



אור חדש

New Light Congregation

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New Light News December 2024

The Flashlight

Dear Friends,

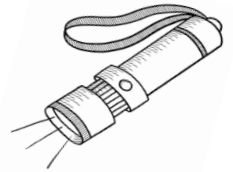
Hanukkah is not the only “festival of lights” in the world. It appears that each religion incorporates lighting of lights as daylight is diminished during the winter season. The lights of advent are just one example of how the religions of the world take up this theme. The Talmud itself acknowledges in Avodah Zarah 8a that the solstice ritual goes all the way back to Adam, the first man:

When Adam the first man saw that the day was progressively diminishing, as the days become shorter from the autumnal equinox until the winter solstice, he did not yet know that this is a normal phenomenon, and therefore he **said: Woe is me; perhaps because I sinned the world is becoming dark around me and will ultimately return to the primordial state of chaos and disorder. And this is the death that was sentenced upon me from Heaven**, as it is written: “And to dust shall you return” (Genesis 3:19). **He arose and spent eight days in fasting and in prayer.**

Once he saw that the season of Tevet, i.e., the winter solstice, had arrived, **and saw that the day was progressively lengthening** after the solstice, he **said: Clearly**, the days become shorter and then longer, and **this is the order of the world. He went and observed a festival for eight days. Upon the next year, he observed both these eight days** on which he had fasted on the previous year, **and these eight days of his celebration, as days of festivities. He, Adam, established these festivals for the sake of Heaven, but they, the gentiles of later generations, established them for the sake of idol worship.**

Elsewhere in the midrash Bereishit Rabba 11:2, there is a story of how Adam discovered fire:

Rabbi Levi said in the name of Rabbi Ze’eira: That [primordial] light functioned for thirty-six hours – twelve on the day before Shabbat, twelve on the night of Shabbat, and twelve on Shabbat. As the sun set at the conclusion of Shabbat, darkness began approaching, and Adam the first man became afraid, as it is stated: “And I said that darkness will envelop me [*yeshufeni*]; night for me is light,” (Psalms 139:11) – that one [the serpent] in whose regard it is written: “He will strike you [*yeshufekha*] with his head, and you will strike him [*teshufenu*] with your heel” (Genesis 3:15), is now coming to confront me. What did the Holy One blessed be He do? He prepared for him two flint stones and he struck them one against the other. Light emerged from them and he recited a blessing over it. That is what is written: “Night for me is light.” What blessing did he recite over it? [Blessed be God] Who creates the lights of fire. This is in accordance with the opinion of Shmuel, as Shmuel said: Why does one recite a blessing over light at the conclusion of Shabbat? It is because that time was the beginning of its creation. Rav Huna in the name of Rav and Rabbi Abahu in the name of Rabbi Yohanan said: One recites a blessing over it [light] at the conclusion of Yom Kippur, as well, because fire rested all that day.



These two texts illustrate how the first man coped with the increasing darkness of the winter months. Instead of cursing God or giving in to despair, he turned to prayer and established an eight day holiday for the sake of Heaven. He learned to create fire from striking two flint stones together and credited God “who creates the lights of fire.” Hanukah then becomes the only rabbinically ordained holiday in which we say the blessing “who sanctifies us with His commandments and commands us to kindle the Hanukah lights.” Lighting the lights is our response to God’s darkening of the world. The lights are symbols of hope and optimism during the dark days of winter and we like the First Man invent the festival of lights to brighten our days. The first passage also mentions that the festival is created by man for the “sake of Heaven” whereas the gentiles, namely the Romans, established these days for the “sake of idol worship.”

Our candle lighting holiday is not so different than other candle lighting holidays around the world but there is a difference in Judaism. We credit God for showing us the way to share light during the darkest days of winter as a reminder to ourselves and to God that brighter days are ahead. Joy can be found by increasing the light each day and celebrating with God the natural order of the world.

Let the Hanukah lights brighten our days and sanctify our holy living even when the natural phenomenon of the world curtails the days of sunlight. We work with God to light up the night and share the lights by placing them in the window for all to see.

Chag Urim Sameach (Happy Festival of Lights),
Rabbi P.

Thank you to Rabbi Lauren Holtzblatt of Adas Israel in Washington DC who shared these texts on the yahrzeit of 18 Heshvan.

Hanukkah/Torah Mantle Dedication Party

Please join us on Sunday, December 29th, 2024 at 4:30 PM in the Ballroom as we celebrate the re-dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem by Judah Maccabee and the dedication of our new Torah mantles. Celebrate Hanukah with candle-lighting, songs, dinner and prayers. Thank you to Bruce Hyde, Carol Black, Sharyn Stein and Arthur Weinrach for the new Torah mantles. Don’t forget to bring your Hanukkiah! \$20 per person. Please reply to Barbara (barbaracaplan@comcast.net), or 412-521-4332 or 412-519-7141) by Sunday, December 22nd.



December Presidents' Report

Many of you are in a state of shock; others are celebrating. Regardless, November 5th brought an end to the incessant competing TV, radio and social media ads about the election.

