



BAT YAM MATTERS



Number 117 December 2021 - January, February 2022
Kislev / Tevet / Shevat / Adar 5782



A REFORM JEWISH CONGREGATION SERVING SANIBEL, CAPTIVA,
FORT MYERS & SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES



Bat Yam Temple of the Islands

It's not the new year, but it is -- we hope -- the beginning of a new era. This was readily apparent on the night of Friday, November 5, when some 30 Bat Yam congregants gathered in Fellowship Hall for our first "in person" service since the COVID shutdown.

Masks failed to hide everyone's delighted smiles as we greeted one another, and we were energized by the enthusiasm with which the Rabbi and Cantor conducted the service. Spirits were lifted by familiar words, prayers and music, to say nothing of a new, jazzy version of "L'cha Dodi", composed by Craig Taubman. It was a memorable evening.

As the winter progresses, we hope that more and more Bat Yam members will venture out to Shabbat services so that they too will experience the joy that only "in person" attendance can bring.

Services will be held in Fellowship Hall of Sanibel Congregational United Church of Christ. They also can be joined virtually via Zoom. Details to follow in emails to congregants. We welcome all to join us - please email batyamsanibel@gmail.com for information. To make a donation, please visit www.batyam.org

RABBI FUCHS REFLECTS

Rabbi Stephen Lewis Fuchs

Too often, over the years, I have heard people say, "The Bible is a book about men in which women receive short shrift." But as I read Scripture, it is the woman who repeatedly "gets it" and the man who is often "clueless."



For example, Eve has been maligned for generations for the "fall of man" when in fact she is – in my view --the heroine of "the elevation of humanity." In the Garden of Eden, she had the courage to seek knowledge and trade immortality for a life with the potential to have meaning and purpose.

Rebecca was another earth shaker. One may certainly question the way she went about things, but she certainly had greater insight into what God needed in terms of an heir to the Covenant of Abraham than did her husband, Isaac. She acted decisively on her instinct.

Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law, deserves credit for his transformation from one who sold his brother as a slave into one who would not let his other brother become a slave. The story of Zelophehad's daughters, in the Book of Numbers, marks a vital first step in establishing a woman's right to inherit her family's property.

Then there are the six women who made it possible for Moses to stand before Pharaoh to demand the liberation of our people: the two Hebrew midwives, Shifrah and Puah; Yocheved; Miriam; Pharaoh's daughter; and Moses' wife, Zipporah. Deborah, in the Book of Judges, successfully united the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali to thwart foreign invaders. She summoned Barak, a leading General, but he refused to lead the troops unless Deborah went with him into battle. She was a judge, military leader, prophet and poet, one of the Bible's strongest characters of either gender.

In that same book Samson's unnamed mother received God's vision that she would bear a son

who would begin to redeem the Israelites from the Philistines. But when she told her husband, he was sure they would die. However, Manoah's wife knew better. She was another example of a savvy woman with a clueless husband. Hannah, Samuel's mother, is another pivotal figure in the Bible. Compared to her, Eli, the High Priest at Shiloh, was a bumbling fool.

There are five books of the Bible designated as Megillot (scrolls); Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther, and these are associated with Passover, Shavuot, Tisha B'Av, Sukkot and Purim respectively.

Three of the five Megillot are about very strong women. Purim celebrates the courage of Vashti and Esther. Song of Songs tells of a woman strong enough to resist the blandishments of King Solomon's harem to follow her shepherd lover.

Then there is Ruth. The story tells of Naomi's faithfulness and Ruth's loyalty and the reward she receives to become the great grandmother of King David, who, according to both Jewish and Christian traditions, is to be the ancestor of the Messiah.

I hope the examples of Eve, Rebecca, the six women who saved Moses' life, Deborah, Hannah, Samson's mother, Vashti, Esther, the heroine of Song of Songs, Naomi and Ruth are sufficient to convince everyone that far from being unimportant, many biblical women outshine the men around them in terms of leadership ability and perception of what it was God needed them to do. They are important role models for young women today and an inspiration to all of us.

