

Chai~Lights



January 2014

29 Tevet - 30 Shevat 5774

Lighting the KJCC Chanukiah - page 21
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Gloria Explains Tu B'Shvat - page 31

Keys Jewish Community Center

P.O. Box 1332 • Tavernier, FL 33070 • 305-852-5235 • keysjewishcenter.com

January 2014

29 Tevet - 31 Shevat

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Men's Club Game Night 7:30	2	3 Yardena Kamely Richard Knowles <i>Arlene & John Line</i>	4
5 Sisterhood Meeting 9:30 a.m.	6	7	8	9	10 Steve Hartz & Steve Steinbock <i>Patti & David Gross</i>	11
12 KJCC Board Meeting 9 a.m.	13	14	15	16 Tu B'Shvat	17 KJCC Religious School and Teachers Shabbat Dinner 6:30	18 Torah Learning Service w/ Rabbi Agler 10 a.m.
19 Tu B'Shvat seder & tree plant- ing at KJCC	20	21	22	23	24 KJCC Sisterhood Service <i>Carol & Steve Steinbock</i>	25
26	27	28	29	30	31 Erica Lieberman- Garrett 6:30 Service	

2013 - 2014 Officers and Board

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Newsletter

Lisa Richardson Rutherford

CHAI-LIGHTS is the
monthly publication of the
Keys Jewish Community Center

P.O. Box 1332

Tavernier, Florida 33070

chailights@keysjewishcenter.com

President's Message Bernard Ginsberg



I am writing my column today with a sore back from dancing at Westley Silverman's Bar Mitzvah party. It's good to have little aches that are earned by performing *mitzvahs* like this celebration. Our little synagogue has been hit by plenty of tragedies lately, but great Bar Mitzvahs, like Westley's, Will Pollack's and Zach Schrader-Grace's, balance the scale of happiness and sadness and even push us toward the happiness (*simcha*) side of the scale.

It was great to see the Silverman and Berman families having a great time, and have them pack the synagogue with family members who knew a thing or two about how and when to say the *Brochas* and answer amen and participate in a Torah service. It is obviously from family that Westley got his inspiration. As I mentioned in my remarks at the service, he even taught me something about the stained-glass windows in our sanctuary, pointing out that the depiction of a dove with an olive branch was not merely a sign of peace (as I had thought), but an illustration of a teaching brought out by Joyce Peckman's son Daniel when he led services a few weeks before. Daniel recalled the legend that Noah decided to open his Ark after the great flood only after a dove he released came back with an olive branch with olives on it.

Noah then was said to have pressed those olives into oil that was hidden and passed down amongst the Jews until it was needed for lighting the lamp in the Temple for the first Chanukah.

Westley showed that he could not only learn, but learn from and *expand* on what he'd heard in the synagogue. When the Hebrew school student can teach the synagogue president, you know that we are doing something right in our religious school. This is the best reward for our efforts; to know that we are producing young people who will continue the story of our people and faith into the future. Unfortunately we recently lost founding member Stephan Ban, but I am sure that he and all our deceased founders are looking down from on high. They are undoubtedly happy with the dividends their investments in the KJCC have made, culminating in a Bar Mitzvah like Westley's.

If you missed our group menorah (chanukiah) lighting, you missed something else very special. I thank all of Sisterhood, especially Erica Garrett and President Barbara Knowles, for your efforts at this and all our wonderful synagogue functions.

Happy New Year, Bernie

Nosh

KJCC Scholarships

If your child has been a student in our Religious School and is applying to an institution of higher education, he or she may be eligible for a KJCC Scholarship. Applications and guidelines are now available. Completed applications must be submitted between January 1st and April 1st; awards will be announced in May. KJCC wants to give our students a helping hand in their first year. Call David Gitin, Scholarship Chairman, at 305-393-4979 for applications and more information. Applications can now also be downloaded from the KJCC web site, keysjewishcenter.com.

BOOK PLATE

In honor of my mother
Bianka Kirschenbaum
by Medina Roy
2013

Oneg Sponsors for January 2014

January 3rd - John and Arlene Line to celebrate the birthday of Crue Lamarche.

January 10th - David and Patty Gross to honor Alvin Gross.

January 17th - An Anonymous Donor is sponsoring the pre-Shabbat dinner.

January 24th - Steve and Carol Steinbock to celebrate Carol's birthday.

Meditation Garden Brick

**MARIANNE CIMKOWSKI
LOVING MOTHER OF
CAROL ANN STEINBOCK
& STEVE STEINBOCK
3/24/1917 - 11/19/2013
LINDA & JOEL POLLACK**

Meditation Garden Brick

**WILL TRAVIS POLLACK
BAR MITZVAH HONORS
WITH LOVE FROM
GRANDMA AND GRANDPA
POLLACK**

Rabbi Agler's January Torah Service

The great gift to KJCC of Rabbi Richard Agler's monthly Torah Learning Services will continue on Saturday, January 18th at 10:00 a.m. in the KJCC sanctuary. For those of you who haven't been able to attend, there is a brief Torah service followed by a spirited discussion of that week's Torah portion based on the probing questions and learned guidance of Rabbi Agler. Many have quietly told us that they miss the majesty of Torah readings, since the Torah isn't brought from the Ark on Friday nights. Well, to those lamenters, here's your chance.

The 2014 Directory is Nigh

We've recently received a number of e-mail changes from members. Since we're close to going into production on the new KJCC Membership Directory, now would be a good time for all of you to make sure we have your most recent address(es), phones, e-mail and even (hey, it happens) name or marital status changes. Please send any changes to Bernie at president@keysjewishcenter.com by the 15th.

A Shabbat Dinner on January 17th

Sisterhood will be sponsoring and hosting another of their wonderful Shabbat Dinners prior to services on Friday, January 17th. Dinner will begin at 6:30, followed by services at 8:00. Due to a sponsorship, there is no charge to members. The cost for all non-members will be \$15. Contact Joyce Peckman for reservations and to arrange to contribute a covered dish. Also see the ad on page 10 for further details.

January Birthdays

1st.....	Jerry Olsen
1st.....	Justin Wade Gilson
1st.....	Laura Goodman
2nd.....	Sherrie Willner
2nd.....	Stanley Rosenberg
3rd.....	Crue LaMarche
4th.....	Howard Gilson
4th.....	Randi W. Freundlich
6th.....	Janice Gorson
6th.....	Stanley Margulies
8th.....	Jessica Hernstadt
8th.....	Matthew Barrett
8th.....	Roger Levy
9th.....	Cathy Rakov
9th.....	Deborah Beinfest
9th.....	Sarah Kamely
10th.....	Martin Fabian
10th.....	Nancy Yankow
11th.....	Michelle Zinner
12th.....	Alex Dutton
12th.....	Meredith A. Cline
13th.....	Amy Nobil
15th.....	Charlie Horowitz
15th.....	Heather Gilson
15th.....	Jamie Goodman
15th.....	Jill Taksey
16th.....	Brieze Levy
16th.....	Donald Zinner
17th.....	Andrea Kluger
17th.....	Neal Rakov
17th.....	Suzi-Sarot Feder
18th.....	Barry Alter
19th.....	Benjamin Friedman
19th.....	Mark Kanarek
19th.....	Sandy Seder
20th.....	Mary Terner
20th.....	Sy Gelbard
22nd.....	Sheila Olsen
24th.....	Stuart Grossman
26th.....	Carol Ann Steinbock
26th.....	Marshall Kaplan
27th.....	Beth Hudson
27th.....	Pat VanArtsdalen
28th.....	Yardena Kamely
29th.....	Beth Kaminstein
29th.....	Jeffrey Boruszak
30th.....	Kristen M. Schur