Janet and I traveled most of November on a Rhine cruise visiting Lucerne, Switzerland, Koblenz, Speyer and Cologne, Germany and Amsterdam, the Netherlands. At each City we took a walking tour of the "old city" with buildings dating from the 1500's. Quite picturesque. In Cologne there was no old city – we bombed the city and destroyed 90% of the city during WWII. Every tour touched on a troubled European history – pogroms, massacres, responsibility for the slave trade and destruction of indigenous populations and cultures throughout the world. Not particularly uplifting nor encouraging.

One story in Amsterdam spoke to me (Steve). Over 80,000 Jews lived in Amsterdam in 1940; with 60,000 living in one small area close to downtown. Initially, when the Nazis conquered Holland they imposed few restrictions on Jews. Instead, they asked the leaders on the community to take responsibility and then imposed more and more onerous restrictions; even demanding that they hand over individuals to be deported to the death camps. The leaders cooperated. By 1945 there were no Jews left in the City; not even the leaders.

The Israel- Hamas-Hezbollah War has been going on for fourteen months with no end in sight. To give our members perspective and information, we offered two lectures by Avi Ben-Hur, the Classrooms Without Borders Scholar-In-Residence. The first described the geography and ethnicity of the lands surrounding Israel; the genesis of Hamas and Hezbollah; the role of Iran as a funder of these terror groups. In short, a very dangerous neighborhood with enemies seeking the destruction of Israel and the Jews living there.

The second lecture (which Steve did not attend) described the Israeli Government's war policy. Avi introduced each of the members of the War Cabinet and their "agendas", as well as the "agendas" of the leading candidates to be involved Israeli policy under the second Trump Administration. According to Barbara, not a pretty nor coherent picture – and if you changed the names and faces you could easily have been looking at Trump's cabinet. Large numbers of Israelis strongly oppose the manner in which the War has been fought. Avi commented that there are many Israelis considering leaving the country. (To be honest, Janet and I have posed the same question!) Israel is a deeply divided country between those who defend the country with their lives and those who only want to take. The future for Israel – and U.S. policy regarding Israel under a Trump Administration – is deeply troubling.

On Wednesday, November 27th, Israel and Hezbollah agreed to a cease-fire.
May the hostages come home soon.

Barbara Caplan and Stephen Cohen
Co-Presidents

Last Call

The Memorialization Working Group would like to curate the three congregations' perspectives on how the eleven martyrs were gifts to their congregational communities so a statement can be included as part of the Memorial. Eric Lidji has been working with the families to gather their thoughts on their loved ones and the Working Group would like Eric to conduct a similar process for the congregations. Eric will conduct listening sessions with each congregation. After Eric hears from each congregation, he will create a draft statement for approval/feedback. Thank you for being an important part of this process." (email from Selena Shultz, 10/23/24)

If you wish to provide input to Eric, please contact Stephen Cohen (info@newlightcongregation.org). As indicted above, Eric can meet with you individually, or if desired, as a group. Or you can express your thoughts in a letter/email that can be forwarded to Eric. Dan, Rich and Mel were the religious heart and soul of our congregation. Here is our opportunity to remember them.

December Board Meeting

The next board meeting is Sunday, December 8th, 10:30 AM in Helfant and on Zoom. Use the same Zoom connection as for Shabbat.

December Birthdays

Shari Kubitz
Brenda Werber

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

Barbara Caplan

Eric Cohen, Bruce Hyde

Karen Coburn

Janet Cohen

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janet@newlightcongregation.org

New Light Congregation December 2024 30 Cheshvan 5785 - 30 Kislev 5785

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	30 CHESHVAN Rosh Chodesh Kislev - Day 1 Rosh Chodesh Kislev - Day 2	1 KISLEV Rosh Chodesh Kislev - Day 1 Rosh Chodesh Kislev - Day 2	2 KISLEV	3 KISLEV	4 KISLEV	5 KISLEV 4:33 Services, 6:00 PM	6 KISLEV 7 Services, 9:45 AM
8	7 KISLEV Board Meeting, 10:30 AM	8 KISLEV	9 KISLEV	10 KISLEV	11 KISLEV	12 KISLEV 13 4:34 Services, 6:00 PM	13 KISLEV 14 Services, 9:45 AM
15	14 KISLEV	15 KISLEV	16 KISLEV	17 KISLEV	18 KISLEV	19 KISLEV 20 4:37 Services, 6:00 PM	20 KISLEV 21 Services, 9:45 AM
22	21 KISLEV	22 KISLEV	23 KISLEV	24 KISLEV Christmas Day	25 KISLEV	26 KISLEV 27 Chanukah - Day 2 4:41 Services, 6:00 PM	27 KISLEV 28 Chanukah - Day 3 Services, 9:45 AM
29	28 KISLEV Chanukah - Day 4 Chanukah Party, 4:30 PM	29 KISLEV 30 Chanukah - Day 5	30 KISLEV 31 Chanukah - Day 6 Rosh Chodesh Teves - Day 1				