It has been my privilege to lecture and write, both in America and Germany, on the vital roles played by biblical women. It is an important subject about which more people need to learn. That is why I will teach a one-hour seminar on this subject entitled **Strong Women; Clueless Men in the Bible** on Tuesday, January 11, 2022 at 1:30.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I want to begin my remarks by thanking our leadership and members for supporting our efforts to connect with you on Zoom. While we would prefer joining you in Fellowship Hall, we will move in that direction in steps to ensure everyone's safety.

November signals the return of Cantor Murray Simon and pianist Abbey Allison, joining us for Friday night services. There will be in-person attendance in Fellowship Hall, where the following guidelines will be in place: attendees will be fully vaccinated and masked. Services will begin at 7:30 PM. Members will receive notices via email and links to the service if you prefer to participate virtually.

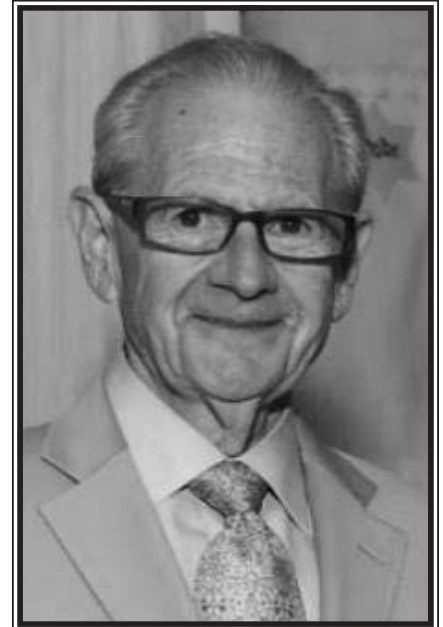
Our Saturday morning classes initially will be done by Zoom. We will be sending out letters to our congregants to determine how many would prefer to attend the classes in person and will update our method of connecting once we have all the responses.

On 10/31 Rabbi Fuchs, Sandy Teger, Edina and I attended services at Sanibel UCC, followed by a reception in honor of Pastor Deb Kunkel, who is leaving to become the pastor of two small congregations in Wisconsin. Deb has served the Church for the past 10 years and worked closely with our social action committee and in numerous joint activities with the Church and Bat Yam. We wish her and her husband, Gregg, great success.

Bat Yam, like any nonprofit, relies on the support of its members not only financially but by joining one of its numerous committees to meet our goals. While Rabbi Fuchs and Cantor Simon play significant roles in both the services and education, all of the other responsibilities to carry out the mission of the Congregation lie with the volunteers. The COVID crises not only ended in-person services but the opportunity to socialize and meet new members. Fortunately, we were blessed with a small core of volunteers who stepped up and spent untold hours to ensure that we stay accessible to our members and friends via Zoom. In particular, what I call "Our Tech Team" ultimately allowed us to have over 150 programs, services and other significant events.

For the past three decades Bat Yam has provided the Jewish presence on Sanibel, Captiva and nearby Fort Myers. Our major challenges now are for some of you to step forward to join one of our important committees so that we may continue to provide not only religious services but a wide range of exciting programs; and a concerted effort to increase membership, which allows us to more effectively serve Sanibel, Captiva and nearby Fort Myers.

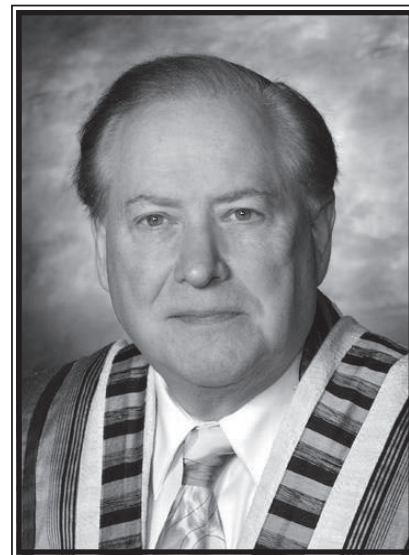
Alan Lessack, President
allessack@sbcglobal.net
773 251-8862



CANTOR'S MESSAGE

Well, here we go again! Just like Rosh HaShanah that fell this year on the heels of Labor Day, we have Hanukkah beginning this year on Thanksgiving weekend. So, you might be tempted to say, "Hanukkah is early this year!" But no, it is right where it belongs.

