

Todah Rabah!

Haftarot for February

Sandy Boxerman, Rebekah Sheinbein, Margaux Buck, Howard Belsky

Greeters for February

Steve Birenbaum, Avi Goldfarb, Nancye Gliner, Hal Goldsmith

Kiddushes for February

Synagogue, David & Lori Sheinbein and Chesed Committee

Minyan Breakfast Sponsors

Rhonda Grimsky, Marshall Myers, Irv Taryle, Pat Rosen

Mazal Tov!

Anniversaries in March

Roger & Marcia Brockman
Hanley & Florence Cohn
Jim Fehr & Anne Glowinski
David & Lisa Gellman
Ben & Frances Kootman
Neil & Pamela Lazaroff
Jerry & Ida Legow
Donald & Hedva Levy
Michael & Noemi Neidorff
Leon & Sylvia Schwartz

New Arrivals

Mazel Tov to Rolf and Shelby Cooke on the birth of their daughter, Alia Rose, on February 6th.

New Members

Shaare Zedek welcomes Craig and Liz Redler and their children Cameron and Olivia.



OPEN M-F 10:00AM- 12:30PM
Special Hebrew School Hours:
M, W 5:30- 6:30 pm
Sunday hours by appointment.
Arrangements may be made for special occasions (i.e., weddings, b'nai mitzvo, bris melah, etc.)

New Ashreinu leaves and/or new Memorial plaques for February

Bernard Markowitz
Daniel Cutter
Mildred Cutter



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Web www.ShaareZedek.org
Early Childhood Center (314) 727-2565
Religious School (314) 725-6230

Mark Fasman
Rabbi

Joanna Selznick Dulkin
Hazzan

Marvin Lerner
Ba'al Koreh

Jeff Miller
Executive Director

Gary Kodner
Synagogue President

Liz Redler
Youth Director

Michael Raileanu
Shaare Shalom Education Director

Micki Kinglsey
Sisterhood President

Mitchell Shenker
Men's Club President

Jamie Rosenberg, Eliot Markman
USYCo-President

Board Leadership

Gary Kodner President

Marsha Birenbaum Chairman of the Board

Joan Barzalai, Steve Keyser, Vice Presidents
Sandy Boxerman, Beth Levy

Jeremy Buehler Secretary

Marc Spector Treasurer

Al Levings, Sergeants-at-Arms

Randy Silverstein

Committee Chairs

Monroe Ginsberg Ritual

Beth Levy Membership

Michael Levine Budget

Steve Keyser Development

Sandy Boxerman Personnel

Joan Barzalai Building

Karen Rader Education

Kathi Rosenberg Youth

Jeremy Buehler, Steve Selipsky ECC

Beth Rubin Shaare Shalom

Sydney Farber Adult Ed

TBD Family Life

Barbara Bianco Chesed

Micki Kingsley Social Action

Gary Kodner Communications

Don Singer Israel

Sara Myers Halls & Catering

A Message from the Rabbi

Rabbi Mark Fasman

As you might imagine, rabbinical students think a lot about God. My own uncertainties were a significant factor in why I did not seriously consider applying for rabbinical school as a young adult. A couple of weeks ago, during my visit to Israel for the Rabbinical Assembly convention, I found myself serving on a committee interviewing applicants for the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, the school from which I was ordained ten years ago. One of the candidates wrote that he was a theist, that he did not believe that God gets involved with individual human beings, or even with the world in general. For him, God's role ended with creation. The existence (or non-existence) of God was not a factor in his life choices.

The other candidate had written about her strong sense of God's presence as she encountered the beauty of the works of creation and in loving relationships with others. We asked her to speak about a difficult time in her life in which she felt God's presence. She told this story: when she was eight years old, her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. There was just one weekend between the time her mother received the diagnosis and her scheduled surgery. Saturday morning arrived and her mother walked into the children's bedroom wearing a bright red dress. She told her daughters to get dressed for shul, and that they, too, should wear red dresses. Her daughters asked why. Their mother answered, "I need to make sure that I get God's attention this Shabbat."

Many contemporary Jews believe there is no God. Others believe that God may exist, but that He does not have any relevance in our lives. There are individuals who feel God's presence in their lives at powerful moments, such as the birth of a child, or times of illness, or watching a beautiful sunset, or when falling in love. Still others sense God's presence every day and at all times.

Our tradition teaches us that the Festival cycle begins with Pesach, the season in

which we celebrate the birth of the Jewish people. At Pesach our ancestors were totally helpless, newly-freed slaves entirely dependent on God for sustaining their lives with food and water and protection from enemies. Then they experienced birth as they passed through the waters of the split Reed Sea. And they emerged into a new reality, one in which God took care of them while they learn to live as free men and women and while they learn to build and maintain their own free society.

