



# Our Temple

December 2003

Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom

Vol. 40 No. 4

## Notes from the President

# We are all Jews, despite our differences

By Ellen Azrael  
*President*

Mrs. Goldstein wrote all her new years cards, and upon hearing that the post office had special Rosh Hashona stamps, she rushed there, went up to the clerk, and asked for 50 Rosh Hashanah stamps. The clerk asked her, "What denomination?" She thought for a moment, and answered, "8 Orthodox, 12 Conservative, and 30 Reform. Does it really matter?"

Does it matter? What makes someone a Jew? According to the dictionary it is simply someone who has descended from or professes the beliefs of the Hebrew people. Sounds simple doesn't it?

So who is a Jew? Is it a man who prays wearing tefillin? Is it his child whose mother is not Jewish? Is it a mentally disabled person who cannot speak or read? Is it a gay man or lesbian woman? Is it a convert? Some of us might

be thinking, they all are Jews, while some may think that none of them are. And depending on your traditions and practices, you might be able to make a case either way. To be a Jew you have to believe in God, and only one. All Jews study Torah, and follow the commandments and principles found in it. In Reform Judaism all the above are welcome as Jews.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## From the Rabbi's Study

# Give to a good cause this Chanukah

When I speak to the Religious School students about Chanukah, invariably they will tell me how much they love

**Rabbi Brian Michelson**

Chanukah for the presents they get. Who can blame them? It is fun to get new things.

However, it is also sometimes good to be the giver and not the receiver.

Last month, at the national biennial for the Union for Reform Judaism (what used to be called the Union for American Hebrew Congregations), started a program that is worthy of our consideration this Chanukah. For one of the nights of Chanukah, instead of getting we should give.

There is a young Reform synagogue in Mevasseret Zion (outside Jerusalem). It has created vibrant programs that appeal

to young, native-born Israeli. The congregation subsists on a shoestring budget. It receives no government support, unlike most Orthodox congregations in Israel.

After many battles, they began a building project. However, religious authorities have tried to block their development every step of the way. Now due to the weakened Israeli economy, they are unable to complete their building. The shell has been put up, but the inside is bare. For more than a year, they have used folding chairs and moveable tables for services. They deserve to have a home of their own that will represent Reform Judaism within Israeli society.

Their rabbi, Maya Leibovich, is a

dynamic rabbi and a true hero of modern Jewish life. Maya works tirelessly serving her community and ensuring her congregation will survive. I have been an overseas member of her congregation, because I believe in what Rabbi Leibovich is doing. Personally, I am privileged to call her my friend.

I am asking you to choose one night during Chanukah to make a Chai (\$18) donation to Kehilat Mevasseret Zion. Donations should be sent and made out to the Temple to my attention. I will collect the money and forward it on to the congregation as a single check to keep their money conversion expenses down. In return, you will be sent a beautiful certificate marking your donation.

**Choose one night this Chanukah to**

## **December Highlights**

**Friday, Dec. 5:** Shabbat service, 6 p.m.

**Saturday, Dec. 6:** Shabbat morning service, 10 a.m.

**Saturday, Dec. 13:** Tot Shabbat, 10 a.m.

**Sunday, Dec. 14:** Blood Drive, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Men's Club, 9:30

**Friday, Dec. 19:** Family night and Chanukah dinner, 6:30 p.m.

**Friday night services at 7:45 unless otherwise noted**

**Babysitting available at all services**

***Bulletin sponsored by  
Ivan & Dr. Mildred  
Gordon  
in memory of  
Kate and Nathan Gross***



## Religious School News

# Biennial event enriching and just plain fun

**By Holly Michelson**

*Religious School Administrator*

I just returned from the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, now known as the Union for Reform Judaism, Biennial. Some of you have heard me speak of this before. Some of the workshops I attended discussed inclusion, adult education, and spirituality. Some were scholarly and some, just plain fun. For me, there was a focus on seeing old friends and enjoying Shabbat services. In two years, it will be held in Houston. Hopefully more people will be able to join us next time. Praying and singing with almost 5,000 people... there is nothing like it.

At the end of the month, we will be celebrating Chanukah, a “minor” holiday in Judaism, though you would not know it from the celebrations. We will celebrate it at Shabbat services and at Religious School. Many of our families will also be celebrating Christmas with extended family. There are books in the school office for anyone grappling with the “December Dilemma” at home. Feel free to stop by the office to see what we have.

Be sure you take a good look at when school will be closed over the winter break. We have only one Sunday off, but two Tuesdays off.

