



# BETH EL

## The Heights Synagogue

# NEWSLETTER

December 2020  
כסלו / טבת 5781



RABBI  
MICHAEL UNGAR



חג  
אורים  
שמה

## Ultimately in God's Hands

If you ask a random group of individuals what Hanukkah is all about, the answer you will often receive is: “there was only enough oil for one day, and it lasted for eight days!”

The holiday is really a celebration the rededication of the Second Temple at the time of the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucids. Hanukkah is closely tied to a military victory, but for many of us that part of the story gets overshadowed or lost. It ends up being all about the oil.

In this respect, the Sages were vindicated. They knew the military nature of the celebration – and the human aspects that were a component of it. By the time they were writing about the holiday, the leadership of the Hasmoneans had already led the Judeans into Roman domination; de-emphasizing the revolt and its aftermath, the Maccabees get sidelined. The legend of the oil was introduced by the Rabbis to downplay that history and refocus attention on God. Like many of the prophetic texts, the Rabbinic understanding of Hanukkah saw the hand of God in our victory (and in our

eventual defeat). Ultimately, the Sages would argue, we cannot rely on armies; our future is in God's hands.

This message resonates for many of us even in the modern era. During this pandemic and throughout the election season, many of us realize that there are powerful forces around us (for good and for bad); many of them are caused or controlled by humans, while others are simply a part of the universe God created. We are certainly obligated to do what we can to make the world a better place, but some things are simply out of our hands.

Hanukkah reminds us of the interplay between human and divine. There are times when we emphasize one, and other occasions when we focus on the other. This year let us ponder the human and divine miracles of the Festival of Lights... and of the world around us today. May we recognize, as well, what is in our hands and what is ultimately in God's.

*Chag ha'Urim Sameach!*  
Rabbi Michael Ungar

Beth El - The Heights Synagogue builds vibrant Jewish community.  
We welcome all in participatory, traditional, egalitarian worship and learning.

Saturday Morning Services at 9:15 ♦ 3246 Desota Ave., Cleveland Hts., OH 44118 ♦ ☎216-320-9667

## CO-PRESIDENTS



JOEL GENUTH



BUD STERN

### Contact Information

QUESTIONS? CONCERNS?  
COMMENTS? COMPLAINTS?  
Please do not hesitate  
to contact the  
Presidents  
by e-mail  
[president@bethelheights.org](mailto:president@bethelheights.org)  
or telephone  
Joel (617) 943-2076  
Bud (216) 991-7383

HELP US  
STAY IN TOUCH!  
Please be sure we  
have your current  
contact information.  
Send changes to  
[info@bethelheights.org](mailto:info@bethelheights.org)  
or call  
(216) 320-9667

KEEP UP WITH THE NEWS!  
JOIN THE  
BE-THS LISTS!  
Send an e-mail to  
Carol Bruml,  
[benews3246@gmail.com](mailto:benews3246@gmail.com),  
if you need help with  
signing up.

# NEWS FROM BETHEL חדשות

## Condolences to:

ניחום אבלים

- Stacia Dearmin, her children, Isaiah and Janna, and her family, on the recent death of Stacia's father, Robert Loren Dearmin z"l. Stacia left our congregation, and the Cleveland area, in order to move to Florida to help care for her aging parents. She is missed!

## Refuah Sh'lema to:

רפואה שלימה!

- Molly Brudnick
- Lowell Katz
- Marsha Katz
- Miriam Palevsky
- Lenny Tracht
- Ieda Warshay

## Thanks for Contributions to:

תודה!

- Bruce and Judie Amsel, towards the cost of the new window blinds in the school wing.
- Matt and Natalie Barratt, in honor of the engagement of Claire Barratt and Reid Bolding.
- Frank and Jeanette Buchwald, in memory of Jeanette's grandfather, Moishe Werdiger z"l.
- Janice Carrick, with gratitude for Zoom access to High Holy Day services.
- Robin Dubin and Richard Krueck, in memory of Charles Dubin z"l and Marvin Dubin z"l.
- Eric Fryxell
- Sharona Hoffman and Andy Podgurski, in memory of Sharona's father, Morton Hoffman z"l.
- Lowell and Marsha Katz, in memory of Samuel Protus z"l.
- Gabrielle Millas, in memory of her beloved grandmother, Elsie Press z"l.
- Gabrielle Millas
- Adam and Samantha Probst
- Leonard Tracht

## Thanks for Mailing Help to:

תודה!

