



אור חדש

New Light Congregation

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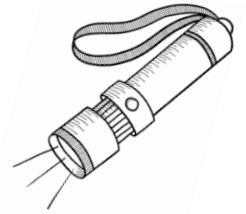
New Light News November 2023

Shining a Flashlight - On Hesed

8 Marheshvan 5784

Dear friends,

A few months ago, I had a conversation with a board member of another synagogue about staying up to date with Israeli news. I told him how challenging it has been this year to understand events unfolding in Israel and that I currently subscribe to the weekly Jerusalem Post (that comes a week late), listen to podcasts from the Times of Israel, and read the headlines on the Haaretz app. I asked him what he did to stay caught up. After naming three prominent daily American newspapers and the Post-Gazette he said that was enough. I pointed out that the American press doesn't always get Israeli stories right. To which he said, "why should I make a special effort to follow the news of a foreign country?" I was flabbergasted.



Last month, I wrote that I would review the three merits of Abraham that I mentioned on Yom Kippur –hospitality, hesed, and hope – that we strive to imitate this year. To describe the difference between hospitality and hesed, I used the words "roadside stand" for hospitality and "tent" for hesed. The midrash describes Abraham opening a "roadside stand" or "Pundak" where he would offer the hospitality of drink, nourishment, and even a place to stay overnight (more like an inn) to all the wayfarers that came by on their way in and out of Beersheva. In other words, he met the needs of others. The "tent" is distinctly different. Abraham's tent was open on all sides so that he could orient himself to anybody needing assistance in the harsh climate of the desert. Abraham could see travelers coming from miles away in every direction and he was ready with water and food when they were 50 feet away from his home. Abraham was always consciously alert to the needs of others whereas in the "roadside stand" metaphor, he waited for others to come to him.

Hesed is a more intimate form of helping others. Hesed is translated as love but it is more than that. Hesed has a deep quality. Hesed is automatic. Hesed is the identification of someone else's needs or desire being your own.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the author of the 18th century Hasidic work, called the "Tanya," redefined the idea of good (or *tov*) as being transcendental. When we speak about *tov v'ra* or "good and evil" (as in the tree of knowledge concerning good and evil that Adam and Eve were prohibited from eating from), we are really talking two different ways of feeling that are neither good nor bad. "Ra" or "bad" is egoistic. A person who gives charity to a beggar on the street is repulsed with how terrible it is that a man should have to sleep on the ground with half a blanket wearing dirty clothes. Because he is repulsed by the beggar, the feeling starts with his own concerns for being warm and clean, an inward feeling that starts with self. It is the "I" that has a concern for doing what is right. We should not judge such a self-oriented individual. This is the natural way that most people feel about doing a deed of hesed. It is "bad" but better than not giving at all. If one were to take a transcendental approach, says Reb Shneur Zalman, one would

identify automatically with what the beggar needs. He would know immediately what it would be like to “walk in his shoes” and his giving would be different. The “tov” approach would take him outside of himself; he would do the act selflessly as he would imagine what it would be like to be this unfortunate person. The “ra” person would feel good about himself after giving charity and performing a mitzvah; the “tov” person would not be concerned with credit flowing to himself. He does the right thing *right*.

Carol Black made me aware of something she and Jody Kart have been doing for the last five years because of their involvement with the 10/27 Healing Partnership. Through the project called Pittsburgh Families Bridging Kindness, whenever there has been a shooting in this bloodstained country of ours they have managed to reach out to victim families and connect with them on an emotional level. They have told them that they know what is like losing someone to gun violence, offered to listen, gave them a phone number to call anytime, and offered some therapeutic help. This is the kind of hesed that we all can learn from. In this month where we mark another *yarzheit* for our own, we need to rethink how we do hesed. We experience transcendence in the act of hesed whether it is feeding the hungry, helping the poor, or giving assistance to others who are not born into privilege. Now after the shock of the horrific pogrom in Southern Israel, we need to figure out ways to reach out to our Israeli brothers and sisters. I know that writing a check doesn't sound so “transcendental” but for we affluent Americans, it is the best *hesed-dik* way to help someone else rebuild his or her life. Entire communities (kibbutzim and settlements) were destroyed by burning. Important personnel are missing or dead. The program has been described as a 9/11 to the 13th degree as it is experienced on the scale of Israel's population. It is a blow physically and psychologically and it is far from over.