A little advance notice: On Jan. 11, we will be having a speaker from Camp

Harlam, our local Reform Movement camp. Two of our students went last year and one of our parents in the school is also alumni. We want parents to join us if you have a student aged 2nd grade to 6th grade.

See you all on the 4th. Have a wonderful secular new year celebration.

### **Important Dates:**

**Friday, Dec. 19:** Chanukah Service and Dinner

**Sunday, Dec. 21:** Chanukah on Ice

**Tuesday, Dec. 23:** No School

**Sunday, Dec. 28:** No School

**Tuesday, Dec. 30:** No School

## NEWSLETTER STAFF

Mark Nemirow—Editor

Sidney L. Symons — Advertising/Sponsorships Manager

Lynn Bates — Assistant Editor

*To get an item in the bulletin,*

*call Mark, 610-370-2533 (Marknem@aol.com)*

*or Temple office, 610-375-6043.*

**Next deadline, Dec. 5**

## The Temple Online

*www.ohebsholom.org*

To contact us:

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bookkeeper@ohebsholom.org

## TIE ONE ON FOR SAFETY

MADD’s national “Tie One On for Safety” campaign began Thanksgiving Eve and will continue until New Year’s Day. Red Ribbons for your vehicles are available at the Temple. Last year the Berks County MADD Chapter distributed more than 50,000 ribbons.

Pick up a red ribbon to remind people not to drink and drive during the holiday season and all year long.

## Have you picked up your pictorial directory?

Directories can be picked up during office hours of 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Please add the following information that was inadvertently left out of the directory:

**BORNSTEIN**, Jeffrey & Shelia -- 610 775-5905

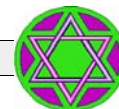
**LEVY**, Michael & Jeanine – 610 926-9608

New addresses:

**BROK**, Glenn and Becky, 1673 Tilden Rd., Mohrsville, PA 19541 (610) 488-0985

**WAXLER**, Andrew and Laurie

1305 Old Mill Road, Wyomissing, PA 19610



## PRESIDENT

*(Continued from page 1)*

Some Jews, such as the Orthodox, adhere to the principles and practices in a traditional manner as evidenced chiefly by daily synagogue attendance and strict observance of the Sabbath, religious festivals, holy days, and the dietary laws. Other Jews, like the Reform and Conservative, have adapted their practices to meet the demands of contemporary life, frequently simplifying, modifying or rejecting that which is deemed to be traditional.

How we practice our Judaism should not alter the fact that we all are Jews. But some would say it does affect whether we are good or true Jews. Are the practices considered traditional today the same practices as those of the Jews who fled Egypt? Probably not, because most of the traditional practices we see today were formulated in the late 17th century in Europe. Many are interpretations and extrapolations of biblical content that best served the Jew of that time. And let's not forget that for the most part Jews had very little choice about where to live, usually separated from non-Jews, living together in ghettos or *stetels*, and limited in contact with the "outside" world. But there was a period of enlightenment in the middle of the 18th century, and many Jews could become citizens of the countries where they lived. That led to a great deal of interaction and the beginning of assimilation into the culture of the country in which they lived.

And this assimilation was what led some Jews to question the practices of their fathers, which had no relativity to their lifestyles of the day. And thus Reform Judaism was born. Many of the

Jews of Germany didn't speak Hebrew or Yiddish in their homes. Their children attended public schools, where only German was spoken. They needed to work on Saturdays, because that was a requirement to keep their jobs. Shops were kept open, so not to lose business to other shops, owned by non-Jews. And to make-up for not being able to go to synagogue on Saturday, they made Friday night's service the highlight of Shabbas, with German the main language for the service. This way all German Jews could understand the service. This change filled the need of many Jews, who struggled with practicing Judaism, while fitting into the world around them. As time has marched on Reform Judaism has evolved, and continues to evolve.

I can remember a time when at Oheb Sholom there was hardly a word of Hebrew spoken. Today we have added a lot more Hebrew to our service, which fills the needs of those coming from more traditional backgrounds. Our movement is in a constant state of Reform, looking to make Judaism meaningful in this day and age.

So, I ask you, are Reform Jews real Jews? Of course we are, and we need to be proud of our branch of Judaism. When I was in junior high school everyone bought school lunches, but when it was Passover I packed a lunch with matzos. The only kids who mocked me in the lunchroom were the Jewish kids from another synagogue, who were buying their lunch. These were the same kids who told me that anyone who went to Oheb Sholom wasn't really Jewish.