- Bill and Carol Bruml

# CALENDAR, DECEMBER 2020

כסלו / טבת 5781

## MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30

7:30 AM – **Full Moon Kislev walking meditation.** Contact Kirby Date at [kirby@kmdateplanning.com](mailto:kirby@kmdateplanning.com) or see the group blog at [www.roshchodeshcleveland.blog](http://www.roshchodeshcleveland.blog) for further details (meeting location is the same as previously, but is no longer being published, per their request).

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5 – *Parashat Vayishlach*

10:00 AM – **Shabbat morning services via Zoom.** (Schmoozing session begins at 9:30.)

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6

1:30 – 2:30 PM – **Book discussion with Rabbi Ungar via Zoom.** The group will continue its discussion of Alan Morinas' "Everyday Holiness." Contact Rabbi Ungar, [rabbi@bethelheights.org](mailto:rabbi@bethelheights.org), for the Zoom link and information on which chapter to read for this week's discussion. New members welcome to join the group, even if you have not previously been participating.

7:00 PM – **Midrash class via Zoom,** led every other Sunday evening by either Rabbi Ungar or Rabbi Starr. If you wish to join the group, please send an email to Rabbi Ungar, requesting an invitation: [rabbi@bethelheights.org](mailto:rabbi@bethelheights.org)

## THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10 – **First night of Hanukkah**

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12 – *Parashat Vayeshev / Hanukkah*

10:00 AM – **Shabbat morning services in-person,** in the sanctuary. Prior registration required.

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13

3:00 PM – **Hanukkah Hike** – Meet at Shaker Lakes Nature Center for a winter walk, followed by sufganiyot, hot beverages, and Hanukkah menorah lighting. Masks required. Social distancing will be observed. May be canceled due to weather or due to dire COVID-19 restrictions; watch your email and/or check the shul web site, if in doubt. No charge. RSVPs are requested by December 7; reply to Ditte Wolin, [adwolin@das93.net](mailto:adwolin@das93.net) or 216-402-3140.

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16

7:30 AM – **Rosh Chodesh Tevet morning walking meditation.** Masks required. Social distancing will be observed. *See November 30 for more details.*

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19 – *Parashat Miketz*

10:00 AM – **Shabbat morning services via Zoom.** (Schmoozing session begins at 9:30.)

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20

7:00 PM – **Midrash class via Zoom,** led every other Sunday evening by either Rabbi Ungar or Rabbi Starr. If you wish to join the group, please send an email to Rabbi Ungar, requesting an invitation: [rabbi@bethelheights.org](mailto:rabbi@bethelheights.org)

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26 – *Parashat Vayigash*

10:00 AM – **Shabbat morning services in-person,** in the sanctuary. Prior registration required.

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30

7:30 AM – **Full Moon Tevet morning walking meditation.** Masks required. Social distancing will be observed. *See November 30 for more details.*

# When the Cycle Gets Broken

By Bud Stern, Co-President

## 1.

Traditional modern Judaism is built upon cycles. Prayers three times a day, Shabbat at the end of the week, with Kiddush and the traditional BE-THS lunch. Rosh Chodesh, and holidays succeeding one another – Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Sh’mini Atzeret ... Even the reading of the Torah has a regular cycle. And when we finish reading the Torah, we start at the Beginning, *B’reshit*, the same day, because the cycles don’t end; they continue.

Month after month, year after year, our Rabbi and our members give *d’vei torah* about the portions – different teachings or commentaries about the same readings as last year and the year before.

In ancient times, Israelites had followed cycles also. For the three *Raglayim*, the Harvest Festivals, provisions were brought to the Temple in Jerusalem. Bulls, goats, sheep, birds, produce were brought to the Temple for sacrifices, following the prescribed schedule and the appropriate activities.

## 2.

I have a confession to make. When I became your co-president, I had not previously been involved with the Synagogue board at all. They let me attend two board meetings and then – boom! I was co-president with Robin Dubin.

So I learned a lot of things. About finances and membership, about sidewalks and drains and elevators. About who did what things that lets this congregation survive and thrive. About how Marvin makes brownies.

The Ritual Committee plans and executes our services. Bill Bruml and the Building Committee along with Marvin Palevsky monitor and maintain (and improve) our aging buildings. The Adult Ed. Committee, organizes and executes our educational programming. The Family Education Committee organizes and provides programming for our kids. The Chesed Committee keeps track of members who are ill and provides info, visits, and meals if needed. Our board takes the job seriously: plans and organizes the functioning of the congregation,

allocates monies for expenses and programs, and monitors what’s happening. Our Communications chair and Newsletter Editor collects information and data and informs the board and the community about what is happening.

