



אור חדש

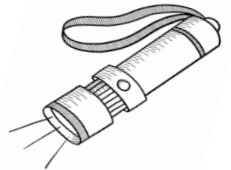
New Light Congregation

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## **New Light News January 2024**

### **Dear Friends**

Some of our members asked me for a copy of a *derasha* I gave last week for *Parshat Mikketz*. Here it is in its entirety with a reflection on the herd mentality that is plaguing our campuses.



I have been not too pleased with the reception Jewish students got when they started their first semester at many of our most prestigious American colleges. Imagine a young woman with a strong Jewish identity. Imagine that you made available all the positive Jewish experiences a Jewish child could have from Jewish Day School to positive experiences at camp and in Israel programs. Imagine that you enrolled her in one of the most diverse, multicultural colleges in America -Yale, your alma mater- where you told her that she would find herself in the global community that Yale represents. You had hoped that she would emerge out of the bubble of her Jewishness and find satisfaction with the curiosity and minds of most Yale students.

Unfortunately, that did not happen. That young woman was my daughter Ada and her first exposure to the Yale global community was traumatic. Since October 7, she has had to pass through Palestinian rallies that yell things like “Shame” and “From the River to the Sea! Palestine must be free!” She has had to regularly defend Israel to her peers and feels awkward around those of the faculty who dismiss her claims for a Jewish state altogether. She has been told she is a “colonializer” and faced all kinds of ugliness and has been the victim of verbal abuse.

Hold on! Who started this war? And is this the Yale of the “Great Conversation” that I knew back in the 1980s?

In this week’s Parasha Mikketz, we learn a lesson about confrontation between Joseph and his 10 brothers that sheds light on where we start from when it comes to awkward, political dialogue. Joseph accuses the ten brothers as being spies in their first encounter. But nothing could be farther than the truth. The rishonim (early medieval rabbis) point out that had the brothers acted like spies they would not go around in a group of ten. Spies usually reconnoiter as one or two men. Also, spies would not invite a personal audience with the head administrator of Egypt. Certainly, they would obtain information in secret and not have to go through such public channels. If we jump ahead to the story in Numbers, the “spies” there behave conspicuously, robed in their own clothes, carrying the large produce of the land everywhere on their shoulders, introducing themselves to the inhabitants of the land. The reason why they earn the title “meraglim” is ironic because they use their “raglayim” (legs) to move slander and gossip among the community and tear down the leadership of Moses and Aaron. They violate “Al Talech Rachil Amecha” (Lev.) for they go as “a tale-bearer among the people.”

When Joseph comes face to face with these brothers, the word “spies” comes into his mind not because he has any evidence that they are spies –he doesn’t – but he remembers how they once tried to destroy him, gaslight him, with their insults, bullying, and conspiracies against him. They were tale-bearers in most heinous kind of spying.

The ten brothers are left wondering, in shock, at what kind of madman they have met only in the quest to find food for their family. Their response is even stranger.

“Nachnu Kanim Anachnu,” they say in one voice, “We are ‘honest’ men.” But the word “Kanim” doesn’t fit the rejoinder to a defense of not being spies. They could have said “we are truthful” (anachnu amitim) or “we are righteous” (anachnu yesharim or zadikim) or “we are pure” (anachnu tamim). They instead choose the word “ken,” which means “yes,” the only time in the Torah that a group is described in this manner. It is important that the brothers say it in one voice: “We are Yes-men.” There is no individuation here. It is though the text has another irony up its sleeve. The brothers plotted against Joseph, even to murder him. In this tale of the anatomy of repentance (teshuva), the brothers have always participated in group-think, even Reuben and Judah who protested some about doing away with Joseph in the previous story; they are all “Yes-Men,” members of the herd that have yet to attain any kind of righteousness. Certainly, they were complicit in gaslighting Joseph.

Rabbi David Wolpe wrote a letter to Harvard about his resignation from an anti-semitic study group that bears on what is happening in the Joseph-Brothers exchange.

He accused Harvard students and faculty as forming a Herd Mentality on current issues regarding Israel and the Hamas War. “Part of the problem is a simple herd mentality,” he wrote, “People screaming slogans whose meaning and implication they know nothing of, or not wishing to be disliked by taking an unpopular position.” He wrote “the system at Harvard along with the ideology that grips far too many of the students and faculty, the ideology that works only along axes of oppression and places Jews as oppressors and therefore intrinsically evil, is itself evil. Ignoring Jewish suffering is evil. Belittling or denying the Jewish experience, including unspeakable atrocities, is a vast and continuing catastrophe. Denying Israel the self-determination as a Jewish nation accorded unthinkingly to others is endemic, and evil.”

Harvard offenders, like Joseph’s brothers, are not interested in the truth. They are only interested in slogans and yelling and chants. A study at UC Berkeley revealed that most students shouting “From the River to the Sea” could not identify the bodies of water that they were talking about. It seems that these universities have missed their calling in trying to educate in the real sense of the word – to “lead out.” Each individual is endowed with separate ways of learning and thinking critically and thus arriving at the truth. Education is not merely parroting what is fashionable or hateful against another group who is depicted as being the oppressor.