January Anniversaries

	Years
1st	Sanford & Nancy Yankow.....24
4th	Steve & Amelia Kasinof.....33
8th	Steve & Luzviminda Levine.....6
12th	George & Muriel Swartz.....34
17th	Alan & Elaine Schulberg.....21
23rd	Marvin & Ivy Blumenfeld.....65
26th	David & Pamela Marmar.....29

Meditation Garden Brick

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF
MARIANNE CIMKOWSKI
MOTHER OF CAROL ANN
THE KNOWLES FAMILY**

Yahrzeit Plaque

In Loving Memory of My Father
Jose (Pepe) Cohen Charaf
October 8, 2013
Jenny Cohen Margulies and Stanley Margulies

Meditation Garden Brick

**IN MEMORY OF
ROSIE BISKAR,
MOTHER OF SAM VINICUR.
A TALENTED ARTIST
WHO WILL BE MISSED BY
ALL YOUR FRIENDS
AND FAMILY AT KJCC.**

BOOK PLATE

In honor of
Gloria Avner
by David Gitin

The KJCC offers its deepest condolences to
**Eva Ban and Judy, Frank, Kelley,
Susie and Katie Greenman**
and their families plus the legion of others
who loved him on the death of
Stephan Ban,
Holocaust survivor and
a founding member of KJCC.

Our New Tanakhs Need Sponsors

During the portion of Rabbi Agler's Saturday services when we discuss the Torah portion, we always put aside our Siddurs and pick up the Tanakhs that we keep in the sanctuary bookshelves so we can all read the Biblical text together. But lately we've developed a very nice problem. Attendance at Rabbi Agler's services has been growing so quickly that we no longer had enough

Tanakhs to go around. So Gloria, our Ritual Committee Chair, ordered twelve more books. If you'd like to sponsor one (or more) of the books, the cost is \$36 each (the actual cost of the book); as with our Siddurs, your donation will include the bookplate text of your choice inside the front cover. Please use the form on page 24 for your order(s), or contact Gloria or Linda Pollack.

Celebrate Tu B'Shvat on January 19th

On Sunday, January 19th, the KJCC Religious School students will conduct their annual Tu B'Shevat seder, celebrating one of the four New Years of our tradition - did you know there were four? - this one for the trees. A new fruit tree will be planted in the students' nascent orchard. All KJCC members are invited to attend and join in the festivities. Gloria has also written about the wonderful trees in this issue. Her article begins on page 31.

Ongoing Projects and Mitzvah Programs of KJCC

SUNSHINE COMMITTEE: If you know of any member who should receive a get well, congratulations or condolence card from the KJCC, call Gene Silverman at 305-664-3316.

CEMETERY INFORMATION: If you wish to plan for the very distant future, you can reserve space at the Kendall Mt. Nebo Cemetery in the KJCC section. Call Stuart Sax, 305-586-8729.

MEDITATION GARDEN: Have you visited our beautiful garden? Call Steve Steinbock, 305-852-6152, to reserve a bench, brick or tree plaque for posterity.

PICTURE POSTCARDS: We have beautiful picture postcards in the KJCC Gift Shop bearing the Millard Wells representation of the KJCC which was commissioned by Sisterhood. They can be packaged to fit your needs and mailed to you or your gift recipient. The price is \$36 per hundred but we will sell lesser quantities. Contact Susan Gordon, 305-766-3585.

ONEG SHABBAT SPONSOR: To schedule your special date with Sisterhood, call Joyce Peckman at 305-451-0665.

KJCC TREE OF LIFE LEAVES and ROCKS, SANCTUARY SEAT PLATES, YARTZEIT MEMORIAL PLAQUES, BOOKPLATES for siddurim: Call Carol Steinbock to arrange your donation, 305-852-6152.

JNF TREES IN ISRAEL: A gift of a tree, or two or more, makes a long remembered way to honor a loved one, a relative, a friend or an occasion. Both Israel and the KJCC benefit. Call Georgia Landau, 305-393-9885.

CHAI-LIGHTS MITZVAH: Place a greeting or notice in Chai-Lights. Call Carol Steinbock, 305-852-6152, to make your donation.

ADVERTISEMENT IN CHAI-LIGHTS or DIRECTORY: Your business ad will appear in every issue of Chai-Lights. Call Linda Pollack, 305-852-8575, for annual rates.

Call the names listed above for assistance or send your request and check to the KJCC, P.O. Box 1332, Tavernier, FL 33070. Recipients of your gifts will be notified by card and listings will appear in Chai-Lights as well. Honorarium and memorial cards can also be requested. Donations can be earmarked to our various ongoing funds; e.g. Holocaust Education Fund, Meditation Garden, Rabbi & Cantor Fund, Scholarship Fund, Sara Cohen Memorial Tzedukah Fund, Sunshine Fund, or General Fund.

Hebrew Classes Plus Lecture Series

Yardena has given us the schedules for both her Hebrew Classes and annual lecture series.

First, Hebrew classes: at least initially, there will be two scheduled classes. On Friday mornings from 9:30 till 11:00 there will be Intermediate Hebrew reading and understanding of the Siddur. On Sundays from noon till 1:30 she will offer a Hebrew beginners crash course. No advanced Ulpan class is scheduled at this point.

Her lecture series this year will build off last year's, continuing "The Three Abrahamic Religions." Part One will explore the history of Jewish communities under Islamic rule, from 500 - 1500 C.E. This covers the period known as "The Golden Age of Judaism," the Karaite revolt, and the period that produced Judah Halevi, Rashi and Maimonides. Part Two will offer two lectures focusing on the challenges of pluralism within the Abrahamic faiths. The dates will be January 26th, February 2nd, February 23rd, and March 2nd. All lectures will take place Sunday evenings from 7-9 p.m. Light refreshments will be served.

Please contact Yardena directly if you wish to sign up for Hebrew classes.

Leaf on the Tree of Life

To honor

Rosie Biskar

Our Mah Jongg Friend

10/19/2013

Meditation Garden Brick

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF
MICHAL KAMELY
MOTHER OF YARDENA,
URI AND DAPHNE
YOU WILL ALWAYS BE
REMEMBERED AS OUR
INSPIRATIONAL TEACHER
YOUR KJCC MISHPOCHA**

Birthday of the Trees

I love a religion that celebrates
the birthday of the trees

grow an orchard year by year
avocados
pomegranates
mangoes
soursop limes

shovels ready
children plead
may I dig now
it's my turn next
bring the soil
manure
the mulch the hose
the prayer book

we sing and dance our water song
raise arms to sky in supplication
move in move out
shout mayim mayim mayim mayim
millennia of tent dwellers
new moon watchers

we bless the trees
hold hands
dirt under our fingernails
make a home for future fruit
our children-to-be

Gloria Avner, December 2013

KJCC Gift Shop



Tallit, Kipot, Kiddush Cups, Candlesticks
Mezuzzot, Jewelry and More!