Some things have changed over the few years. New faces, a few new challenges, modestly increased membership. We tried Purim services at Mitchell’s Ice Cream store on West 25th Street, a new take on an established ritual in our cycle. It was wildly successful – we filled the room from wall to wall!

## 3.

Suddenly, last Spring, the pandemic hit. Almost everything changed. We had to close our building for over six months. In-person programming was cancelled: Shabbat services, *d’vei torah*, *onegs*, hallway schmoozing. *Shabbatot*, *Rosh Chodeshes* (New Moons), spring holidays all came and went without gatherings in the synagogue to mark these events of our life cycles.

Anticipating the future, the board deliberated about options for services. Surveys went out to the congregation: What percentage of our members are comfortable to meet again and under what circumstances? After a hiatus, the Ritual Committee planned and organized indoor and outdoor services this summer and fall in the face of the pandemic and group meeting restrictions.

The board appointed a taskforce to examine the issues about High Holy Days services for the fall. They conferred with the Ritual Committee, currently led by Matt Barrett and Mia Buchwald Gelles, polled the congregants (again) and then planned and executed service offerings that meet the requirements (and sentiments) of our congregation.

In the meantime, Rabbi Ungar organized and offered ongoing classes, as did Barry Starr and Alan Lerner. Classes and interactions were switched to the Zoom arena. The Family Education Committee under Amit Shuck and Jamie Saunt obtained a grant and began to build a new play area for our kids. Marvin Palevsky cleaned the synagogue and began (*continued on page 5*)

# Yahrzeits, December 2020

## כסלו ~ Kislev

Jackie Davis	15 Kislev 5729
Harry Kastner	15 Kislev 5724
Emanuel Fromson	15 Kislev 5735
Esther Math	16 Kislev 5735
Helen Penetsky	17 Kislev 5737
Philip Bertman	18 Kislev 5676
Sanford Gelfand	19 Kislev 5759
William Grossman	19 Kislev 5741
Sylvia Della Stroom	19 Kislev 5738
Bracha Tenenbaum	19 Kislev
Rev. Henry Einhorn	21 Kislev 5718
Ronald J. Maeroff	21 Kislev 5718
Shirley Newman	21 Kislev 5768
Sadie Magden	22 Kislev 5754
Sarah Cohen	25 Kislev 5705
Joseph Fox	26 Kislev 5722
Samuel Suskind	26 Kislev 5743
Rachel Margolis	27 Kislev 5687
Alexander Zeisler	27 Kislev 5720
Henry Tepper	28 Kislev 5703
Nat Slobody	28 Kislev 5723
Louis Eifer	28 Kislev 5741
Robert Mittman	29 Kislev
David Davis	30 Kislev 5713
Helen Citron	30 Kislev

## טבת ~ Tevet

Bernard Lipsitz	1 Tevet	Bella Sobel	10 Tevet
Ginda Rouse bat Boruch Yuzefovich	2 Tevet	Sidney Russack	10 Tevet 5755
Lenke Vamos	2 Tevet 5737	David Bernstein	11 Tevet
Manuel Collin	4 Tevet 5714	Isadore Litt	11 Tevet 5722
Moses Horwitz	4 Tevet	Bertha Weinberg	12 Tevet 5692
Dr. Richard Bloomfield	5 Tevet 5773	Max Levinsky	13 Tevet 5719
Zoltan Saunt	5 Tevet 5736	Milton Gutentag	13 Tevet 5738
David Elliot Sobel	5 Tevet 5769	Minnie Jacobs Weinberger	13 Tevet 5725
Sol Olshansky	5 Tevet 5726	Margaret Jacobs	15 Tevet 5721
Jack Lertzman	6 Tevet 5719	Marion Siskind	15 Tevet 5762
David L. Susman	6 Tevet 5721	Frieda Amsel	15 Tevet 5774
Carl Gilbert Lampel	6 Tevet 5726	Frederick Sadock	16 Tevet
Adolph Weinberger	6 Tevet 5738	Eliezer Lindenbaum	16 Tevet 5697
Sam S. Birkner	6 Tevet	Henry Rocker	16 Tevet 5727
Doug Keller	7 Tevet 5765		
Harry Samuel Weiss	7 Tevet 5710		
P.F.C. Michael Marks	7 Tevet		
Lawrence Mesnick	7 Tevet		
Ruth Ness	8 Tevet 5777		
Rebecca Dorothy Charms	8 Tevet 5729		
Joseph Tracht	9 Tevet		
Max Adler	10 Tevet		



*(When the Cycle Gets Broken, continued from page 4)* several renovation projects. Board meetings also moved to Zoom (thank you to Sharona Hoffman for technical support). Carol Bruml has maintained our newsletter and email announcements on a regular basis, combing for news and information to share.

