Germany by May 7.

Shanghai, China was the only place on earth a Jew could go without a visa. Transportation to Shanghai was limited and expensive. Manfred went ticket shopping every day. Gerda asked him to skip the shopping trip on February 26 to celebrate her first birthday of their married life. Manfred skipped the trip to spring their neighbor's two sons from Sachsenhausen. Near the end of April, three first class tickets became available. The agent for the Jewish relief organization said he was not allowed to pay for first class. Manfred leaned on his case worker who leaned on the agent. On May 9, the family boarded a twenty-seven day cruise to Shanghai. Formal attire was required for dinner. Manfred explained his family had nothing to celebrate and would not dress for dinner. They were allowed to eat in the main dining room after the others had eaten. In Singapore they met a local Jew who encouraged them to remain in Singapore, The British Consulate was closed and the ship was leaving in the morning so, the fellow promised to contact the consulate when it reopened and write to them. Two days later the Japanese captured Singapore and sent all the Jews on a death march.

June 4, 1939 the Oelsners disembarked at Shanghai and traveled by flatbed to a refugee camp. Forty-five beds per barracks. Manfred and Max obtained a hand cart and "kept above water" carrying luggage of new arrivals from the docks to the shelters. Manfred and Gerda moved to more commodious quarters, a room shared by only ten people. Max remained in the shelter the entire time he was in Shanghai. The cart was stolen. The police recovered it. The thief got six months. The police asked for \$500 to return the cart. The money, the police said, was to pay informants to turn in thieves. They accepted \$100.

December 3, 1939 Manfred rented a 14' X 7' store front and opened a cigarette shop. It was open from 6 a.m. till 1:30 a.m. the following day, every day, except Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Max helped run the store. Neither money nor merchandise could be left in the shop overnight.

Everything had to be schlepped twice daily. By this time, Manfred and Gerda had moved into a room of their own.

Their daughter, Edith, was born January 30, 1941. She became sick in 1942 and needed to be hospitalized. Manfred had no money. He asked the hospital director if he needed blood for transfusions. "All the time." They cut a deal.

July 1942, as the Sturmfuhrer had promised the Gestapo came to the Ghetto and insisted that the Japanese, exterminate all 18,000 European Jews in Shanghai. The Japanese refused, but they did agree to create a ghetto.

October 1942 the Oelsners moved into their store. Seven square feet of living space, no sewer or toilet.

The Japanese believed the Allies would not bomb a heavily populated civilian area so, they built munitions dumps in the ghetto. A month before VJ Day the Allies bombed it.

In 1948 Manfred, Gerda, and Edith were accepted into the U.S. Their ship stopped in Hawaii where Edith saw grass for the first time. In 1950, Max was transferred to a D.P. camp in Germany via San Francisco and New York, finally being allowed into the U.S. in 1953. They all became citizens in 1954.

Sisterhood

If anyone is interested in sponsoring a Kiddush just let Joyce Placzkowski know, 1-262-945-7675. The charge for a dairy Kiddush is \$50, meat Kiddush is \$100. The kitchen can always use paper goods. If you are interested in helping to make food for the Kiddush or a Shabbat dinner just let Joyce Placzkowski know.

Donations

Mark Hertzberg in honor of Annie and Louis Herzberg

Barry Langlieb general donation

Max Gordon in honor of David Lee

Beth Israel Sinai
3009 Washington Ave
Racine WI 53405

262-633-7093
Email: bethisraelsinai@att.net
Web: www.bethisraelsinai.org

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February 2021

Shabbat & Holiday Candle Lighting Time

February 5 4:52
February 12 5:01
February 19 5:11
February 26 5:20



February 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 <i>7 pm last class</i>	3	4	5 <i>7 pm service</i>	6 <i>10 am service</i>
7	8	9	10	11	12	13 <i>10 am service</i>
14	15 <i>Presidents Day</i>	16	17	18	19	20 <i>10 am service</i>
21 <i>2 pm board meeting</i>	22	23	24	25 <i>7 pm Purim service</i>	26 <i>Purim</i>	27 <i>10 am service</i>
28						