The idea of hesed is the opposite of how my friend thinks and feels about Israel as a foreign country. Israel is your country. Identify with it. Read as much as you can about it especially in these times. Let your hesed soar and know the suffering of another.

Be well,
Rabbi

You Are Invited: Three Congregations' Joint Yahrzeit Service, November 1

The 18th of Heshvan, the Hebrew date corresponding to October 27, 2018, begins at sundown on Wednesday, November 1st. As in past years, the three congregations, Dor Hadash, New Light, and Tree of Life will join together for a joint minyan. This year it is being held on November 1st at 6:00 PM in Levinson Hall at the JCC as part of a larger Yahrzeit Torah Study evening organized by Beth Perlman and Eric Lidji.

The minyan and kaddish will be jointly led by Rabbis Bardack, Meyers, and Perlman. This service will include the lighting of 11 yizkor candles by family members. Services will culminate with the recitation of the Kaddish D'raban, followed by refreshments. Registration is not necessary for the joint service.

For those who cannot attend in-person, the Zoom connection is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81574664669?pwd=aEVsa3A5MzhqdTlnUzNUa2VGbDlkUT09>

Meeting id: 815 7466 4669 passcode: 10272018

Downtown Yahrzeit Service, November 2

Beth Hamedrash Hagodol (810 Fifth Avenue, downtown) will hold regular schacharit morning services on Thursday, November 2nd at 8:00 AM, in commemoration of the fifth yahrzeit. The congregation remembers all 11 victims and holds a special memory of Dr. Richard Gottfried, who was a regular attendee of daily services. Eric Lidji will read Torah at the service. Breakfast will be served afterwards. Parking is available in the shul's lot.

Co-Presidents' Report

The world churns around us. Perhaps not affecting some of us personally – yet. But so close that we can taste the turmoil and distress. Chaos in Congress. War in Israel. Commemorating 10.27. Perhaps we know personally or through our acquaintances people fighting in Israel. Perhaps we know some of those who perished in the Hamas attack. And we all remember with love our members who died five years ago.

We read about the hate crimes affecting Jews (and Muslims) throughout America and the World; but feel comforted that the Federation Security team is watching and ready in case something happens here in Pittsburgh. Unlike five years ago, our institutions and organizations are prepared (as best as one can be) for the lone wolf seeking attention and redemption.

And we learned – or re-learned – something new. Anti-semitism does not exist just among Nazi-sympathizers and Christian nationalists on the Far Right, but also on University campuses on the Far Left. To one group Jews are not part of the “White” race but a scourge to be eliminated; to the other, Jews are the epitome of white colonizers and imperialists – to be eliminated and marginalized. Same tune – different words – same result.

New Light continues. Under the spiritual leadership of Rabbi Perlman we celebrated Sukkot and Simchat Torah and concluded the six month course on Pirkei Avot. We enjoyed a lovely afternoon get together arranged by the Sisterhood. We are still planning – with obvious caveats – our trip to Israel in the spring.

Please join us on Wednesday, November 1st at 6 PM in Levinson Hall at the JCC as we join together with Dor Hadash and Tree of Life to observe the yahrzeit of the eleven martyrs who died five years ago in the worst anti-semitic attack in America. See more details on page 2 in this newsletter.

While the clouds outside are gloomy, the space inside is warm and inviting. Come join us on a Friday night or Saturday morning. Listen and learn the timeless messages we read each week in the Torah about how we should live our lives today.

Barbara & Stephen

Yahrzeit Torah Study

At 7:00 PM on November 1st (immediately following the joint yahrzeit service) public yahrzeit torah study will begin on the 2nd floor of the JCC. Torah study will include learning around hymns and songs of remembrance, Parsha Vayera, Daf Yomi, poetry, and trauma and healing. Registration is requested; for more information and to register see <https://1027healingpartnership.org/yahrzeit/>.