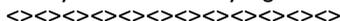
For further information contact:
Susan Gordon (305) 766-3585

In Memoriam January 2014

In Memory Of

Talia Agler

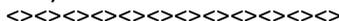
By Richard & Mindy Agler



In Memory Of

Bernice Bernstein

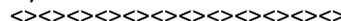
By Paul & Barbara Bernstein



In Memory Of

Laurie Beth

By Alan Beth & Candace Stanlake



In Memory Of

Annette Bitton

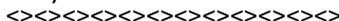
By Michel Bitton & Sylvie Coeurjoly



In Memory Of

David Pearlman

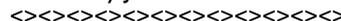
By William & Donna Bolton



In Memory Of

Emma Kohlenbrener

By Joan Boruszak



In Memory Of

Irving Kulick

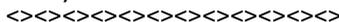
By Thomas & Renee Brodie



In Memory Of

Betty Weinstein

By Dick & Rita Bromwich



In Memory Of

Rita Z. Cline

By Meredith A. Cline



In Memory Of

Miriam S. Marks

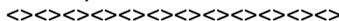
By Meredith A. Cline



In Memory Of

Carolynne H. Cline

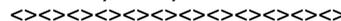
By Meredith A. Cline



In Memory Of

David Cohn

By Nancy L. Cohn



In Memory Of

Yetta Hitzig

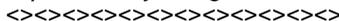
By Wes & Rita Conklin



In Memory Of

Lola Rosenberg

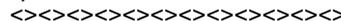
By Robert & Joni Sages Dandrea



In Memory Of

Henry H. Rubin

By Foster Davidson & Carol Laskin



In Memory Of

Nathan Weisberg

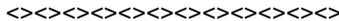
By Gerri Emkey



In Memory Of

Sofia Ojeda

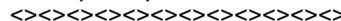
By Mark & Sofy Wasser



In Memory Of

Marvin Greenbaum

By Marilyn Greenbaum



In Memory Of

Judy Lombardi

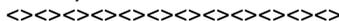
By Marilyn Greenbaum



In Memory Of

Alvin S. Gross

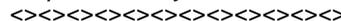
By David & Patti Gross



In Memory Of

Iris Jackson

By Kenneth & Jerri Grossman



In Memoriam January 2014

In Memory Of

Louis Hartz

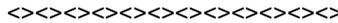
By Steven & Jan Hartz



In Memory Of

Daniel Harvey

By Mitchell Harvey



In Memory Of

Ernest Isenberg

By Patricia Isenberg



In Memory Of

Sylvia Emsig

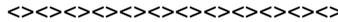
By Lawrence & Pearl Jacobs



In Memory Of

Bernard Kaminstein

By Beth Kaminstein



In Memory Of

Irving Rosen

By Harvey & Joan Kay



In Memory Of

Walter Hankin

By Richard & Barbara Knowles



In Memory Of

Goldie Schweitzer

By Richard & Barbara Knowles



In Memory Of

Samuel Neubauer

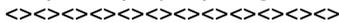
By Jackie LePree



In Memory Of

John Evans

By Stanley & Jenny Margulies



In Memory Of

Sydney Zinner

By Donald Zinner



In Memory Of

Betty Weinstein

By Jerry & Sheila Olsen



In Memory Of

Eta Brownstein

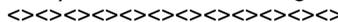
By Pauline Roller



In Memory Of

Nat Gulkis

By Alan & Elaine Schulberg



In Memory Of

Bea Gulkis

By Alan & Elaine Schulberg



In Memory Of

Joan Kaminsky

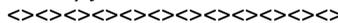
By Alan & Elaine Schulberg



In Memory Of

Joseph Cohen

By Jules & Nettie Seder



In Memory Of

Ellen Kutner Sklar

By Miriam R. Sklar



In Memory Of

Sally Sussman

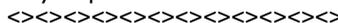
By Richard & Sheila Steinberg



In Memory Of

Karen Hayhurst

By Stephen & Carol Steinbock



In Memory Of

Abraham Raij

By Salomon Terner



Contributions to KJCC

We appreciate the thoughtfulness of those who support the Keys Jewish Community Center by remembering and honoring their friends and loved ones through their generous contributions. All donations made after the fifth of the month will appear in the following month's Chai-Lights. When you make a donation, please signify the fund it is to go to and the recognition of the name or names to be listed.

<i>Bookplates</i>	<i>In Honor of</i>	<i>Sisterhood</i>	<i>In Honor of</i>
Ginsberg, Bernard	KJCC	Pollack, Joel & Linda	Will Pollack's Bar Mitzvah
Gitin, David	Gloria Avner	<i>Sisterhood Oneg Fund</i>	<i>In Honor of</i>
Roy, Medina	mother Bianka Kirschenbaum	Pollack, Linda	Joel's birthday
<i>Count Your Blessings</i>		<i>Sunshine Fund</i>	<i>In Memory of</i>
Peckman, Joyce		Roy, Medina	Muriel Cantanese
Pollack, Joel & Linda		<i>Yahrzeits</i>	<i>In Memory of</i>
Sax, Stuart & Lauren		Boruszak, Joan Julius Kohlenbrener, Burton Boruszak	Robert Coltman, Eva Levine
Gelbard, Sy		Coltman, Barney	Milton Applebaum
Barefoot, Rosemary		Rubin, Mike & Myrna	Sylvia Grossman
Landau, Georgia		Grossman, Stuart	Gary Kreitman
<i>General Fund</i>	<i>In Honor of</i>	Kreitman, Marcia	David Cohn
Kaufman, Michael & Lorena	Sean's naming ceremony	Cohn, Nancy	
Nelson, Darling J.		<i>Yahrzeit Plaques</i>	<i>In Memory of</i>
Wasser, Alan & Arlene	always nice sharing Shabbos with the Keys Community	Margulies, Stanley & Jenny	Jose Cohen Charaf
<i>General Fund</i>	<i>In Memory of</i>		
Foley, Dr. Robert	Rosie Biskar, Ron Levy		
Islamorada Firefighters Benevolent Assoc.	Ron Levy		
Roller, Pauline	Marianne Cimkowski		
Stone Family	Gerald Hirsch		
<i>Holidays</i>			
Rose, Skip			
<i>Meditation Garden</i>	<i>In Honor of</i>		
Pollack, Joel & Linda	brick - Will Pollack's Bar Mitzvah		
<i>Meditation Garden</i>	<i>In Memory of</i>		
Bloom, Marc	Rosie Biskar		
Knowles, Richard & Barbara	brick - Marianne Cimkowski		
Pollack, Joel & Linda	brick - Marianne Cimkowski		
Roy, Medina	Rosie Biskar		
Steinberg, Richard & Sheila	Peter F. Steinberg		
<i>Scholarship Fund</i>	<i>In Memory of</i>		
Bloom, Marc	Michal Kameley		
Roy, Medina	Ron Levy		

How Certain Contributions to KJCC Can Instantly Become Permanent, Living Memorials

Book Plates: We are, after all, the People of the Book. For \$36 an inscription of your choice will be placed in one of our Siddurim or Tanakhs.

