

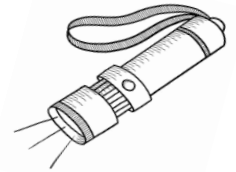


אור חדש

New Light Congregation

5915 Beacon Street, Pittsburgh PA 15217 • 412-421-1017 • info@newlightcongregation.org

New Light News February 2024



The Flashlight

By Rabbi Jonathan Perlman

In the doldrums of winter (especially when the Steelers are not in the playoffs), it is hard to find things to be grateful for. Gratitude, even savoring the good things in your life, is an important Jewish value! Would you believe that the negative counterpart of gratitude is resentment? It wouldn't seem so but in a book I have been studying called *Savoring*, the negative counterpart of expressing and feeling gratitude towards others for their perceived favors and blessings towards oneself is "harboring a grudge, in which one experiences and expresses resentment or hostile ill-will towards others for their perceived wrongs and transgressions against oneself" (Bryant, Veroff p. 140).

This insight came to me as we enter the wilderness years of the exodus from Egypt as described in the Torah this month. Despite the eye-popping miracle of a sea raising up to clear a bridge for the Israelites to escape into freedom, there always seems something to complain about. It seems that the default flip side of gratitude is resentment. The Israelites resent Moses. The Israelites resent God at the shore of the sea, seeking for fresh water to drink in a desert, and desiring the food they used to eat as slaves in Egypt! They suggest that God is vindictive and has dragged them out into the wilderness to die of thirst and starvation. Even though we are told that they danced and sang at the sea with Moses, they cannot get beyond the deep-seated resentment and grudge that a dramatic event has changed their lives forever. To make matters worse, they give up on Moses entirely when they create the Golden Calf and turn against God resorting back into self-focused idol worship.

One of my teachers, Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, tells the story of Shimon and Levi who were bothered once they were told to step down into the seabed of the Red Sea as the miracle was occurring. Their gaze was lowered on the level of the muddy seabed bottom below and they kvetched about how uncomfortable the experience was! They had to take off their sandals. The mud was a stinky mess. It was wet all around. They had to walk around the various sea plants that were in their way. They never once looked up at the walls of sea water piled up to the sky. For Shimon and Levi, it was as though the miracle never happened! Shimon and Levi harbored this all too familiar grudge against Moses and God who was bound to continually disappoint them.

Now you can see how hostile resentment is the opposite of loving gratitude. You would not think of them as opposing pairs but it is true. I believe the Torah is teaching us a valuable lesson about ourselves. The ancient Israelites were unhappy slaves that had to grow into their happiness and gratitude. They are literally born as a nation of children who need to shake the abuse that they

learned as degraded slaves in Egypt and embrace a liberation that is full of thanksgiving for the unseen forces that make a new reality possible.

As Moses teaches them at the shore of the Sea: “Stand fast and see the salvation that God will perform for you today!” (Exodus 14:13). It is a time of standing back and watching your reality unfold. It is time to take a broader view of what is happening around you. Only then- when you cease the dark resentment and hold on to gratitude- will you discover how your life is constantly being renewed. Faith is knowing that God has well-intentioned plans for you but we don’t know how those plans will unfold. We may need to wait and wait some more or take a broader view of our situation.

As Bryant and Veroff write in *Savoring*, “lower order negative concerns tend to block out higher order savoring processes... and impairs people’s ability either to give thanks to others, bask in pride, marvel at wonder at the world, or luxuriate in self-focused pleasure” (Page140). Our attitude should aim at gratitude.

Be grateful.

February Board Meeting

The meeting is Sunday, February 4th, 10:30 AM, in-person in Helfant Chapel and on Zoom. Use the same Zoom connection as for Shabbat.

February 11 Spaghetti Lunch

We are having a spaghetti lunch on February 11th at 1:00 PM in the Ballroom. \$10 per person. G-d willing the weather cooperates. It’s just nice in the midst of winter we can come together and enjoy each other’s company. A good excuse to get out and see people. Please respond to Barbara (barbaracaplan@comcast.net or 412-421-1017) before Sunday, February 4th.

February 3 Kiddush Luncheon

February 3rd’s Haftarah- Yitro - is the anniversary Haftarah of Janet Cohen, Bruce Hyde, and Dan Stein, may his memory be a blessing. Please join us for Kiddush Lunch, sponsored by Janet and Steve.

February Birthdays

Janet Cohen
Bruce Hyde
Carol Kanterman
Charlotte Waldbaum
Harry Waldbaum

February Anniversaries

Rochelle & Aryeh Sherman

Presidents' Report

As we near the end of January we should be grateful that winter has not been so awful. We have had frigid weather and some snow but certainly nowhere as in winters past. We are sure everyone is looking forward to spring which really is around the corner.

By now everyone is aware of the beginning of the tear down at Tree of Life. What bittersweet thoughts we have as this phase begins: both good and then the awfulness of October 27, 2018.