Even when I was getting married there were a few jabs from the other side of the family about the fact that we were marrying in a Reform temple. They were

the same people, who at Passover, served me what I thought was vegetable soup, but turned out to be crab soup. It was good, but that's not the point. It was the fact that they chose not to follow all the dietary laws, so weren't they real Jews? Of course, they were.

We live in a small community, and often I am asked why we need three synagogues. It's because we can't agree on what the right way to worship is. A few weeks ago we had a meeting about having a community service, and when the rabbi and I suggested reading a certain part in English we were told that we couldn't do that, because it wasn't the "right" way. What was unsaid in this conversation was "Reform practices are not valid Jewish practices."

Community is an important aspect of Judaism. We should be getting together with other Jews in the area at the Jewish Community Center. The Reading Jewish Community Center should be supported as the place where all Jews can gather for social and cultural events. And each synagogue should be supported as the place to gather for prayer and education that its members find most meaningful. That is not to say that synagogues shouldn't invite nonmembers to their cultural and social events, but each synagogue should honor the sovereignty of the others' memberships.

We need to be proud of the history of Reform Judaism, and we must understand that we are no better or worse than other Jews. We have to be proud of Oheb Sholom. We have been a part of Reform Judaism for nearly 100 years. Our congregation has adapted to fill the needs of our members throughout its history, and will do so into the future. And

## Shop the Sisterhood Gift Shop...

for all your Chanukah gifts.

Wine, dreidles, Chanukah serving dishes,

Toys, cookie cutters, we have it all....

Spend \$20 and receive a free bag of chocolate gelt.



### The Jane Henry Memorial Fund

The Jane Henry Memorial Fund is not just a camp fund for youth. It will help anyone in need, particularly young people. This fund will consider aiding someone during difficult, needy periods.

In memory of Bernard Sher  
Al & Sara Diamond

To Ann Goldstan in honor of her  
granddaughters Bat Mitzvah  
Maxine & Dick Henry

To Barbara Marks with wishes for a  
complete recovery  
Carole & Irv Beck

To George and Sue Viener in memory of  
mother Rose  
Dick & Maxine Henry

**Mazel Tov. . .**  
to Tom Lynn and  
Jessica Hirsch, who  
will be married  
Dec. 21.

### New Building Fund

In honor of Gene Friedman's  
special birthday  
Conrad & Ruth Heisman

Get-well wishes to Sue  
Viener  
Conrad & Ruth Heisman

In memory of George  
Viener's mother, Rose  
Bob & Kaye Ullman  
Irwin Gross & Michelle  
Wachs  
Beth & Hoard Mortman  
Kathie & Jon Wachs  
Sue & Herb Wachs

In memory of Michael  
Perilstein's father, Paul  
Sue & Herb Wachs  
Marty & Norma Beckerman

### Music Fund

In honor of Mara  
Schneider's Bat Mitzvah  
Ken & Mary Miller

### Landscaping Fund

To Dr. Farber in memory  
of his wife Phyllis  
Dr. & Mrs. Eric Zelnick

In memory of Michael  
Perilstein's father, Paul  
Dr. & Mrs. Eric Zelnick

To Mindy Small in  
memory of Cosette Small  
Sharon Scullin

To George & Sue Viener  
in memory of mother,  
Rose Viener  
Harriet Baskin

### Landscaping Holocaust Garden

Six lights from:  
Lorri and Yonni Oziri

Yahrzeit in memory of  
Rosalye's mother Victoria  
B. Levine  
Rosalye & Richard Yashek

Yahrzeit in memory of  
Richard's father, Eugen  
Jaschek  
Richard & Rosalye Yashek

### Greater Temple Fund

In memory of Bernard  
Sher  
Claude & Barbara Ruth.  
Catherine M. Woynarowski

In appreciation of being  
able to attend High Holy  
Day services:  
Aaron and Lillian Zimmerman  
Susan, Jerry, Cory and  
Rachel Jeffers

In honor of Isabelle  
Stern's consecration  
Dr. William & Sonia Stern

**Shirley K.  
Jacobs**

### Religious School Fund

To Alexander Cardinal  
and his family in honor of  
his Bar Mitzvah  
The Rosenzweig Family

To Ian Gavigan and his  
family in honor of his Bar  
Mitzvah  
The Rosenzweig Family

To Mara Schneider in

honor of her Bat Mitzvah  
The Rosenzweig family

To Michael and Barbara  
Perilstein, in memory of  
father Paul Perilstein  
Robert & Norma Nagy

### Computer Fund

Congratulations on a  
successful Food Festival  
Evans & Barbara Goodling

### Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

In honor of Bryan Blanck's  
engagement to Nicole Jacobi  
Dr. & Mrs. C. Harold Cohn

In memory of Bernard  
(Bernie) Sher  
The Sher Family

## Subject: The Good News

There is the story of a Rabbi who got up one Friday night and announced to his congregation: "I have good news and bad news. The good news is, we have enough money to pay for our new building program. The bad news is, it's still out there in your pockets."