Tree of Life Leaves: We have two beautiful, six-foot Trees of Life — the world's most enduring spiritual metaphor — adorning the wall at the rear of the KJCC sanctuary. For \$75 an individual, golden leaf can be engraved with your message of memory or love.

Garden Bricks: \$125 buys a single brick and \$200 a double brick in our magnificent Meditation Garden walkway, engraved with your personal message.

KJCC
SISTERHOOD SHABBAT
DINNER



FRIDAY, JANUARY 17,
2014

6:30 PM

COVERED DISH

~DAIRY~

*Contact Joyce @ 305 451-0665
joycepeckman@gmail.com to reserve your
spot and coordinate your covered dish.*

Sponsored Dinner - no charge

Sisterhood Barbara Knowles



Well, December is here and I am looking forward to January when KJCC high season hits full stride.

I hope everyone who attended our Chanukah Dinner on Friday, November 29th, enjoyed themselves. We worked hard to make sure there was an abundance of food, especially latkes, to eat. Kudos to Erica Garrett for running this dinner and helping in the kitchen and basically doing everything from start to finish. I also want to send a special thanks to our president, Bernie Ginsberg, and to Erica, Nettie and Jules Seder for spending their Thanksgiving day at the KJCC laboring over the hot stove making "lots of latkes" for the rest of us to enjoy. Thanks go to everyone who helped contribute to the success of this event, especially to Joel and Linda Pollack for sponsoring all of our Chanukah dinners for as long as I can remember.

It's great to welcome the remainder of our snowbirds back, which means that until it gets hot again, we'll have all our *mishpocha* here to visit with. Since everyone's here, allow me to remind everyone that we still have plenty of open dates for sponsoring an oneg. If you want to celebrate a mitzvah, anniversary, birthday, homecoming or anything at all, contact Joyce Peckman to make arrangements. And speaking of Joyce, Sisterhood will be having a covered dairy dish dinner on Friday, January 17, 2014 at 6:30 p.m. Joyce is coordinating, so call her at 451-0665, to arrange your covered dish and to reserve your spot. This dinner has been sponsored so there is no charge to members. (There will be a \$15.00 charge for all non-members.)

We all enjoyed the recent Bar Mitzvah of Westley Silverman on Dec. 14th. His hard work showed and paid off. He truly did an awesome job. And his family was awesome, too.

As I write, the special weekend of beautiful cantorial singing and rabbinical teachings and therefore multiple treats for our ears, intellect

and spirituality are less than two weeks away. After the 10 a.m. Shabbat morning and Torah service by Rabbi Richard Agler and visiting Cantor Irwin Gelman, Sisterhood will be hosting a catered Kiddush brunch in the Richardson Social Hall. Then, shortly after brunch, those interested have been invited to Burton Memorial Church to experience the peace service by the visiting Buddhist monks. Please let me know how you felt about any or all of it.

I thought since our Northerners are back, I'd send out a friendly reminder that Sisterhood meets at 9:30 a.m. on the first Sunday of every month in the KJCC Ruth Richardson Hall. Sisterhood plays a very important part in the everyday functioning of our synagogue. There is never a separate membership fee and every female member of KJCC is automatically welcome at the breakfast meeting. I think you'll find it well worth your time, and we need you. Our meetings are mostly about planning activities, events and services we provide KJCC, and we also enjoy each other's company while we're there. We've had a lot of great ideas in our recent meetings, and we'd love to have your input, too. So please join us.

A group from Sisterhood will be conducting services on Friday, January 24th, 2014, led by Erica Lieberman-Garrett, so we look forward to a good attendance by all. By the time you read this, Richard, Moira and I will have just returned from a five-day cruise. But before we go I will print off some extra copies of Sisterhood's "Count Your Blessings" fundraiser and leave them on the back table. Whenever you feel particularly grateful, please fill one out and send in your donations.

Together let's make January "A Great Month!" ◇



**Keys Jewish Community Center
Adult Ed Program**

**JEWISH REFUGEES FROM ARAB
COUNTRIES**

Date: Sunday, Feb. 16, 2014

Time: 7:00 pm at the KJCC

DVD: The Forgotten Refugees

Running Time: 49 minutes

"The Forgotten Refugees" of the Arab-Israeli conflict is an untold story of the Middle East.

"The world has long recognized the Palestinian refugee problem, but without recognizing the other side of the story - the 850,000 Jewish refugees of Arab countries."

**Ronald S. Lauder, President
World Jewish Congress**

Discussion and light refreshments to follow.

**Questions: Contact Medina Roy
hiitsmedee@gmail.com**



World Jewish Report

Medina Roy



He's "Just a Regular Jewish Kid....."

Max Levin, 16, from Voorhees, New Jersey makes more money just sitting in his math class than most people make in a day at the office. His grandfather, a day trader in New York City, started teaching him how to pick stocks when he was just 11. Two years later, Levin used his Bar Mitzvah money to buy and sell stocks every school day in between classes. To honor his grandfather, who died in 2012, Levin launched *StockPick101.com*, a website devoted to helping young people learn the fundamentals of stocks including investing and trading. The young man currently writes weekly articles using the name "StockPick Whiz Kid" for *MainStreet* and *TheStreet*, two online publications connected to Jim Cramer, the host of CNBC's *Mad Money*. Levin says that when he's not trading stocks, he's just "a regular Jewish kid." He plays lacrosse and is a member of the debate and mock trial teams at his high school. He attends Congregation Beth El in his hometown. His future plans? He'd like to start his own hedge fund. (*The Forward*, 11-19-13)

"A Chanukah Miracle"

Chanukah may be over, but the Israeli Mission to the United Nations received what they are calling "a Chanukah miracle" when, in early December, the UN passed an Israeli-sponsored resolution on a bill dedicated to sustainable agricultural advancements for developing nations. The bill saw a record number of member states - 138 in total - voting "yes" on the resolution, making this the third time in its history at the UN that Israel has passed a resolution by a majority vote. The mission said the bill emphasizes the introduction and use of agricultural technologies specifically by young people and women in Africa. Bolivia was the only country to vote "no." The resolution had 105 cosponsors with Israel. (*www.jpost.com*, 12-6-13)

IDF in the Philippines

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) emergency medical team left the Philippines 11 days after arriving there on November 13th to aid victims of the November 8th typhoon. The 148-person medical team brought 100 tons of humanitarian and medical supplies. They treated more than 3,000 patients (including 800 children), performed 52 surgeries and delivered 36 babies, most of them premature. The mother of one baby named her son *Israel*. At the time of this writing, the official death toll from the gigantic storm was 5,700. Accompanying the Israelis home were also two Filipino children with cleft palates, who were to be treated at Schneider Children's Hospital. (*www.jta.org*, 11-25-13)

Making a Final Push

Thanks to efforts by the Simon Wiesenthal Center (SWC), there's been some success trying to find the last remaining Nazi war criminals and bring them to justice. Just recently, four cases were brought to the Center's attention through its *Operation Last Chance* campaign, an initiative to raise awareness among the international community on the need to find and try these criminals before it's too late. The four cases include two suspected camp guards who have been handed over to German authorities, an individual connected to a massacre in Oradour, France, and a suspect accused of weapon profiteering. SWC Director Efraim Zuroff said that 110 names of suspects - 81 in Germany - have already been culled from nearly 300 tips. (*www.jspace.com*, 11-26-13)