The Festival cycle concludes with Purim, a holiday in which God's presence is entirely concealed. The Book of Esther is the only book of the Tanakh in which God never appears. The name "Esther" means "hidden" – just as God's name is hidden. In Shushan the survival of Jewish individuals and the Jewish people as a whole was dependent entirely upon human beings, not God.

Children tend to live in a world of Pesach; they experience God simply and directly. Just as their parents watch over them so, too, God watches over them. But adults tend to live in the world of Purim; we experience God entirely through faith. And faith is hard for many of us. In some ways it is easier not to believe than to believe. Belief is fraught with problems, not the least of which is reconciling an all-powerful and all-just God with the problems of evil, disease, and injustice in the world.

Rabbi David Wolpe, with whom I worked during the three years before I came to Shaare Zedek, grew up the son of a rabbi who became a committed atheist as a teenager. Then life happened to him. During his second year at Sinai Temple his wife was diagnosed with cancer (she is in remission). Then his mother had a serious stroke and lost her ability to speak. Then he collapsed one evening after delivering a talk – he had a brain tumor (thankfully benign, but required months of



rehabilitation). At that point he wrote another book, Making Loss Matter. Then he was diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoma. Just last August his new book was published: Why Faith Matters.

Rabbi Wolpe discovered something that transformed his life. He discovered that one can be a rational human being and also believe in God. (David Wolpe is a brilliant man; he has been a nationally-ranked chess player and a professor of philosophy.) He discovered something else: not only can a rational person believe in God, belief in God leads to a more satisfying life, a life of meaning, a life guided by a divine imperative to live with loving-kindness and justice.

What I find so powerful about this book is that it is written by a man who couldn't believe and then found that he had to believe. It is a book that takes arguments for the non-existence of God seriously. It is a book that takes thoughtful atheists and agnostics seriously. It is a book that takes modern educated adults seriously.

"He discovered that... not only can a rational person believe in God, belief in God leads to a more satisfying life, a life of meaning, a life guided by a divine imperative to live with loving-kindness and justice."

There are those who live with simple faith. What a blessing to have God in one's life, God to Whom one can turn in times of joy and in times of loss, God to Whom it is easy and natural to pray, God whose presence in one's life is taken for granted. There are many educated people who experience God

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Presidential Matters

Gary Kodner



A Message from the Rabbi

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There are those who live with simple lack of faith. For them, either there is no God or God is irrelevant. Plenty of educated people live comfortably without faith.

But what about the rest of us, the ones who struggle with faith, the ones who want to believe in personal God who is relevant in our lives, but who need proof (or, at least, compelling evidence of God's existence)? What about those of us for whom faith is not simple, those who have grown up in a world that considers faith in God as a kind of weak-mindedness?

Maybe we need a serious of experiences, either good or bad, to convince us that God exists. And more, to convince us that God makes a difference in our lives. But maybe it is possible to develop faith without experiencing life crises.

We live in a world of Purim, a world in which it is impossible to tell the difference between barukh Mordecai (blessed is Mordecai) and arur Haman (cursed is Haman). It is a world in which belief doesn't seem to matter. It is a world in which God's presence is not felt directly in our lives or in the life of our community.

It is a world in which many of us who seek God have to take a leap of faith if we are to live with God in our lives.

We are not alone. Contemporary thinkers have written that we live in "a generation of seekers." If you are a seeker I recommend you read *Why Faith Matters*. It might help shed light on your path.

If you are a seeker I encourage you to continue your search. If nothing else, the search itself can be a powerful component of a meaningful life. And in any event, like chicken soup, it can't hurt.

Have you found your connection to Shaare Zedek?

What's your passion? What is your interest?

We want to know where you are and who you are. We want to hear from you.

For many of us the Synagogue is our second home. We have a place for you. Please contact me or any of our congregation's leaders and we will help you get involved. We want each and every member to feel counted and wanted. Your membership experience can be enriched through service and involvement. Your membership has greater significance when you find purpose and meaningful connection.

Bring your unique talents or interests to any of the many activities and programs this synagogue sponsors every day, 365 days a year.

We have many connecting points:

- Minyan morning and evening
- Men's Club
- Sisterhood
- Shabbat Rinah
- Shabbat morning services
- Adult education classes and lectures
- Shaare Shalom Religious School
- ECC Early Child Center School
- Youth Group programs
- Chesed
- Social action
- Israel programs
- Read Torah
- Chant haftarah
- Lead a service
- B'nai Mitzvah
- Holidays
- Giving / fund raising
- Building
- Planning
- Financial
- Membership
- Family programs
- Mishpacha
- Communications
- Meals, Catering, Kiddushes
- Music
- Art
- Havarah
- Special projects and more!

