

# Beth Israel Sinai News

The Monthly Newsletter of Beth Israel Sinai Congregation

February 2025 Shevat 5785

## Rabbi's Message

There is an old Yiddish phrase that goes "Tze zyn a shvair tzu bin a yid." It is hard to be a Jew. No better phrase epitomizes the Jewish plight throughout history. No other phrase has been used more often to justify assimilation. From the time of Alexander the Great to the 19th century period of enlightenment, Jews have sought to assimilate into their host cultures. While some maintained their religious traditions, most preferred not to be "too Jewish". Being traditionally Jewish became too much of an encumbrance for these "modern" individuals.

This had not always been the case. Our forefather Abraham was able to negotiate land deals with his Canaanite neighbors. Though Isaac lived largely off of his father's inheritance, Jacob and his sons expanded their wealth to include holdings throughout the Middle East. Joseph, despite being left for dead by his brothers, rose to become the chief economic advisor to the Pharaoh while maintaining his traditions. In fact, so persuasive was Joseph that his wife, a daughter of the Egyptian high priest, came to follow the customs of her husband.

After Joseph's death there arose a Pharaoh "who knew not Joseph" (Exodus, Chap. 1). Jews were cast into slavery. So assimilated had they become, despite their onerous burden of slavery, they initially resisted Moses' attempts to free them. Having enjoyed a prosperous life in Goshen, they thought that Pharaoh would eventually come to his senses. The Israelites would be reinstated to their former position. As the story of Passover indicates this would not happen. Only after the last of the ten plagues, the killing of the Egyptian first born, did Pharaoh let our people go. A forty year journey began. Several unsuccessful attempts were made to return to Egypt. A Golden Calf was built when the people thought Moses would not return from his awesome meeting with the Holy One on Mount Sinai. Despite these setbacks, the Israelites eventually accepted the primacy of the Torah. This 900 year period of religious renewal (1250-350 B.C.E.) would last until the time of Alexander the Great.

The Greek culture appealed to many Jews. An enlightened ruler, Alexander allowed his subjects to practice their customs and beliefs provided they maintained political subservience to the state. Jewish philosophers emerged arguing that perhaps Jews should shed their more obvious differences. Observance of dietary laws and the Shabbat became inconvenient. Saturday mornings, in an age before cartoons, was when all the sports activities were conducted. Synagogues could barely get a minyan despite the fact that the Torah was now read in Greek since few Jews could read Hebrew. Had it not been for the Syrian King Antiochus, who preferred forced conversion to gradual assimilation, Jewish culture might have disappeared from ancient Greece. 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 (70 C.E.) to the end of the 7th century. This allowed for the growth of rabbinical seminaries (Yeshivot) to compose the code of laws, The Mishnah and the Talmud. From the rise of Mohammed until the Spanish Inquisition, Jews flourished as advisors to both Islamic and Christian rulers. It was not uncommon for a saintly Jew to be simultaneously a Rabbi—Physician—Financial Advisor and General. Interestingly, most of his secular and religious knowledge would come from the 63 volumes of the Talmud. For these individuals it was easy to be both an observant Jew and a proud participant in society. Unlike the Greek Jews, it would never occur to them to change their religious observance in order to become "accepted". Only the advent of the Spanish Inquisition made their existence as Jews almost impossible. Those who could fled to Spain and Portugal. Others converted but maintained their customs secretly (Marranos). Jews in Southern Europe and Russia would segregate 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 political life in most European countries until the end of the 19th century, quotas of Jews were allowed to become bankers, doctors and lawyers. To further their acceptance into Gentile society, 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 men like Geiger and Holdheim that only a more relaxed form of observance would prevent Jewish conversion to Christianity to achieve their political and social goals. Whether this reduced the number of outright conversions is debatable. As Hitler would later prove, one's particular Jewish beliefs were of no concern to him. The mid and later parts of the 20th century saw a renaissance in Jewish learning and participation. Descendants of classical Reform Jews now light Shabbat candles and observe many traditional aspects of Judaism. Many Reform households keep Kosher while others refuse to eat pork or shellfish. The acceptance of a more traditional liturgy has been incorporated into The Gates of Prayer, Gates of Repentance and Mishkah Tefilla.

It is my belief that a greater respect within the Jewish community will replace previous intolerance. The thirst for Jewish learning is at a new high. Day schools representing all the mainstream movements are being built at an unprecedented rate. More young people are visiting Israel. In our community, participation in Jewish activities is required for our survival. Many of our congregants obviously agree. Beth Israel Sinai has seen an increase in attendance at Saturday services. No matter how busy you are, one should try to attend at least on Saturday morning service a month. Make it of equal importance to a Saturday sports event. No longer is it "Hard to be a Jew". It is an honor to participate in the survival of Racine Jewry and the entire "K'lal Yisroel" - Community of Israel.

See you in Shul  
Rabbi Marty

Rabbi Adelberg will be celebrating his Bar Mitzvah on Saturday, February 1, 2025. Please come and celebrate with us.

You can come in person or zoom to join in any of our services. The zoom link is in a box below this box, we also send out emails to our email list members with a link to join on zoom.

### **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.

### Linda Hulbert Story

Rabbi Hyman Cohen was the Rabbi at Beth Israel Sinai throughout Linda Hulbert's childhood. This is her story.

I have been a member or member adjacent my whole life. My parents Ruth and Dave Hulbert and my dad's parents Etta and Nathan Hulbert are part of the fabric of the congregation. My grandfather and grandmother were involved in synagogue life from before the existence of Beth Israel. My grandmother started the first Sunday School.

I was married to my first husband in the synagogue by Rabbi Cohen. My father was president of the congregation that year. There were 300 members at that time. All were invited to the dinner, there were 100 people there!

Our lives circled around the 10th Street building. My parents developed a warm relationship with Rabbi Cohen and his wife as well as the rabbis that came after him. In the 50s and 60s the choices for Jewish membership were very limited. None of the country clubs accepted Jews except for a token family or two.

Life cycle events were held at the synagogue. My parents would have anniversary celebrations there and of course, we participated in all congregational events. Holidays which were celebrated at home holidays, were always recognized with food, family, and friends. My parents hosted large Passover seders and always included people without family. Often there were 25-30 people in attendance. Everyone brought food. The requirement was to ring the doorbell with your elbow because your hands were too full of food. We kept kosher at home so that my grandparents could eat at our house.

My Bat Mitzvah was in 1960. At that time, women and girls were not allowed on the bima or to touch Torah. So my celebration was on Friday night where I chanted haftarah. I didn't even go to services which stuns me now-my uncles, not members of the congregation, chanted the Torah portion I would have read-Chaye Sarah. I have since had an adult bat mitzvah-correct for that loss as a kid.

My how things change.

#### 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  
Joyce Placzkowski general donation  
Anonymous general donation

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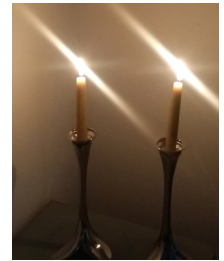
rabbi@bethisraelsinai.org

Web: www.bethisraelsinai.org

**BETH ISRAEL SINAI**  
**February 2025**  
**Shevat 5785**

**Shabbat & Holiday Candle Lighting Times**

February 7 4:54  
 February 14 5:04  
 February 21 5:13  
 February 28 5:22



# February 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						<i>1</i> service 10 am in person and zoom
<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i> service 10 am in person and zoom
<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i> Tu B'Shevat	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i> service 10 am in person and zoom
<i>16</i>	<i>17</i> Presidents' Day	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>22</i> service 10 am in person and zoom
<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>28</i>	