Austria Honors Vienna Native

Theodore Bikel, who fled the Nazi occupation of his native Vienna for pre-state Israel,

was honored by the Austrian government in November on the 75th anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, the 1938 pogrom in Germany and Austria. Bikel, 89, accepted the country's highest honor in the arts and then gave an hour-long concert of mostly Yiddish songs, concluding the concert with *Zog Nit Kayn Mol*, known in English as the "Song of the Partisans." The song, often referred to as the anthem of Holocaust survivors, was written in 1943 by Hirsh Glick, a young Jewish inmate in the Vilna Ghetto. Bikel is best known for his Broadway portrayal of *Tevye* in the musical "Fiddler on the Roof," or possibly as the wry Russian submarine commander in the film "The Russians are Coming, The Russians are Coming." He is currently producing and starring in the documentary film "Theodore Bikel in the Shoes of Sholem Aleichem." (You can find *Zog Nit Kayn Mol* performed by Israeli singer Chava Alberstein on YouTube. (www.jewishjournal.com, 11-7-13)

An "Unprecedented Finding"

After 100 years of exhaustive excavations throughout Jerusalem's City of David, archeologists have finally found a structure from the Hasmonean period in an area near the Temple Mount. The building, which dates back to the second century BCE, was found with dozens of ancient silver and bronze coins still lying on the floors. The structure, very likely a public space, was found in the Givati parking lot, located by the walls surrounding the City of David National Park. The Hasmonean dynasty, descendants of the Maccabees, ruled Judea and surrounding areas from 141-37 BCE. In 37 BCE the Hasmoneans fell to the Romans and Herod, and the Herodian dynasty began. Vivid descriptions of the Hasmonean city can be found in the works of Flavius Josephus. Dr. Doron Ben-Ami, one of the directors of the excavation, called the finding unprecedented, saying, "We are filling a gap in the sequence of periods in Jerusalem's history. We know it is well documented in different texts that it flourished in the 2nd century BCE, but there has been almost nothing found there until now." (www.jpost.com, 12-3-13)

Anti-Israel Campaign Has a Small Problem

According to an investigation by the United Kingdom's Zionist Federation (ZF), organizations looking to boycott Israel are finding it difficult to practice what they preach. Several websites that advocate BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions) of Israel are programmed using the Tel Aviv-based software platform *Wix*. The website of Cornell University's branch of "Students for Justice in Palestine," whose campaigns include advocating the boycott of skincare products, soft drink manufacturers, hummus, and, even more ironic, the website of the "Palestinian Holocaust Museum," were among many BDS websites built with *Wix*. Listed on the NASDAQ stock exchange, *Wix* claims 40 million users around the world. (www.algemeiner.com, 11-18-13)

Crypto-Jews Light Up for Chanukah

More than 100 descendants of Jews who converted to Catholicism during the Spanish Inquisition celebrated the eighth night of Chanukah at the infamous Steri Palace prison in Palermo, Sicily, a place where Jews were routinely tortured from 1601 to 1782. "Centuries after the Steri Palace prison was used to try to extinguish the light of Israel, we came here to show that the flame of Judaism continues to burn," said Michael Freund, chairman of *Shavei Israel*, a Jerusalem-based organization that reaches out to "lost" Jews and works with them to strengthen their ties to Israel and the Jewish people. Jewish life flourished in Sicily for centuries. In the 14th and 15th centuries, Sicilian Jews were forced to live in ghettos, subject to increasingly cruel treatment and pressure to convert to Catholicism. In 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain issued the *Edict of Expulsion*, which forced more than 37,000 Sicilian Jews who refused to convert to leave the country. (Sicily was then controlled by Spain.) Large numbers of *conversos* (Jews who chose or were forced to convert) remained and suffered under the Inquisition. Their descendants are known as Crypto-Jews. (www.tabletmag.com, 12-5-13)

The Jewish Nobel Prize

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg was the first recipient of the Genesis Prize, an award established in 2012 by the Genesis Philanthropy Group, a consortium of wealthy philanthropist-businessmen from the former Soviet Union, the Office of the Prime Minister of Israel and the Jewish Agency for Israel. Bloomberg said that he will use the money (he'll receive \$1 million in May 2014) to promote economic ties between Israelis and Palestinians. The plan is for the Genesis Prize, known as the "Jewish Nobel Prize," to be awarded annually to "an accomplished, internationally renowned professional who is a role model in his or her community and can inspire the younger generation of Jews worldwide." Bloomberg is in his third and final term as mayor of New York. He was selected for the award from among more than 200 nominees worldwide. (www.jta.org, 12-3-13)

Massachusetts...Home Away From Home

According to a new study, companies with ties to Israel (more than 200, up from 78 three years ago) added \$6.2 billion to the Massachusetts economy last year. Governor Deval Patrick said, "Massachusetts has become a home-away-from-home for Israel's innovation economy." The businesses, which range from information technology to life sciences and software, employed more than 6,600 people in 2012. The study found that Israeli entrepreneurs are attracted to Massachusetts because of its top academic and research institutions, a highly educated workforce, and the concentration of high technology industries. Nearly one-third of the Israeli-founded companies were started by Israeli alumni of Massachusetts colleges. (*The Forward*, 12-7-13)

In Memoriam

· Arik Einstein, considered by many to be Israel's greatest singer, the voice of his generation, has died. He was 74. The multi-talented Einstein (singer, songwriter and composer) was said to have held an "unparalleled place" in the history of Israeli music. Some have compared him to Bob Dylan, emerging

in the 1960s and linking Israel's traditional folk music with the birth of Rock & Roll. At the height of his popularity, and after performing for more than four decades, Einstein became a recluse. Advertisers and concert promoters offered him millions, but Einstein was not interested. (www.tabletmag.com 11-26-13)

· Saul Kagan, founder and longtime executive director of the *Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany*, has died. He was 91. Commonly referred to as the *Claims Conference*, the organization was established in 1951 and has become the main vehicle responsible for negotiating with Germany and Austria over restitution payments to Holocaust survivors. During his 47 years at the helm of the organization, Kagan secured billions of dollars in restitution payments. He was born in Vilnius, Lithuania, and ultimately fled to New York. His father survived the war in the Soviet Union, but his mother, brother and grandparents were killed by the Nazis. Kagan, who spoke six languages, served as an intelligence officer in the U.S. Air Force. In 1952 he played a key role in the landmark Luxembourg Agreements, when representatives of Israel, Germany and the *Claims Conference* met to work out a reparations agreement for the crimes of Nazi Germany. (www.jta.org, 11-12-13)

Did You Know...

· This past November, over 100 Muslim and Jewish students from Rutgers University joined forces to prepare and distribute 500 meals to the homeless in the Newark, New Jersey area. The joint event was called *The People of Abraham United Against Hunger*. Some 125 events took place simultaneously in 26 countries, organized by Manhattan's Foundation for Ethnic Understanding. (*World Jewry Digest*, November 2013)

· After a rash of threats and violent attacks on a London mosque, leaders of a Jewish group, the "*Shomrim*," (Hebrew for *guardians*) have volunteered to provide security for the Muslim congregation. A spokesman for the "*Shomrim*" called it "the beginning of a long-term partnership between the two communities." (*World Jewry Digest*, November 2013) ♦

Photo Gallery

On November 22nd, to help get over the nerves of standing before the entire congregation (think it's easy? try it yourself), Westley Silverman led services along with Gloria. Parents and grandparents were there for support.