And so, Joseph’s brothers experience a slip of the tongue. They have yet to individuate themselves as ten separate men who arrive at their own opinions. And so Joseph receives them as “spies” who deal in misinformation and gossip. This model of “spying” will eventually challenge Moses and Aaron in their own generation. Joseph’s brothers are “yes-men” in the third degree, and they are dangerous. No wonder that Joseph must direct them to repentance and ultimately his forgiveness.

Read on Harvard’s crest the word “Veritas,” the Latin word for truth. It is a fungible word yet cries out in its severity. It takes one mind to engage in critical-thinking, listening, employing various definitions to get at the truth. I pray that college students and faculty can reach these truths so that agitation and sloganeering does not tear down the hallowed walls of the university process of education.

Be well,

Rabbi

## January 2024 Presidents' Report

December began with an invitation from one of our family members to a meeting to view the unveiling of the 10.27 Memorial being constructed on the Tree of Life site. We were asked to keep confidential the design until they were ready to release it to the public - which occurred at the conclusion of the presentation. Barbara and I are sure that you by now have seen all the renderings in the paper, in the news, the Chronicle and emails. It is on the site of the Zittrain gardens which sits on the Shady side of the main building. The key design element is "Books of Light", one for each of the deceased. Otherwise, it is very similar to the present garden - below ground. Some members present were interviewed privately but we were not approached.

There are many restrictions placed by the city on all property bordering a busy intersection in terms of height and sight lines. Nothing can block the view of cars coming on the corner of Wilkins and Shady. It does lead to a rather low emotional impact for a memorial. If you have any comments, please let Barbara or me know so we can report them to our families to bring back for future meetings of the Memorialization Working Group.



Does the TOL-Memorial matter to New Light? Every Shabbat we honor those we lost as their names grace our Torahs and call to us from our Memorial Boards. A monument to them stands proudly at the entrance at the top of the hill at our cemetery. We remember and honor and love. And during this time of war between Israel and Hamas we remember why they died: during the worst anti-Semitic act of violence in U.S. history. If the families are content, so are we.

Construction of the new Tree of Life building is to begin the second week of January.

On December 10<sup>th</sup> Sisterhood sponsored our annual Hanukkah Dinner. It was a fun filled evening with good food, good companionship and a fun trivia game with prizes. It was a wonderful evening in spite of all the news surrounding us in the outside world.

Barbara & Stephen

## New Class: What is Troubling Rashi?

Rabbi Perlman introduces the most famous of all medieval Torah commentaries that will become the foundation of much of Jewish thought and strategy concerning the reading of sacred sources. The students will develop critical skills learned from greatest of the first wave of commentaries and understand how they influenced Judaism in generations to come.

8 Wednesdays at 6:00 PM starting January 17<sup>th</sup>. In the Lehman Center and also on Zoom. Tanaka is required. Register by emailing [janet@newlightcongregation.org](mailto:janet@newlightcongregation.org).

## January Board Meeting

The next board meeting is Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 AM in Helfant Chapel and on Zoom. Use the same Zoom connection as for Shabbat.

## Sisterhood News

The Hanukkah party was very successful. Thanks to Barbara and Harold for arranging the dinner with Elegant Edge. Rabbi and Beth Perlman had a fun game for all to play.

Enjoy Books will be returned in January.

### January Birthdays

Larry Kanterman  
Judi Pearlman  
Beth Perlman  
Debbie Salvin  
Carl Solomon

### January Anniversaries

Michelle & Joel Reisz

## Correction

December's newsletter incorrectly listed Barry Werber's birthday. In fact, Brenda Werber's birthday is in December.

## 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

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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 January 2024

20 Teves 5784 - 21 Shevat 5784

Sunday		Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday	
	1	20 TEVES	2	21 TEVES	3	22 TEVES	4	23 TEVES	5	24 TEVES	6	25 TEVES	
	 New Year's Day								 4:47 Services, 7:00 PM		 Shema Services, 9:45 AM		
7	26 TEVES	8	27 TEVES	9	28 TEVES	10	29 TEVES	11	1 SHEVAT	12	2 SHEVAT	13	3 SHEVAT
 Board Meeting, 10:30 AM								 Rosh Chodesh Shevat	 4:54 Services, 7:00 PM		 Va'eira Services, 9:45 AM		
14	4 SHEVAT	15	5 SHEVAT	16	6 SHEVAT	17	7 SHEVAT	18	8 SHEVAT	19	9 SHEVAT	20	10 SHEVAT
		 Martin Luther King Day				 Rashi, 6:00 PM				 5:02 Services, 7:00 PM		 Bo Services, 9:45 AM	
21	11 SHEVAT	22	12 SHEVAT	23	13 SHEVAT	24	14 SHEVAT	25	15 SHEVAT	26	16 SHEVAT	27	17 SHEVAT
						 Rashi, 6:00 PM		 Tu B'Shvat		 5:11 Services, 7:00 PM		 Beshalach Services, 9:45 AM	
28	18 SHEVAT	29	19 SHEVAT	30	20 SHEVAT	31	21 SHEVAT						
						 Rashi, 6:00 PM							