How come Hanukkah moves around so much? Well, it doesn't. It always comes on the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev on the lunar calendar. What is interesting to me is that this very minor Jewish holiday is not mentioned in our Bible since it occurred in the 2nd century pre-Christian era, around 167 B.C.E. The story is preserved in the books of the First and Second Maccabees which describes in detail the re-dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem (Hanukkat HaBayit) and the re-lighting of the menorah.



There are very few religious prohibitions during Hanukkah, unlike our major holidays of Shabbat, the High Holy Days and the Festivals of Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot. What, then, is required of us during the observance of this joyous minor holiday?

The most iconic ritual during Hanukkah is the daily lighting in the home each evening of the "hanukiah"—the special, nine-branched menorah used just for Hanukkah. The reason for the Hanukkah lights is not for the "lighting of the house within," but rather for the "illumination of the house without," so that passersby should see it and be reminded of the holiday's miracle (i.e., that the sole cruse of pure oil found in the Holy Temple, which held enough oil to burn for one night, actually burned for eight nights). Accordingly, hanukkiyot are set up at a prominent window or near the door leading to the street. I remember being in Israel during Hanukkah six or seven years ago and I was enthralled to see the hanukkiyot of each home burning in a glass display case affixed to the home's outside wall facing the street. What a moving sight!

When we think of Hanukkah, we think of the special sights of standing around the lit hanukiah, the sounds of singing the appropriate Hanukkah songs and the tastes of the special Hanukkah treats such latkes and sufganiyot. Then we know where Hanukkah belongs – it belongs right in our hearts!

Happy Hanukkah!
Cantor Murray E. Simon



THE TWINS

Gil and Debbie Mann's twin granddaughters, Vivian and Ruby, were born four months prematurely and as of October 24, have spent 107 days in the Minneapolis Children's Hospital NICU. In an email on this date, Gil says that Vivian is now 7 lb, 7 oz -- up from her birth weight of 1 lb 4 oz -- and will likely go home in the near future. Ruby is now 5 lb 9 oz, up from 13.5 oz.

"I had two shehechianu moments recently," writes Gil. "After waiting nearly four months, I got to hold Ruby for the first time and feed Vivian. Vivi is doing well, she started breathing room air with no assistance. That's a woo hoo!"

Ruby is alert and very cute, reports her grandpa. She continues to struggle with her breathing but is slowly improving.

The Mann family appreciates all the support and love that has poured in from the Bat Yam community. Gil ends his email by saying, "I understand better than ever why Judaism teaches that we should say 100 blessings of thanks every day."

Gil and Debbie have invited anyone who wants to keep track of the twins' progress to go to the following link: www.caringbridge.org/visit/rubyandvivian.

Our beloved Bat Yam Temple of the Islands needs your help.



Please let us know which of these many exciting positions you would like to volunteer for.

Membership
Publicity
Tzedakah
Programs
Development
Nominating
Governance
Finance

L'Chaim Federation Newspaper
Caring
Venue/Security
Education
Ritual
Social Action
Technology

Each one of these committees would love to have you involved with them. If you prefer to be on more than one committee or to start a new committee, any suggestions would be welcomed.