That same night we also celebrated the birthdays of Gloria Avner and Georgia Landau at the Oneg. Yes, they did manage to extinguish that one intrepid candle.



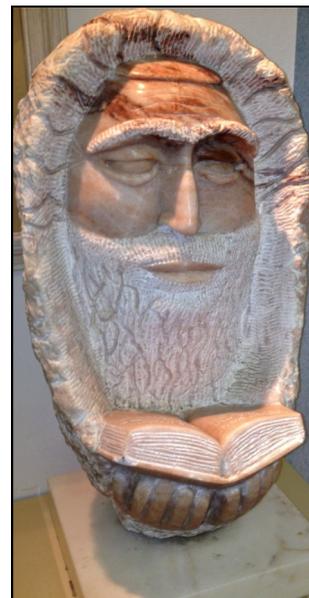
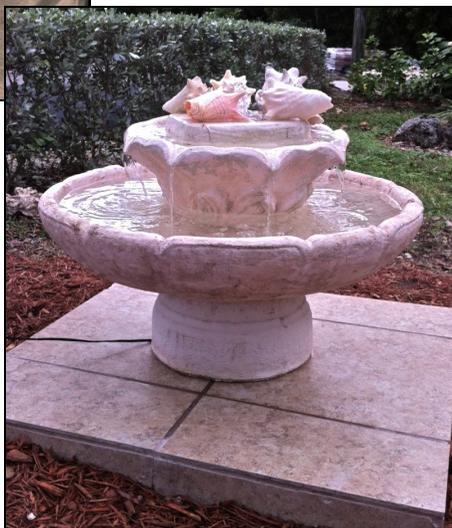
The two photos at left are both in celebration of Chanukah. At far left are Jeremy and Brittany Schur, among the grandchildren of Lee Schur, in Chicago. In the center photo, Gloria had gone to West Palm to visit her mother Bea for Chanukah at the assisted-living facility. She ended up leading both the candle-lighting prayers and a rousing sing-along of familiar Chanukah songs, of course. For weeks afterward Bea basked in the reflected glow of celebrity. Mitzvah accomplished.



All the photos on this page were taken on November 29th, as KJCC celebrated the third night of Chanukah with a Sisterhood-sponsored feast prior to services at 8:00. Westley, Moira Knowles and Pauline Roller (one of the other kids) helped Bernie and Yarden lead the candle-lighting and prayers. You can see at left that Michael and Lorena Kaufman brought baby Sean. How many shuls can brag that their attendance includes a living age span of 98 years?



At top, Linda Perloff lights all nine candles at KJCC on the last night of Chanukah. At right is the fountain that Susan Gordon donated to the KJCC Meditation Garden. Garden architect Steve Steinbock had a slab installed and then had it tiled. It's all working perfectly. Listen for the gentle tinkling next time you're here.



At top is a sculpture created by Alex Avner (Gloria's father, who discovered his own artistic ability late in life after a business career). Gloria has donated the alabaster sculpture, appropriately titled "A Man of the

Book," to the KJCC library.

At left the KJCC contingent stands with Judy Greenman and two of her daughters, Susie and Kelley, at the funeral service for Judy's father Stephan Ban, one of the founding members of KJCC. At Judy's request, Gloria had led the service.



-This Month in Jewish History-

January

49 B.C.E. – Julius Caesar crosses the Rubicon, signaling the start of civil war against fellow triumvirate member Pompey, who had defiled the Holy of Holies, mocked the Jewish religion and shipped thousands of Jewish slaves to Rome. Once Caesar wins the war, he allows the walls of Jerusalem to be rebuilt, institutes a taxation system that takes the sabbatical year into consideration and makes it possible for Jews living in the Italian peninsula to form into communities. Romans of the time note the unusual grief displayed by Jews when Caesar is assassinated.

1180 – Philip Augustus, the new king of France, arrests large numbers of Jews while his father, Louis VII, a sometime protector of the Jews, is still alive. All Jews found in synagogue on the Sabbath are arrested. Philip agrees to free them, however, for 15,000 silver marks.

1232 – In London, The *Domus Conversorum* known in English as the House of the Converts, is founded by order of Henry III – a weak and extravagant grandson of the Lion Himself, Henry II, and son to King John of Robin Hood fame – to provide a home and free maintenance for Jews converting to Christianity.

1301 – Andrew III of Hungary dies, ending the Arpad dynasty in Hungary. As king, Andrew reverses the anti-Jewish practices of his predecessor, insists that Jews in Posonium (Bratislava) should enjoy all the liberties of citizens. Things go downhill for the Jews of Hungary after Andrew's death. They are expelled from the kingdom in 1349 under the belief (not restricted to Hungary) that Jews are responsible for the Black Death that wipes out a third of Europe.

1600 – The 400 Jews of Verona complete their synagogue after their move into the ghetto. The occasion is actually celebrated as a "Purim" until the 1789 French Revolution, since many feel that the ghetto provides some protection, and since in an unusual move the keys of the ghetto are given to the Jewish leaders.

1606 – The Governor of Puerto Rico reports that one-fifth of the white population of the island is Portuguese. Many of these "white" Portuguese are most likely *conversos*.

1625 – John Milton, later to author "Paradise Lost," is admitted to Christ's College, Cambridge, at the age of 16. During Milton's lifetime, Jews are still officially not allowed to settle in the British Isles. But like many Puritans living in the England of Oliver Cromwell, Milton sees a connection between his brand of Christianity and the Israelites. Until his eyes weaken, he reads the Hebrew Bible on a daily basis and expresses a positive view of Mosaic Law. Milton also serves as a secretary to Oliver Cromwell and, according to one of his biographers, is part of the group which negotiates for the return of the Jews to England.

1706 – Benjamin Franklin – printer, publisher, scientist, author, statesmen and vital American – is born in Boston. Franklin sees the American Revolution as a replaying of the story of the Jewish Exodus from Egypt, and suggests that the Great Seal of America depict Moses standing on the shore of the Red Sea, while Pharaoh drowns in his chariot in its midst. When the Jewish community in Philadelphia builds their synagogue, "Mikveh Israel," Franklin contributes to the building fund. On July 4, 1788, too sick and weak to get out of bed, Franklin instructs that the Independence Day parade in Philadelphia include the clergy of different Christian denominations, "with the rabbi of the Jews,"

walking arm in arm.

1788 – Georgia becomes the fourth state to ratify the U.S. Constitution. A year later it becomes the third state to ban religious discrimination. The first Jewish families had arrived in Georgia in July of 1733. Two years before the ratification vote, the Jewish community of Savannah feels stable enough to reorganize Congregation Mikve Israel, elect officers and rent a house to be used as a synagogue.

1815 – General Andrew Jackson defeats the British at the Battle of New Orleans. At his side fight two Jews famous for very different reasons: Pirate Jean Lafitte, whose mother's Separdic family had fled the Inquisition, and Judah Touro, scion of the famed New England Touro family (the Touro Synagogue).

