

# Beth Israel Sinai News

The Monthly Newsletter of Beth Israel Sinai Congregation

January 2024      Tevet / Shevat 5784

## Rabbi's Message

There is an old Yiddish phrase that goes "Tze zyna shvair tzu bin a Yid." **"It is hard to be a Jew."** No phrase better epitomizes the plight of the Jewish people throughout history. No other phrase has been used more often to justify assimilation. From the time of Alexander the Great to modern times, Jews have sought to assimilate into their host cultures. While many maintained their religious traditions, most preferred not to appear "too Jewish." Being traditionally Jewish became too much of an encumbrance for these "modern" individuals.

Historically, this had not always been the case. Our forefather Abraham was able to negotiate land deals with his Canaanite neighbors. Though his scholarly son Isaac lived largely off his father's wealth, Jacob and his sons expanding their holdings throughout the Middle East. Joseph, left dead by his jealous brothers, rose to become the chief economic advisor to Pharaoh with his beliefs and traditions. In fact, so persuasive was Joseph that his wife, the daughter of the Egyptian High Priest Potiphar, came to follow the traditions of her husband.

After the death of Joseph, there arose a Pharaoh "who knew not Joseph." (Exodus, Chapter 1). Jealous of their success in the fertile crescent of Goshen, Jews were cast into slavery. So assimilated had they become, that despite the onerous burden of slavery, they initially resisted Moses' attempts to free them. Remembering their prosperous life in Goshen, they thought that Pharaoh would eventually come to his senses. The Israelites would be reinstated to their former lofty position. As the story of Passover tells us, this would not happen. Only after the last of the 10 plagues, the killing of the Egyptian first born, would Pharaoh let our people go. A forty year journey began. A Golden Calf was built when the people thought Moses would not return from his meeting with G-d on Mt. Sinai. Despite these setbacks, the Am Yisroel accepted the sovereignty of the Torah. A 900 year period of religious renewal and commitment (1250-350 B.C.E.) would last until the time of Alexander the Great.

Greek culture appealed to many Jews. An enlightened ruler Alexander allowed his subject to practice their customs and beliefs provided they maintained political subservience to the state. Jewish philosophers, like Philo, emerged arguing that Jews should shed their more obvious differences. Observance of dietary laws and Shabbat became inconvenient. Saturday mornings were when most sports activities were conducted. Synagogues barely got a minyan despite that the Torah was now read in Greek since few Jews knew how to read Hebrew. Since Greek culture greatly admired the naked human form, some Hellenists (Jews who advocated the practice of Greek culture) tried to have their circumcisions reversed. Had it not been for the King Antiochus, who demanded forced conversion to gradual assimilation, Jewish culture might have disappeared from the Greek Empire. A Judah Maccabee would have had no one to save from tyranny.

This pattern of action and reaction would continue throughout Jewish history. Little evidence of Jewish participation in secular life has been recorded from the destruction of the Second Temple by the Roman Empire in 70CE to the end of the 7th Century. This allowed for the growth of Jewish laws known as the Mishnah and Talmud. From the rise of Mohammed until the Spanish, with "minor" setbacks like the Bubonic Plague where Jews were accused of poisoning the Christian water supply Jews flourished as advisors to both Islamic and Christian rulers. It was not uncommon for a pious Jew to simultaneously be a Rabbi, physician and financial advisor to the current ruler. Interesting, most of that individual's secular and religious knowledge would come from the 63 volumes of the Talmud. For these Jewish citizens, they felt it their obligation to both be an observant Jew and a proud participant of society. Unlike many Hellenistic (Greek) Jews, it never occurred to them to change their religious observance to become "accepted." Only the coming of the Spanish Inquisition made their existence as Jews virtually impossible. Those who could fled from Spain and Portugal eventually arriving in the Ottoman Empire and the New World. Others converted but maintain their customs secretly as Marranos. When caught for their duplicity, they suffered death at the hands of the Inquisition. Between the 16th and 19th centuries, with the exception of a few wealthy individuals and families like the famous banking House of Rothschild, Jews were segregated into ghettos. Their walls would only begin to breakdown after the French Revolution in 1789.