Happy Chanukah to all!

## Liefter Tree of Life

Thank you to Jeff Gernsheimer and Pat Klein (of Klein's Signs) for installing our Tree Of Life.

Do you have a simcha in the future? Leaves can be purchased for all your happy occasions. Cost of \$150.00 includes engraving. Funds generated from the Tree of Life go to our Greater Temple Fund. The office has order forms for ordering leaves.



## Sisterhood News

# Thanks for the laughs . . . now it's time to learn

By Elyse Horowitz

Thanks to all who attended Comedy Night. We hope everyone had a fun evening and a few good laughs. Many thanks to all who helped to make the night a success. Hats off to my committee and the Men's Club for all their hard work.

Sunday, Jan. 4, we will be having a Coffee Klatch at 9:30. Roz Hyman will be giving a talk on her trip to China. So after you drop the kids off at Religious School, come and have something to eat and hear about Roz's exciting journey.

**Save the Date!** May 1 will be

Sisterhood's big fund-raiser. We will be having a Casino Night filled with fun games, great food, excellent prizes and some dancing music. If you would like to help with planning please contact Linda Bram.

Stop by the Gift Shop and see all the great new merchandise and receive 20% off all the time. We will also take special orders if there is something special that you are looking for.

Here is a calendar of sisterhood events:

March 16: Donor event

April 16: Sisterhood Shabbat

May 1: Casino Night

May 16: Spring Meeting, 5 p.m.

We need volunteers to help with Sisterhood events and the Gift Shop. If you would like to get involved or if you can share time on a Friday night to work the Gift Shop, contact Linda Bram. Remember you earn Donor Dollars for every hour you work.

Come take part of Great Reading and Great conversation at the Sisterhood book club. We meet on Sunday afternoons at Borders every other month. Contact Elyse Horowitz if you are interested.

A very Happy Chanukah from

# Hospital Visits

Please call the Temple office  
to let us know if you have a loved one  
in the hospital and wish to have the rabbi visit.  
The hospital can no longer call us  
to inform us that you are a patient.

## Perpetual Memorials

### Dec. 5 and 6

Albert Gilbert  
Helen Winston Quartner  
Samuel R. Lurio  
Rose Ehrlich Liefert  
Samuel Goldsmith

### Dec. 12

Julius Goldsmith  
Nathan Mendelsohn  
Leopold Loeb  
Solomon Weil  
Bertha Knoblauch  
Edith Sondheim  
Simon Falkowitz  
Herman Folkman  
Abraham W. Loeb

### Dec. 19

Bertha Guggenheim  
Goldye B. Curson  
Dora Kins  
Josephine Miller  
Deborah B. Schweriner  
Carlyn Liefert  
Bernard Bash  
David Hermann  
Irene R. Salpeter

Harry J. Bash  
Albert M. Salas  
Julius L. Cohen  
William Holzman  
Johanna Gernsheimer

### Jan. 2 and 3

Dora Sondheim  
J. Harold Fisher  
Samuel Frankel  
Irving Bash  
Anna Baerncopf  
Claire Dershwin  
Benjamin W. Loeb

### Dec. 26



# Sisterhood Florence Frank Offering Fund

To Julia Nazimov in memory of her mother  
Mrs. Dorothy Schlanger  
Mrs. Sylvia Schiff

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Cardinal on the Bar Mitzvah of their son  
Mrs. Hilde Gernsheimer & Fred Jakobs

To Dr. Harold Farber in memory of his wife, Phyllis  
Mrs. Helen Rappoport

To Mrs. Jane Sher in

memory of her husband Bernard  
Mrs. Helen Rappoport

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Symons in honor of their new home