1836 – Mendele Mocher Sforim, "Mendele the bookseller," the pseudonym of Sholem Yakov Abramovich, Jewish author and one of the founders of modern Yiddish and Modern Hebrew literature, is born to a poor family in Kopyl, near Minsk. His first article, "Letter on Education", appears in a Hebrew newspaper, *Hamagid*, in 1857. Initially writing in Hebrew, coining many words in that language, he ultimately switches to Yiddish in order to expand his audience. Like Sholom Aleichem, he uses a pseudonym because of the perception at the time that as a ghetto vernacular, Yiddish is not suited to serious literary work. It is an idea he will do much to dispel.

1852 – Mt. Sinai Hospital is incorporated in New York City by Sampson Simson and eight associates. It is the first Jewish hospital in the United States.

1858 – Eliëzer Ben-Yehuda, the father of modern Hebrew, is born in Lithuania as Eliezer Yitzhak Perelman. His plan to restore Hebrew as a spoken language of Jews in Palestine is three-pronged: "Hebrew in the Home," "Hebrew in the School," and "Words, Words, Words." By the time of his death in 1922, Ben-Yehuda has almost single-

handedly transformed Hebrew into a revitalized and thriving modern language.

1876 – Konrad Adenauer, the first post-war Chancellor of West Germany, is born. Imprisoned by the Nazis during World War II, Adenauer seeks to return Germany to the world community. To make amends to Jews everywhere, he offers war reparations to the government of Israel. Under Adenauer, Germany recognizes Israel and provides arms for her defense despite threats from Arab governments.

1887 – The Jewish Theological Seminary Association opens under the leadership of Rabbi Sabato Morais in New York. The idea is to train Rabbis who will help preserve Jewish traditions being eroded by the "reformers" and their Pittsburgh platform. In 1902 Solomon Schechter reorganizes the Seminary and changes the name to JTS, or the Jewish Theological Seminary. It becomes the central foundation for the Conservative Movement, a role it still plays today.

1895 – Theodor Herzl writes of personally witnessing Capt. Alfred Dreyfus being "drummed out of the army in the courtyard of the [French] Ecole Militaire as huge crowds outside shout 'Death to the Jews!'"

1908 – Abraham Goldfaden dies at the age of 67. Born in 1840 in part of the Russian Empire, Goldfaden is a driving force in the Yiddish theatre during its golden period of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as author, composer (yes, there were musicals), director and producer. One of his early comedies is called *Shmendrik*, whose title-hero is the proverbial gullible, good-natured schlemiel. The play is so popular that the word *Shmendrik* becomes part of the Yiddish language and survives today in American slang. Goldfaden is so famous at the time of his death that he rates an obituary in the New York Times referring to him as "the Yiddish Shakespeare." Some 75,000 people attend his funeral procession from the People's Theater in the Bowery to Washington Cemetery in Brooklyn. ◊

Chanukiah Lighting at KJCC

It was the fifth night of Chanukah. We had twelve chanukiot. A full classroom of happy revelers included guests from Paris, Morocco and three very special ones from Chile.

by Gloria Avner

Forty Chanukah celebrants of all ages assembled at KJCC on the fifth evening of Chanukah to “light the lights.” A “live tradition,” in the words of a great poet, was “captured from the air and made new.” Our celebration this year, instead of being hosted at a grandparent’s home, took place in the KJCC’s David Kamely classroom. It was noisy, delightful, filled to capacity, delicious, musically entertaining and international.

Pauline, our matriarch, was once again our honored host. Michaela Bitton played *dreidel* with Yardena’s four-year-old twin granddaughters (visiting from Chile with Yardena’s son, Eitan), Jane Friedman demonstrated her *dreidel* spinning techniques, and the *Shabbatons* were particularly tuneful and boisterous.



close to Portuguese, traditionally spoken by Sephardic Jews – called



“*Ocho Candelikas*.” All joined in the singing, the laughter, and the *latka*-eating. “*Souvganiot*,” traditional jelly-filled donuts, homemade by Sylvie Bitton with Michaela’s help, provided dessert.

There was something moving about





watching our families light their chanukiahs this year. (Yes, technically the plural should be *chanukiot*.) Twelve beautiful, individual candle-



for generations to come. Look at the faces. (The ones you don't know are our international visitors.) A great time was had by all. Let's do it again next year. ◇

holding sculptures with five candles and a *shamash* (or "helper") in each sat ready at the table. Though unplanned, it seemed perfectly appropriate that we lit twelve *chanukiahs*. With the electric lights out, our table glowed with symbolism as well as candles. We became the twelve tribes of Israel, rededicating ourselves in a perfect place, the room where we educate our children and set in motion Judaism's survival



Our thanks to Richard Knowles and Gloria Avner for the photos.





KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

BOOKPLATES

Bookplates are available for our new siddurim. Donation is \$36 per plate. These can be purchased as honorariums or memorials and as gifts. Place your order for one or several to support this new project. Use this form to send in your wording with your check. Be a regular presence at Services by having your message inscribed in our new prayer books.

In Honor of _____
for (occasion) _____

By _____
or

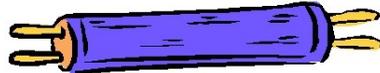
In Memory of _____
By _____

We will send a notification card to the honoree or giftee at your request.
Provide mailing information here: _____



Contact Carol Steinbock for further information:
(305) 852-6152/cac147@gmail.com

Mail to KJCC, PO Box 1332, Tavernier, FL 33070
Use back of form for additional information.



Westley Silverman's Bar Mitzvah *a Memorable Day at KJCC*

by Gloria Avner

One look at the KJCC parking lot would have told you something very special was happening that Saturday morning, December 14th. More than six months of hard work was about to reach a crescendo and bring heart-warming rewards to the entire trans-oceanic Silverman clan. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends from all over the globe, with a high concentration of British Islanders, had gathered to celebrate Westley's rite of passage.

Cousins were excited about their coming honors. Young friends were planning candy-passing



strategies. (They were about to throw candy at Westley after his *haftorah* reading, a ritual that symbolizes the assembled congregation's wish for the Bar Mitzvah boy to have a sweet and happy life.) Special green *yarmulkas* were given to the congregation. Jane's beautifully created booklet gave an impressive introduction to what was about to happen. Westley and the Rabbi made last-minute adjustments and read a few words of Torah in anticipation of the coming call to chant.

Westley not only looked handsome and relaxed. He gracefully moved into his new persona, and inhabited it well. He read English passages with clarity and read the Hebrew of V'a-



Our deep appreciation to Richard Knowles for helping us to tell this lovely story through the use of his professional photographs.





havta with care and precision as he stood with proud teachers Yardena Kamely and Gloria Avner. His chanting was so strong and tune-



He was sincerely moved by the work that the Keys' Children's Center does, and will continue to support them, taking his Mitzvah project beyond the realm



ful one could almost get the meaning by rhythm and melody. Many eyes looking at Westley were moist in wonder. His parents' prayers for him are already being realized. This sensitive, humorous young man worked hard for his honors and deserves the praise heaped upon him. We all learned from him as much as he learned from us.

When Westley said it was especially mean-



of "requirement." We are proud of this kind, witty, smart, and enthusiastic boy-turned-young-man. He graduates from student to tutor now and will pass on what he has learned to our younger students, including his equally bright, engaging younger brother, Cole.

