

New Light News December, 2018

A Word from the Rabbi

Ever notice that Torah portion Miketz (Genesis 41:24-44:17) is always read on the intermediate Shabbat of Hanukkah when we read the story of Joseph?

And of course there's the big question — Hanukkah is not a Torah holiday. In fact, it was so unimportant that the Jerusalem Talmud doesn't even mention it! So why engineer the calendar so that Miketz is always read during Hanukkah?

As it turns out, there is a Torah connection, and our friend Rashi finds it. However, he puts his explanation in his commentary on the Talmud, and not in his Torah commentary. Even then, he puts his d'rash smack in the middle of Tractate Shabbat in the Babylonian Talmud, Folio 21b through 23a, where the discussion of halachot for Hanukkah are examined. What is he doing? What does he suggest is the connection between Hanukkah and the story of Joseph?

Actually, Rashi begins by looking at the week BEFORE Shabbat Hanukkah — Parshat Vayeshev. In that parsha, Yosef is first thrown into the pit. The text tells us that the pit was “empty and there was no water in the pit.” A few verses later, it again says the pit was empty, and had no water in it. Rashi wants to know, why did the Torah tell us twice that the pit was empty and there was no water? It could have done so just once, and we would have understood it. He first answers that it was said twice because there were snakes and scorpions in it. The first question is why the Torah said it was empty if there were snakes and scorpions in it? It has to do with the water, but that's a different D'rash for another time. For this particular purpose, there is more.

Rashi cites a Midrash which records that, after the death of Jacob, Joseph insisted that he wanted to go back and visit the pit in which his brothers had thrown him, and from which he was sold into slavery in Egypt. This will be the second time he was involved with that pit, but the pit has now become something different to Yosef. His brothers, we are told, found him kneeling at the edge of the pit, and they panicked! They feared that Joseph's temper was building and building, and he would finally do what they were afraid he was going to do, and that would be to torture and kill them all. As it turned out, Yosef wasn't fuming at all, nor was he voicing regret for everything that had happened to him. In fact, he was praying! He was giving thanks to HaShem for all that He had done for him, and for the miracles He did for Yosef, preserving his life, and for making him the instrument for saving the tribes from certain death in the famine in the desert. In Vayeshev, just before Hanukkah, Yosef was thrown into the pit. In Miketz, DURING Hanukkah, he is taken out. In fact, he also ends up being liberated from prison and from there he is able to save his family. Yosef prayed while he was in the pit and God answered him. Now, he prayed prayers of thanksgiving outside the pit.

And so, we read YaYeshev before Hanukkah and Miketz during Hanukkah.

The Zohar predicts that there will be TWO messiahs — Moshiach ben Yosef and Moshiach ben David. The Moshiach ben Yosef will come first and save us from mass destruction, and Moshiach ben David will restore Hashem's Kingdom on Earth and will bring the ultimate redemption.

A grope, you ask? Our sages never grope! Sometimes Talmudic logic is hard to fathom. However, from here, we also learn that we are allowed to create a holiday and pray "...B'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu..." over candles and engage in special customs, even for a holiday that isn't in the Torah. We do it for Purim as well. Our Sages declared these days to be important enough, because we could possibly have disappeared as a nation if the events and miracles commemorated had never happened. In fact, we are even allowed to create individual "holy days" to commemorate times when we were miraculously saved. But when those occasions are of a national level, they last as long as the Jewish People last, and we are promised by God that we will be here forever.

Am Yisrael Chai!

Rabbi (With Thanks from Rabbi Kawaler)

Shloshim

Shloshim is 30 days from the time of burial. Traditionally, families gather on the eve of Shloshim to share and support one another, recite prayers, and give to charity in the merit of the deceased. Shloshim for Dan is November 29, for Mel on November 30, and for Rich on December 1. On Friday, November 30th we will note Shloshim for all three families in conjunction with our Friday evening services. Please join us.