Joel Genuth has frequent contact with Federation Security for our events, and he sends out timely blasts to us all with useful information. Thank you, Joel!

### 4.

The heartthrob of Jewish observance is cyclical: daily, weekly, monthly, seasonally, yearly. The pandemic which has disrupted our customary observance is a once in a hundred years event. As the COVID-19 alert has eased, we began alternating services for Shabbat, in person with reservations and social distancing, and on alternate weeks via Zoom. But the pandemic is not over, and it will interfere and inconvenience further. We can and will be adaptable. Join us in ways you are comfortable with.

*(Full disclosure: this column was inspired by the November presidential note for Temple Am Shalom in Mentor written by Andrew Kenen)*

# Claudio Saunt to Speak on Indian Removal and Mass Deportation

Honey Massey's nephew, Claudio Saunt, will give a lecture on Thursday, January 21 at 7:00 PM through the Siegal Lifelong Learning Program on "Indian Removal and Mass Deportation in the Modern Era" (via Zoom). Explore the history of Indian Removal in the context of other mass deportations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Join Professor Saunt to look at the US-sponsored expulsion of the Indian population in the 1830s forcing them westward, creating something of a model for colonial empires around the world including the infamous deportations of World War II. Notoriously, during the Nazi conquest of Eastern Europe, Hitler equated "indigenous inhabitants" with "Indians" and declared "the Volga River must be our Mississippi." This lecture is offered in conjunction with Beth El –The Heights Synagogue. Cost \$5 for members, \$10 for non-members; register at <https://www.lifelonglearningcleveland.org/public/Course/browse?courseid=26778>.

## Adult Ed Continues, Despite COVID! Join Us!

Please join our adult education programs, which are ongoing through Zoom despite the pandemic. Our Midrash class, led by either Rabbi Michael Ungar or Rabbi Barry Starr, takes place every other Sunday evening. Our book club continues to meet once a month on Sunday afternoons for fascinating discussions of moral attributes with Rabbi Ungar. See the calendar and weekly announcements for details.

The discussions are lively and accessible, and you can participate fully even if you have not done the reading. This is a great way to socialize and learn from the comfort of your own home. Fight the COVID blues with BE–THS adult education programs!

Sharona Hoffman, Adult Education Chair

## Arrangements for Minimizing COVID-19 Risk in the Sanctuary

Because the COVID 19 virus is now thought to transmit mainly through the air, we have been working to make the ventilation system for the Sanctuary bring in large quantities of fresh air and of cleaned air. For the High Holy Days, when the weather was still warm, that meant opening windows, running an exhaust fan, and putting better filters and high intensity UVC lights in the air conditioning system.

As the weather turns cold, fresh air coming in the windows might not be too comfortable in the Sanctuary. Ex-Marine Marvin Palevsky used his skills and creativity to hand-craft ductwork to allow additional ventilation in the sanctuary during cold weather without chilling the members of the minyan. Marvin opens the windows and turns on the fans which pull in fresh air through the windows. The cardboard 'ducts' direct the air through the radiator before it gets to the fans. That way the air is warmed before it gets into the room. This is not the most energy-efficient way to run a building, but it should reduce our risk of transmitting the virus at in-person services, while minimizing the discomfort to our members.

This system got its first try-out on November 14, working in combination with the air conditioner blower, which provided additional cleaned air. I understand the system worked better than expected, and that the room stayed comfortably warm. We will keep watch to see if this continues to work well as the weather gets colder.

Bill Bruml, Building and Operations Chair



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**Meet us at the  
Shaker Lakes Nature Center**

**Sunday, December 13, 3:00 PM**

**to light candles  
and go for a winter hike  
followed at 4:00 by sufganiyot  
& hot beverages in the Pavilion**

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☆ No charge, but RSVPs are requested by December 7 (so we know how much food to order), to Ditte Wolin, 216-402-314 or [adwolin@gmail.com](mailto:adwolin@gmail.com).

☆ Bring your own menorah and four candles (we will light three for the third day, not four for the fourth night). Electric ones are fine; there are outlets there!

☆ Masks are mandatory. Plan to maintain social distance!

☆ Bring a hot drink container, if you have one, to reduce our use of disposables.

☆ There will be NO access to bathrooms; the Nature Center building itself remains closed to the public.

☆ Due to the uncertainty of the weather, and COVID restrictions, please watch your email for updates, in case we need to cancel.