A "Golden Age" for Jews had begun-relatively speaking. Though still not allowed to participate in most political life in most European life until the middle of the 19th century, certainly "privileged" Jews were allowed to become bankers, doctors and lawyers. One English Jew whose father converted him to the Anglican Church after a dispute over dues to the Great Synagogue, Benjamin Disraeli, actually became Prime Minister. Proponents of a "Reformed" Judaism, led by Samuel Holdheim and Abraham Geiger in Germany encouraged Jews to discard many previously observed laws and customs. Observance of the dietary laws were discarded. Shabbat observance was limited to a short service conducted mostly in German. It was the sincere belief of scholar's like Geiger, Holdheim and their later contemporaries like American Rabbis David Einhorn and Isaac Meyer Wise, that only a more relaxed form of observance would prevent Jewish conversion to Christianity and acceptance into Gentile society. Whether this actually resulted in a lower rate of conversion is open to debate. Hitler would later prove that a Jew's personal religious observation was of no consequence to him.

The mid and later parts of the 20th century saw a renaissance of Jewish learning and participation. Descendants of Reformed Jews now light Shabbat candles and observe other traditional aspects of Judaism. Some Reform Jews keep kosher while others refuse to eat pork or shellfish. The acceptance of a more traditional liturgy has been incorporated into their liturgy.

While a minority of the Orthodox community still remains insular, most have sought a reproachment with secular society and less traditional Jews. While perhaps not the intellectual caliber of a Maimonides, Nachmonides or Luzzato, it is increasingly common to find Orthodox Rabbis and laymen earning their living in a secular world while remaining true to their Torah principles. The Lubavitch movement has an outreach program that has won the hearts and minds of many assimilated Jews.

What does the future hold? It is my belief that more Jews will embrace their "inner Jew" in a variety of ways. The thirst for Jewish learning is at a new high. However, our focus today is on something different than levels of religious observance. Since the massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh in 2018 and the subsequent desecration of our own synagogue in 2019 and 2022, world Jewry has faced a rise in global antisemitism. The Israel-Hamas war has exacerbated this situation. This has caused many Jews to question their commitment to the current government of Israel. Despite the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust, while most Jews support the current war to eradicate Hamas, others question whether the Israeli government has done enough to release the hostages and prevent the death of 20,000 Gazans.

As I look forward to celebrating with all of you the 60th anniversary on January 20th and my 24th year at Beth Israel Sinai, may we continue to grow from strength to strength.

**See you in Shul  
Rabbi Marty**

I want to thank everyone who helped with our Chanukah Dinner. It was so nice to be with our Beth Israel Sinai family celebrating Chanukah.

This month Rabbi Adelberg will be celebrating his 60th anniversary of his Bar Mitzvah on January 20, 2024. I hope you can all join us for the celebration either in person or by zoom.

Buy Israel Bonds. The war in Gaza is expensive. Give an Israel Bond to mark any occasion. Bonds are issued with several interest rates and maturities. Contact Israel Bonds at 800-253-2779 <https://israelbonds.com>

### **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. .

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 Marc Greenberg 702-465-4805

### **ZOOM LINK INFO**

**Meeting ID 86963820547**

**Passcode 812975**

**Phone Number**

**1-309-205-3325**

### **The Presidents Message**

I want to welcome the new members that joined Beth Israel Sinai this year. We are so happy to have you as a member.

You can easily join our synagogue family we have affordable full memberships and we have associate memberships for those who may live too far from us to become an active member. Whether you want to attend weekly or just when you have time please consider joining with a membership. Your membership helps to keep our synagogue open and vital.

If there are any programs you think would be interesting and they are on zoom let us know and we can try to have the program on zoom for you to enjoy at the synagogue.

You can reach me by phone 262-945-7675

Joyce Placzkowski President

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.

Arthur Domsky April 11, 1922—January 8, 2022

Do you recall a tall, well dressed gentleman who could daven with the best yet so self effacing he never accepted an Aliyah. Coat and tie, little, red feather peeking over the band of his Trilby hat, he spoke to few but knew everyone; where they came from, where they worked, their parents, spouses and their children. He was Art Domsky, the primary source for the yahrzeit sketches that appeared in this news letter for over a year. Art fell while shopping at Woodman's and broke his hip. Day by day he grew weaker. He wanted to go home. He passed away three months short of his 100th birthday.