Dr. Bernie's words said it best:

When a young man like Westley emerges from our school with such character and accomplishment, we can





verse in the Book of Genesis: "Be strong, be strong, and may we be strengthened."

Mazel Tov

breathe a little easier about Judaism surviving into the future.

The Silvermans are a fine example of a supportive family. Living at great distances, they managed to work together to create a meaningful event for their child with lots of extended-family participation. It was a privilege to be a part of the process, tutoring Westley in Torah trope and seeing his confidence grow.

Chazak, chazak, v'nit-chazayk. As we shouted in unison at the end of Westley's maftir, the last

to the entire extended Silverman family from the entire KJCC *Mishpocha*. Thanks for joining our synagogue, placing your boys in our educational hands, and inviting us to the delicious Kiddush after the event. As

you can see from the photos, the party went on into the night, concluding with a bonfire on the Ocean Reef Beach, the toasting of marshmallows and the eating of S'mores.

Despite "becoming a man" there are still lots of things to enjoy as a kid. S'mores, and dancing in Conga lines wearing Mexican hats, is all part of Bar Mitzvah joy. ♦









“Etz Chaim Hee”

Happy Birthday, Tree of Life

Celebrating Tu B'Shvat, the New Year of the Trees

by Gloria Avner

When spring arrives and you first see a fruit tree burst forth with blossoms, there is a blessing we are told to say: Baruch Atah Adonai Elohainu Melech ha-Olam shelo hasair ba-olam kloom, ubara bo b'ri-ot tovot v'ilanot tovot l'hanot bahem b'nei adam: Blessed are you, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Who did not cause any lack in this world, but created in it good creatures and good trees that all may enjoy them.” As Jews, we are nothing if not constantly attentive to “firsts” and grateful to be alive to celebrate them. Witness all the occasions we begin with “Shehechyanu.” But this particular prayer, and these trees, are even more special. The Kabbalah teaches that the blessing upon blossoming fruit trees, Bircat Hallanot, can redeem souls.

It is Shabbat morning. We're getting ready to take out the Torah. Rabbi chants: “L'dor va dor.” We echo with gusto: “L'dor va dor,” from generation to generation. There is pride in our ongoingness, and in almost every mention of continuity there is metaphor. It goes deeper yet. In every metaphor, at bottom, is a tree.

As children we learn to count growth rings to tell the age of a tree. When we want to document our personal ancestry, generation to generation, we make a graph of continuity and call it a family tree. Awe sets in early when we discover that trees use the carbon dioxide waste we exhale to make their food,

and the by-product of metabolism they then release to the air is oxygen. We breathe their air, eat their fruit, and plant their seeds to make new trees. The linkage between trees and man, physically and metaphorically, extends throughout every field of study from biblical history to anthropology, art, poetry, philosophy, biology, and mysticism. The deep-rooted fascination (pun intended) crosses

cultural boundaries, continents, and centuries. On the 15th day (the number *Tet Vav*, pronounced *Tu*) of *Sh'vat*, the Jewish take on trees comes to life.

Because *Tu B'Shvat* marks the last of the winter rains in Israel, it also marks the time when life force in the form of sap begins to rise from earth, roots, and tree trunk to the growing tips of branches. Seasons transition from death-like winter stasis to a promise of spring and

budding fruit growth. The day is not just a birthday, but also the beginning of a New Year for the Trees, one of the four distinct New Years that Jews celebrate over the course of one calendar year.

For us, the tree is a double symbol, representing both Man and Torah. From the psalmists we hear “...a man is as a tree of the field.” From our liturgy on Shabbat morning, we sing “Etz chaim hee”: Torah is a “tree of life” for all who cling to it. Both man and Torah have roots, trunk, branches, and fruit, all the major elements of a tree.

The roots of man, the Jewish people, are

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our ancestors, our matriarchs and patriarchs, the whole book of Genesis. The trunk is the whole body of the Jewish people, the “signers-on” to the covenant at Sinai, who received the Torah and entered the Promised Land, the cast of the Book of Exodus.

In Hebrew, the word for tribe is *Shevet*, a word close to *Sh’vat*, the name of this month and also the exact word for branch of a tree, a word that evokes beautifully all who came before us, survived oppression, and nurtured coming generations in the ways of Judaism. Our tribes are our branches, spreading out from but still attached to the trunk, with sub-branches from original branches reaching all the way to and throughout the Diaspora.

What is the fruit? The fruit of Man and the fruit of the Torah are the same: the good deeds of every living soul. When Rabbi Agler talks on a Shabbat morning of those deeds that we cannot do too much of – visiting the sick, honoring our parents, consoling the bereaved, celebrating with bride and groom – studying Torah is the last act mentioned, and said to be the greatest, because, as the verse goes on, the study of Torah leads to them all.

One interpretation of Torah’s roots, trunk, and branches are its inner secrets, the concealed mother and father principle explored

What is the fruit? The fruit of Man and the fruit of the Torah are the same: the good deeds of every living soul.

in Kabbalah, and the body of written and oral Torah with all the different methods of commentary. Torah’s fruits can be seen as new insights that flow to those who devote themselves to its study and share those insights with the

world, resulting in *tikkun olam* actions.

People, Torah and trees. There are very specific laws (*Halacha*) that interrelate the three. We are instructed not to harvest the fruit of a tree until it is three years old. Even

in war, it is forbidden to cut down a fruit tree. There are laws about gleaning. And numerology (*gematria*) adds even more mystical depth.

The period from *Rosh Chodesh Sh’vat* to *Tu B’Shvat* falls exactly between the two holidays of Chanukah and Purim. From the last day of Chanukah until *Rosh Chodesh Sh’vat* there are 29 days. From the 2nd of *Shevat* until *Tu B’Shvat* there are 14 days. Following *Tu B’Shvat*, from the 16th to the day of Purim, there are again 29

days. Two times 29 (58, the *gematria* value of the word *chen*, “grace” and “symmetry”) plus 14 gives a total of 72 days, the value of *chesed*, or “lovingkindness.” We come back to the fruits of Man and Torah, “*gemilut chasadim*,” the doing or giving of varied acts of lovingkindness.

From the fruits of kind deeds we move to fruits we can eat. The holiday of Chanukah is the holiday of pure olive oil. The holiday of Purim is the holiday of wine. All of the seven species and fruits of the land of Israel are contained within and encompassed by these two primary fruits.

Join us in the KJCC schoolroom and orchard on Sunday, January 19th. Together let us celebrate the mystical seder devised more than five centuries ago in Tzfat, Israel, during the time of the great Kabbalist, Ari. Sample all fifteen varieties of fruit with us, listen to stories, drink four cups of “wine,” progressing from pure white to rose to russet to red, symbolizing each season of the year. Help us plant a tree, sing and dance and say the blessings from the Torah. May we each be, as the psalm describes: “...like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in season; our leaves shall not wither; and whatsoever we do shall prosper.” ◇

Sample fifteen varieties of fruit with us, listen to stories, drink four cups of “wine,” pure white to rose to russet to red.

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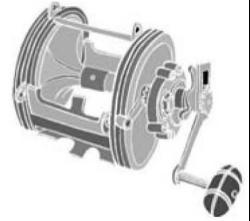
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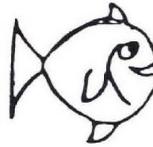
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