We are making a change for Friday Night Services. The Board discussed at length the low in-person attendance on Friday night. One factor was the lateness of the service. Effective February 2nd, Friday night services will now start at 6 PM. Please join us.

The Board also discussed the proposed 10.27 Memorial to be built on the Tree of Life site. Our comments to members of the Memorialization Working Group and TOLI are published in full elsewhere in this newsletter. Your comments and thoughts are appreciated.

Please remember to communicate with Stephen, Barbara, Sharyn and/or the Rabbi if you know of anyone in the hospital or ill. It helps us keep in touch with our New Light family.

Barbara and Stephen

New Light Comments on Proposed 10.27 Memorial

The following was sent as an email on January, 12, 2024:

On December 5, 2023, New Light Congregation received a first look at the proposed 10-27 Memorial design. For the past two years, we have been excluded from direct participation in the design development. At our Board meeting of January 7, 2024 we discussed the proposed Memorial design and offer the following comments:

It was difficult to actually visualize the Memorial as the slides went by very quickly. The meeting was somewhat confusing, too, as it started with a request to keep what we were to be shown confidential – and ended with many of the principals being interviewed by the Press and the slides distributed to the public. Pictures of the Memorial were in the newspaper that weekend.



In brief, it is on the site of the Zittrain gardens which sits on the Shady Avenue side of the main building. The key design element, proposed almost eighteen months ago, are lighted “Books of Life”, one for each of the deceased. Otherwise, it is very similar to the present garden – below ground. 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 to the corner of Wilkins and Shady. It does lead to a rather

low emotional impact for a Memorial. We worry about security of the Memorial on such a busy, public corner.

We hope the design is not final and urge that the design process be opened up to the public. We agree with comments from some of the families of the deceased that other voices and design options should be sought. Monies provided by the Pittsburgh Jewish Federation’s Independent Committee, is available to underwrite such a design competition.

As we noted above, there are severe restrictions on the easement area in terms of height of the Memorial. But the entire area is not subject to those restrictions. The area close to the part of the building beyond the stained glass is not in the easement area; nor the area on the far south of the property. Could something more substantial be erected in those areas? Could there be a sculpture

attached to the building itself? Just as an idea: something with eleven Jewish stars?

We also wonder about the appropriateness of the concept of a “Book of Life”? Each year we pray on Yom Kippur that G-d write us in the Book of Life. Clearly that is inappropriate for the deceased. The one factor that is true for all the victims is that they were praying in their respective shuls. They were wearing (the men) tallit and anticipating the reading of the morning’s Torah portion. Instead of a “book”, could the stations be in the shape of a Torah scroll, surrounded by a tallit? This imagery was suggested by our families and forms the design of the New Light Memorial Monument erected at our cemetery.

The purpose statement of the Memorialization Working Group states that the Memorial should remember those lost and the congregations affected; as well as address the issue of anti-semitism. How will the outside Memorial (as opposed to the inside Museum) address these issues? In particular, how will references to New Light Congregation be included in the physical Memorial?

Finally, New Light Congregation adopted (though did not sign as we were never offered the opportunity) the Memorandum of Understanding concerning the development of the Memorial. Part of that agreement called for the creation of an organization to manage the Memorial. Is this no longer being pursued? Who will be the owner and manager of the Memorial?

We look forward to a public dialogue about the design of the Memorial to 10.27. The families, the Congregations and the community deserve a Memorial that honors and remembers the eleven Jewish lives taken while they gathered in a sacred space to celebrate Shabbat with their congregations; and that the outside 10.27 Memorial bring awareness of the deadliest attack against Jews in the history of the United States in order to promote the continued fight against the dangers of antisemitism.

Submitted January 12, 2024

On Behalf of the Board of New Light Congregation

Barbara Caplan, Co-President

Stephen Cohen, Co-President

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

rabbi@newlightcongregation.org

barbaracaplan@comcast.net

info@newlightcongregation.org

dgsalvin@pobox.com

haroldcaplan@comcast.net

ileenportnoy@gmail.com

janet@newlightcongregation.org

New Light Congregation February 2024 22 Shevat 5784 - 20 Adar I 5784

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
4 ▲ Board Meeting, 10:30 AM	5	6	7 🎉 Fun with Rashi, 6:00 PM	8	9 🕒 5:19 Services, 6:00 PM	10 🕒 5:28 Services, 6:00 PM
11 ▲ Spaghetti Lunch, 1:00 PM	12 🇺🇸 Lincoln's Birthday	13	14 🎉 Fun with Rashi, 6:00 PM	15	16 🕒 5:36 Services, 6:00 PM	17 🕒 5:44 Services, 6:00 PM
18	19 🇺🇸 Washington's Birthday (observed)	20	21 🎉 Fun with Rashi, 6:00 PM	22	23 🕒 5:44 Services, 6:00 PM	24 🕒 5:44 Services, 6:00 PM
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