Celebrating Hanukkah

On Sunday, December 2nd, we will join TOLOLS and Dor Hadash at a special community candle lighting ceremony outside of the Tree of Life building, beginning at 6:00 P.M. (Please dress for the weather.) It is the hope of New Light Congregation, along with Congregation Dor Hadash and Tree of Life*Or L'Simcha, that the rituals of the first night of Hanukkah will help us all heal together as a community. The public ceremony, candle blessings and singing will be short and sweet. It is said that "The speech is given by the candle." Family members of the Oct. 27 tragedy, representatives of first responders, and Mayor Peduto are expected to participate.

Please join us for the first night of Hanukkah. As we recognize our nearly 2,000-year-old tradition by lighting the menorah we will look to the future together, knowing that it will reflect "the light that fills the darkness."

Regular Services Schedule

We are holding our regular services on Friday nights at 7:30 P.M. and Saturday mornings at 9:45 A.M. in the Helfant Chapel at Beth Shalom.

We will resume Sunday morning services followed by breakfast jointly with TOLOLS Men's Club as soon as possible – stay tuned for an update as soon as we know.

December Meetings

The monthly Board Meeting is Sunday, December 2nd, 10:30 A.M. at the Forward Shady Apartments, 5841 Forward Ave.

Moses in the Midrash

Come join us for a perspective on Moses' life from the pages of the Midrash. The Midrash asks many good questions about the complexity of Moses' life as a murderer, a "Midianite" shepherd, a reluctant prophet, and a mature leader. Our next classes are December 5th and 19th at 7:00 P.M. Location is Beth Shalom, Lehman Center Board Room, second floor, Jerusalem lobby.

An Afternoon with New Light Family and Friends

New Light family and friends are invited to gather on December 30th, from 1:00 to 4:00 P.M. in the Beth Shalom ballroom for appetizers and dessert. This will be a very informal time for us all to sit and talk with each other, and cherish our time together.

Invitation from Rodef Shalom

Rodef Shalom presents its inaugural **Pursuer of Peace** program on Sunday, December 9th at 9:30 A.M. in Levy Hall. Roberta Schomburg, PhD, Interim Director of the Fred Rogers Center will present "How to Support Children in Times of Crisis." Everyone is welcome, please RSVP to rodefshalom.org/rsvp. Rodef is also sponsoring a holiday toy and book drive to benefit children served by Jewish Family and Children's Services from November 12th through December 9th. Consider bringing an unwrapped toy or book priced under \$25 for a child aged 4 – 17 if you attend the lecture.

Hebrew Reading Lessons

Do you need a refresher in reading Hebrew? Rabbi Perlman has identified someone to teach us on Sundays, starting January 13th at 10:30 A.M. Eight sessions will cost \$400 per person. Contact Rabbi Perlman for more information.

Presidents' Report

Tradition.

When I was sixteen I saw Zero Mostel in "Fiddler on the Roof" In New York. Last night I saw the new National tour show after going through security lines at The Benedum.

As a teenager, I saw the play as an affirmation of America - the land of safety and freedom for Jews. A safe place where I could raise a family. A place like Squirrel Hill.

Now I see the play differently: No place is truly safe. Not Russia; not France; not Israel. Not the United States of America.

On October 27th our world changed forever. Three members of our Congregation were martyred. These men, Richard Gottfried, Dan Stein and Mel Wax, were our lay leaders. They conducted our services, managed the Torah service, and led the congregation. Our heart goes out to Peg, Sharyn and Jodi and their families on their loss. Whatever is needed, we are here for you!

The first week was filled with funerals, shiva calls and inter-faith services at the Rodman Street Missionary Baptist Church, the Sri Venkateswara Hindu Temple in Monroeville, and the Islamic Center of Pittsburgh in Oakland. Last January, a similar attack occurred at a mosque in Quebec. Nine members of that mosque drove thirteen hours to share their experiences following their attack - on their own; unbidden.

The next three weeks have been spent trying to put our lives back together. We reached out to Beth Shalom to be our new home. They responded warmly and graciously, offering us the use of the Helfant Chapel as our sanctuary, plus an office, and another small office next to the Helfant Chapel that we can use as a mini kitchen - no stove; but room for a full sized refrigerator, shelving and a microwave. We thank them for their generosity.