Please mail your volunteer request(s) to:
Sheila Sklar, Corresponding Secretary
dr.sheila@mac.com

RABBI RICHARD ADDRESS

“NEW RITUALS FOR NEW LIFE STAGES”

Sandy Teger

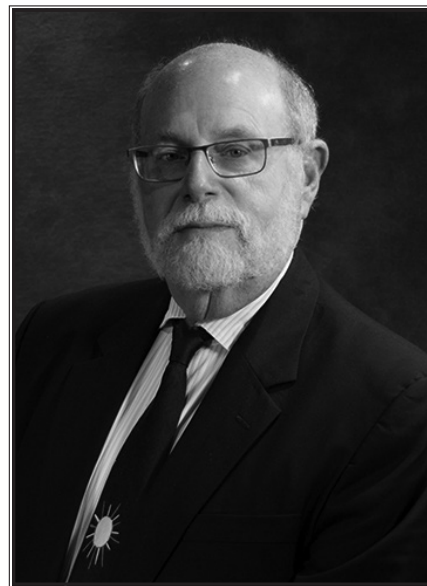
Those of us who were able to participate in the Zoom session with Rabbi Richard Address on 11/11 had no idea what a treat was in store for us. You probably have to hear him speak before you have a feeling for how relevant his topics are to our daily lives. Rabbi Address has thought extensively about the questions that are relevant to the baby boomer generation—questions our grandparentS may not ever have asked. His sense of humor and understanding of the realities of our lives makes him feel like someone you want to know.

He believes that part of life is creating rituals, both religious and secular. We all have them and they can be very individual, just like your own morning routine. His work looks creatively at “what’s ok and what’s not ok” in complicated life situations such as when a spouse has dementia and no longer recognizes you or your adult children. He believes that sometimes our deeply held beliefs can change as time and life situations change.

One example of a possible new ritual is the period in which we sign “advanced directives” in a lawyer’s office. This is a situation in which you are facing your own mortality, even if we don’t usually treat it that way. He conceives of it as a situation in which you could offer a prayer that thanks G-d for giving us free will and agency over our lives and expresses the hope that those who are left to carry out our wishes understand their importance to us. It could also be one of many times you talk with your adult children about things that happen after you are no longer with them. These can really be spiritual times and not just about your “legal affairs”.

Rabbi Address hosts a weekly podcast called “Seekers of Meaning” and our own Rabbi Fuchs has been a guest on it. His website jewishsacredaging.com also has a study guide which you may want to visit after you hear the recording of his podcast at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIV0hTrS5D8>.

Rabbi Richard Address is Founder and Director of Jewish Sacred Aging. He served congregations in California and New Jersey, served on the staff of the URJ for over three decades and was Founder and Director of the Department of Jewish Family Concerns. He is an expert in Gerontology and Palliative Care.





DONATIONS TO BAT YAM

*Note: Any recent contributions not yet listed will
be in the next issue of Bat Yam Matters.*

In Memory of Esther Pokedoff

Carole Cohen

Peter Danford

Book Club of Gloria Garten

Marilyn and Steve Gordon

Steven and Amanda Greenstein

Bluma Herman

Joyce Jacobs

Marilyn Kushner

Alan and Edina Lessack

Sheila Rudolz

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Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Steven Weiss yahrzeit donation in
memory of Helene Rene Weiss

Judith Adler in honor of Rabbi Stephen Fuchs
and Cantor Murray Simon for a meaningful
Yom Kippur service

Rich and Barbara Scissors

Yahrzeit Donations

Tanya and Michael Hochschild

Josephine Schneider in memory of
her father Leonard Kaplan

Tzedakah Fund

Judith Adler in honor of Alan Fisher,
Sheila Sklar and Riv Swartz

Judith Adler wishing Carla Benninga
a speedy healing

Member Contribution

Janice and Ron Chaddock sending
healing wishes to Carla Benninga

Janice and Ron Chaddock in honor of Rabbi
Stephen Fuchs for his spiritual leadership during
the 5782 High Holiday days

Janice and Ron Chaddock in thanks to Harrison
Snowden for blowing the shofar during
Bat Yam's 5782 High Holiday services

Elissa and Michael Samet in honor of all the
amazing devotion, efforts, and contributions by
both Esther and Marty Pokedoff to
Bat Yam over the years

Alan and Edina Lessack for speedy
recovery of Elissa Samet.



BAT YAM TEMPLE OF THE ISLANDS

PO BOX 84 • SANIBEL, FL 33957

batyamsanibel@gmail.com

www.batyam.com

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BAT YAM MATTERS

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