November Birthdays

Judy Blumenfeld

Barbara Caplan

Hugh Casper

Marilyn Kramer

Yetta Speiser

Jenni Swerdlow

November Board Meeting

The next board meeting is Sunday, November 5th, 10:30 AM. **The meeting will be in-person in the Zweig Library, 3rd floor, Beth Shalom, as well as on Zoom (use the same connection as for Shabbat).**

Upcoming Events

November 11: Unveiling several memorial plaques by Michael Neft, during Shabbat services.

November 18: Shabbat kiddush luncheon sponsored by Barbara and Arhtur Weinrach, in honor of their granddaughters Minn and Nina Lidji.

Sisterhood News

The Enjoy Books have arrived. Contact Sharyn Stein at 412.521.5231 to purchase one for \$30.

The sisterhood sponsored gathering on October 15 was very pleasant. Thanks to Barbara for arranging for the delicious refreshments.

Israel Update with Avi Ben-Hur

Classrooms Without Borders (CWB) is offering a weekly update on the situation in Israel, presented by Avi Ben-Hur on Wednesdays at 2:00 PM. through November 15. The series is free and offered on Zoom.

Each update will be dynamic in nature, providing insightful analysis into the complex war as it unfolds. Avi Ben-Hur is a Brooklyn native who moved to Israel in 1983. From 2003-2008 Avi was Director of the Archaeological Seminars School for Israeli Tour Guides. As Scholar in Residence for CWB Avi has lectured, taught and facilitated workshops in the US, Warsaw, Prague, Berlin and Greece. From 1996-2000, Avi taught in Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies. As a guide, Avi has specialized working with organizations focusing on political issues (such as AIPAC & CIJA), inter-faith programs and Holocaust studies. Avi is currently an examiner for the Israeli Ministry of Tourism Licensing Boards and is the ongoing scholar in residence of CWB. Avi was the guide for New Light's trip to Israel in 2015.

For more information and to register see <https://cwbpgh.org/event/israel-update-with-avi-ben-hur-8/2023-11-08>

Reminders

- To purchase Memorial Plaques, Simcha Tree Leaves or Stones contact Ileen Portnoy.
- To purchase bricks for our "Garden of Freedom" contact Barbara Caplan.
- To purchase Giant Eagle gift cards contact Karen Coburn.
- For information on our cemetery contact Stephen Cohen.

NEW LIGHT CONGREGATION

5915 Beacon Street

412-421-1017

www.newlightcongregation.org

Rabbi

Co-President/Social VP/Yahrzeits

Co-President/Cemetery/Website

Membership

Sisterhood

Treasurer/Men's Club

Simcha Tree/Plaques

Religious Committee

Recording Secretary

Corresponding Secretary/Calendar

Jonathan Perlman

Barbara Caplan

Stephen Cohen

Debbi Salvin

Sharyn Stein

Harold Caplan

Ileen Portnoy

Eric Cohen, Bruce Hyde

Karen Coburn

Janet Cohen

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New Light Congregation **November 2023** 17 Cheshvan 5784 - 17 Kislev 5784

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
5 21 CHESHVAN ▶ Board Meeting, 10:30 AM	6 22 CHESHVAN	7 23 CHESHVAN	8 24 CHESHVAN 1 Yahrzeit Service, 6:00 PM, JCC Torah Study, 7:00 PM, JCC	9 25 CHESHVAN	10 26 CHESHVAN 5:55 Services, 7:00 PM	11 27 CHESHVAN Chayei Sarah Services, 9:45 AM
12 28 CHESHVAN	13 29 CHESHVAN	14 1 KISLEV Rosh Chodesh Kislev	15 2 KISLEV	16 3 KISLEV	17 4 KISLEV 4:41 Services, 7:00 PM	18 5 KISLEV Toldos Services, 9:45 AM
19 6 KISLEV	20 7 KISLEV	21 8 KISLEV	22 9 KISLEV	23 10 KISLEV Thanksgiving Day	24 11 KISLEV 4:37 Services, 7:00 PM	25 12 KISLEV Vayitzei Services, 9:45 AM
26 13 KISLEV	27 14 KISLEV	28 15 KISLEV	29 16 KISLEV	30 17 KISLEV		