TOLOLS and Dor Hadash have relocated to Rodef Shalom.

The Tree of Life building needed major repairs before this. Now, it needs more. While there was no structural damage to our Sanctuary, the Pervin Chapel was not so fortunate. The psychic damage is incalculable. TOLOLS leaders are engaging architects to repair and rebuild. They have asked - and we have agreed - that New Light is interested in continuing to rent space. While it is currently unknown what renovations will occur, we anticipate being out of the building for one to two years. We have asked to be a member of the committee overseeing the Tree of Life rebuilding.

We met with our insurance agent, Alan Himmel of the Wagner Agency. Alan wears many hats. He is a Beth Shalom board member; our insurance agent; and leads several Federation Committees. (I kept thinking of Bartholomew and his 500 hats.) We have business interruption insurance that will cover rental and moving costs (we need to move our memorial boards and office equipment out of TOLOLS while the building undergoes renovation). We also have “extra expense” insurance to cover unanticipated expenses – for example, catering expenses since we no longer have a kitchen at our disposal.

And we have received mail. Over a thousand emails, Facebook posts and letters. The messages of love and support are overwhelming. Some contain checks; but all contain messages of sorrow and condolence. A committee led by Janet Cohen is writing thank you notes – special thanks to Karen Shapiro, Ann Notovitz and Marilyn Kramer for their help.

Many charitable funds have been established for the victim’s families and the congregation. The Federation has reached out to major corporations and wealthy donors. A TOLOLS gofundme campaign has accumulated over \$1.2 million.

New Light has created a fund too. While nowhere near as substantial, it represents a challenge as well as an opportunity. We are seeking independent advice on how to manage and distribute the funds contributed to us. There are rules governing large scale donations and we are still learning about these rules.

We have engaged a public relations firm to help manage the avalanche of media inquiries. The media has laser-focused on Rabbi Myers and TOLOLS during the past month. In many ways that has been a blessing as it has allowed us to grieve in peace. But it is now time to tell our story. There was a front page article in the Post-Gazette recently. Television producers are now reaching out to do more in depth stories about us.

Finally, the future. We are trying to re-establish our routines. Friday and Saturday services re-started immediately. Many individuals and organizations have reached out to assist with Torah and Haftarah reading as well as leading services. We thank all these visitors from far and near.

We are joining TOLOLS for a special Hanukkah candle lighting ceremony. We will soon re-start the Men’s Club Sunday minyan. We are planning a New Year’s (well, late December) get together. Routine is good.

A special thanks must go to Rabbi Jonathan Perlman. For some, there is no time permitted to deal with personal trauma. He has been eloquent in speech; steadfast in support of others; and forthright in his belief that this tragedy should remain private and not be turned into a public spectacle. We are lucky to have him as our spiritual leader. Thank you.

I am writing this on Thanksgiving - a uniquely American secular holiday. We have suffered a grievous, hate-filled loss, but we have much to be thankful for. Neighbors, friends, the Pittsburgh community and the world have reached out to us in solidarity and comfort.

Maybe America is different.

Barbara Caplan & Stephen Cohen, Co-Presidents

December Birthdays

David Greenberg
Marilyn Honigsberg
Jeremy Tuckfelt
Brenda Werber

December Anniversaries

Bonnie and David Greenberg

December Onegs

7 – Bonnie & David Greenberg Anniversary
21 – Marilyn Honigsberg birthday

Reminders

- To purchase Memorial Plaques, Simcha Tree Leaves or Stones contact Ileen Portnoy 412-683-7985
- To sponsor an Oneg in honor of that special person/event or for no reason at all call Hugh Casper at 412-421-7619
- To purchase bricks for our “Garden of Freedom” or sponsor a Kiddush luncheon contact Barbara Caplan 412-521-4332
- To purchase Giant Eagle gift cards contact Marilyn Honigsberg at 412-521-7174
- For information on our cemetery contact Stephen Cohen at 412-421-3999

NEW LIGHT CONGREGATION

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