Art kept a kosher home and prepared enough of each dish for several meals. He recorded the date each serving was prepared and its location in his freezer. Entrees repeated on schedule, fish on Thursday, chicken on Friday... Meals were served on time.

Until the end of his life Art drove all over Chicagoland to shop kosher grocers, butchers, fish mongers, and bakeries. The clerks knew which items he preferred and how he wanted them packaged. He bought brisket at Jewel in Highland Park, capon at Shaevits Kosher Meats in Highland Park, and fish at Robert's Fish Market in Chicago.

Art grew up on Hamilton Ave. with his mother, father and sister Mildred. In 1967 the city bought property to build South Memorial Drive and the family moved to 711 Lombard Ave.

Neither Art nor Mildred married. Millie worked full-time as a legal secretary for 30 years and did all the cooking and housework. Near the end of her life, she taught Art how to cook his favorite dishes and keep house. Art was on his own.

Art graduated from Park High in 1939. That year he won the Commercial Honor Club spelling award, joined the National Honor's Society, Equites Romani FL

Flae Duodecimae and the chess team. Art excelled at chess. "It was during the depression and chess was a cheap game. Bowling and golf cost money," he said. For decades Art played regularly. He was the County Chess Champion 6 times and earned many awards in city, county and state competitions. As his friends grew old and passed away games became less frequent. In 2000, after 11 years in retirement from chess and at age 77, Art placed 1st in the Racine-Kenosha invitational. He kept a move by move record of every game he played since 1949.

On his way home from school one day, Art stopped to ask for work at a drug store. His parents were shocked. The druggist, they explained, was a Kluxer (Klan member). Art's first paying job was in his grandfather's fruit business. He earned 3 cents an hour! They bought fruit at a wholesale market in Chicago when Art observed black people gleaning fruit that had fallen from trucks to the pavement. They used long sticks to turn over the fallen fruit. If the fruit was not damaged, they took it home. Art also worked for a New Deal program maintaining Sanders Park but quit because the foreman was a bitter antisemite. It was a tough decision at the bottom of the depression. After graduation from high school he was a clerk for Motor Transport Company, a freight forwarding outfit on State street across from Supreme Bakery.

In 1947 he joined the parts department at Massey-Fergusson. Art served on the UAW bargaining team that negotiated the thirty-and-out pension benefit which he retired under in 1977 at the age of 55. Art pointed out to the company that the cost of the pension plan was less than the price of one combine.

Every year Art raised tomatoes—big red one pounders— from seeds of the previous crop and shared the bounty with neighbors and friends.

Bix Beiderbecke, a fast living, jazz musician of the roaring 20's, was Art's favorite recording artist. Every year Art drove himself to the Bix Beiderbecke festival in Davenport Iowa. Art belonged to the orthodox shul on Superior Street. When it closed in 1964 Art joined Beth Israel Sinai. He and Max Sheft ran the cemetery for decades. Art also attended Chabad of Kenosha, belonged to B'nai B'rith and was an Hadassah associate. "I grew up during the Depression:. Art explained once, "I have deep pockets." People in a position to know told me of his pockets were indeed deep and that he donated to every charity that solicited him.

#### 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

Mary Vite general donation  
Rick Schaefer general donation and Rabbi Fund  
Robert Miller general donation  
Joyce Placzkowski general donation  
Anonymous general donation  
Max Gordon in honor of Joyce Placzkowski birthday

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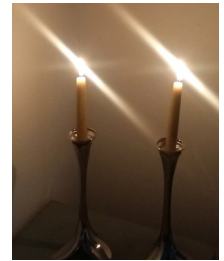
rabbi@bethisraelsinai.org

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**BETH ISRAEL SINAI**  
**January 2024**  
**Tevet Shevat 5784**

**Shabbat & Holiday Candle Lighting Times**

January 5 4:12  
 January 12 4:20  
 January 19 4:28  
 January 26 4:37



# January 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6 <i>service 10 am in person and zoom</i>
7	8	9	10	11	12	13 <i>service 10 am in person and zoom</i>
14	15 <i>Martin Luther King Jr. Day</i>	16	17 <i>6 pm board meeting</i>	18	19	20 <i>service 10 am in person and zoom Rabbi anniversary 60</i>
21	22	23	24	25 <i>Tu B'Shevat</i>	26	27 <i>service 10 am in person and zoom</i>
28	29	30	31			