Still haven't found your niche?

Call me: Gary Kodner 314-721-1404

At Shaare Zedek we experience Judaism with all of our senses.

Shaare Zedek member **Bea Hollander** is an employment counselor for the State of Missouri helping people find jobs.

If you are looking for a job, you can make an appointment with Bea at work by calling **877-0916**.

She will be happy to work with you.

HazzaNotes

Hazzan Joanna Selznick Dulkan



In a Hassidic story with many variations, a rich man dozing during the Rabbi's sermon on the showbreads in the Temple somehow comes away with an idea that God likes challah. So he and his wife prepare twelve loaves of challah and put them in the ark of the synagogue just before Shabbat. The shammes (custodian) of the shul, a very poor man, enters to clean the shul just after the rich man left his challot. As the poor man cleans off the bima, he pauses at the ark to make a special petition to God, asking for a little extra food to get through Shabbat. He smells something delicious, then opens the ark to find twelve challahs. A miracle! He and his family can eat for a week. The rich man comes to shul Saturday morning and holds his breath as the ark is opened for the Torah service. The challot have gone to God – a miracle! The same thing happens for weeks, months, and even years, and every time both men, rich and poor, consider it a miracle from God. Until one day when the rich man came back into the shul after depositing his challahs and saw the poor shammes taking them out in gratitude. The men got into an argument: "You stole God's challah!" "No, this challah came from God!" One of the many conclusions of the story is that the great Kabbalist, Rabbi Isaac Luria, was observing the two men. He emerged from the shadows of the sanctuary and explained that God was in both the giving and the taking, that the men's hands were the hands of God. He encourages them to keep up the practice of giving and receiving challot, only to do so in person: one does not have to put challah in the ark or receive challah from the ark for God to be a participant in tzedakah.

Hunger in our community has many Jewish faces, and our very own Harvey Kornblum Jewish Food Pantry is the local concretization of this story. When it opened almost twenty years ago, 12 percent of the St. Louis Jewish community was living below the poverty line, but very few sought food assistance. The food pantry now delivers food to homebound

clients, and provides groceries to thousands of families monthly.

As many of you know, the Food Pantry is struggling. Need is up, and supply is down. In 2008 the food pantry helped to feed clients from over 89 different zip codes throughout the greater St. Louis area. From 2007 to 2008, they have seen a 59% increase in clients, and a 60% increase in new families coming to the pantry. In December 2008, there was a record 3174 clients!

From the bima, we urge you to bring food to donate every time you come into the building. There was a wonderful concert organized by Suzie Broddon at the end of January that raised almost \$6,000 and brought a truckload

of food donations. But what about the months since then? In August 2008, Missouri led the nation in jobs lost, at that time the number hovered around 55,000. By the end of the year, the nation had lost nearly 2.6 million jobs and the state's unemployment rate matched the national numbers: 7% (a number not seen since 1985!). At the end of January 2009, over 150,000 job cuts were already reported for this year and the national unemployment was up to 7.6%! Unfortunately, everyone now knows someone who has lost their job, if not a handful of people – and many of us in the Shaare Zedek community may be among those who are unemployed. It can be any one of us who will need assistance, any one of us who may have to turn to the Jewish food pantry this year.

Maybe you are like me: you always forget a can or box of food every time you walk in to drop off your children to school. So why not buy an extra bag of non-perishable groceries or personal care products when you go shopping? Leave it in the car so it's there the next time you come to shul. Or every

time you restock your pantry, select two or three or ten things to set aside as donations. Every little bit does count. You also may not know that the food pantry also accepts donations of perishable food, fresh fruits and veggies as well.

This month we celebrate Purim – where one of the most important mitzvot (aside from eating and drinking a lot) is matanot la'evyonim – literally, gifts

to the poor. We are commanded to give charity to those in need on Purim day. Don't forget that your hands are God's hands when you reach out to those in need. Even those who have limited resources are commanded to give tzedakah, because there is surely someone in even more dire need. Your hands are God's hands. Open them up generously. And know, that if you need help, nobody is turned away.

For more information about the Food Pantry, or to volunteer, contribute, or if you need assistance contact Sue Rundblad, at (314) 812-9307 or srundblad@jcs-stl.org.

The Sisterhood is looking for a volunteer to staff the Gift Shop on Fridays from 10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Please contact the office if you can help. Thank you.