Mrs. Hilde Gernsheimer & Fred Jakobs  
Mr. & Mrs. Gene Friedman

To Sidney Knoblauch for a speedy recovery  
Mr. & Mrs. Lionel Asher  
Congratulations to Dr. and Mrs. Herbert Wachs

in honor of their new granddaughter  
Mrs. Sylvia Schiff

Congratulations to Phyllis Knoblauch on receiving her masters degree

Mr. & Mrs. Lionel Asher

To Mrs. Mae Marlowe in memory of her brothers

Mr. & Mrs. Lionel Asher

To Glynn Polter in memory of her mother, Vivian

Dr. & Mrs. Gerald Frank

To Mrs. Berna Sherman in memory of her husband, Morton

Mr. & Mrs. Gene Friedman

Dr. & Mrs. Gerald Frank  
Mrs. Sue Wolfe  
Mrs. Edythe Stern

To Eleanor Printz in memory of her husband, Ernest

Dr. & Mrs. Gerald Frank

Mrs. Sue Wolfe  
Mrs. Edythe Stern  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Brok

*Kindly send Florence Frank Offering Fund contributions to Mrs. Marilyn Frank, 2027 Lorraine Road, Reading, PA 19604; or Mrs. Gene Friedman, 107 Primrose Lane, Wyomissing, PA 19610.*

## Book group

meets Sunday, Dec. 7 at 4 p.m.

We will be discussing "Everything is Illuminated"

by Jonathan Safran Foer

## Please remember the gardens

The Landscape Committee has put our gardens "to sleep" for the winter, but we haven't stopped thinking and planning for spring.

We plan to add benches, a walkway, and lighting to the new library memorial garden as well as more plants and trees. Jeff Gernsheimer is designing a plaque to explain the symbolism in the garden and recognize donors.

Your contributions to the landscaping fund will augment the generous gifts we've already received to create a beautiful Holocaust memorial, gathering space, and enhancement of our building.

# Blood Drive

Sunday, Dec. 14 – 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

"It's All About Life" is the theme of our blood drive. By giving just a little more than an hour's time and 1 pint of blood you are giving someone else a chance at living. Please call the Temple office and make your appointment. Our goal is 30 donors. **The best times fill up fast so call today.** We will need help with unloading the truck in the morning and setting up. Also, we could use people to act as host/hostesses. Call the office to learn more.

### Some important facts about blood usage:

1. Blood shortages are very serious and very real. Some 4½ million lives are saved each year because of blood donations.
2. Every three seconds someone's life depends on the kindness of a stranger: a blood donor.
3. Some 32,000 pints of donated blood are transfused single day.
4. A single blood donation may save 3 lives.
5. Type O negative and type B are in greatest demand.



### Men's Club News

## Coffee for connoisseurs or java for the regular Joe

By Marshall Azrael

*Men's Club president*

For many of us, a cup of coffee is an essential part of our daily routine. Some can't start the day without "a shot of caffeine". And, we all have our favorite blend or method of brewing. On Sunday, Dec. 14, Rabbi Michelson will lead us on an expedition into the flavorful world of coffee. Join us; so, you won't miss your seat on our Java Journey.

#### A new year!

Just as we have renewed the year at Rosh Hashanah, it is now time to renew our Men's Club memberships. For this year, our national organization, NFTB, increased dues \$3. Subsequently, your

Men's Club s also increased dues to \$30. Please send your dues for this year, 5764, (2003-2004), to the Men's Club treasurer Richard Schwartz at the Temple: 555 Warwick. Dr., Wyomissing, PA 19610.

Your support is needed to continue our Men's Club mission to engage in projects and activities that provide meaningful services and vitality to our congregation. One of our continuing endeavors is to promote Jewish leadership. This is an election year for new officers and committee chairmen. Some of the standing committees are Membership, Publicity, Kitchen Program, Fund raising, Ushering

and Nominating. Where do you want to make things happen?

I hope to see you on December 14, to learn more about coffee, "the elixir of life" - for some, with Rabbi Michelson. Please call me if you have any questions or suggestions. Our next meeting is Jan. 18.

Your officers are:

Marshall Azrael, President; Sidney Symons, Vice President; Michael Pardo, Secretary; Richard Schwartz, Treasurer; Arthur Becker, Past President.

These are the meeting date for the rest of the year:

Jan. 18; Feb. 22; March 21; April 18; May 16.

## Chanukah Family dinner & service Friday, Dec. 19

Join us this year for the first night of Chanukah as members of our Board of Trustees host the annual dinner,

**beginning at 6:30 p.m.**

followed by Shabbat service where we will light the first Chanukah candle.

## Thanks...

to all who participated in the Light the Night Walk for Leukemia and Lymphoma at Gring's Mill in September.

This was the first year the walk was held in Berks County and "Team Bill Ueberroth" raised over \$3,000. Not bad for a last minute decision to participate!

**Lisa Ueberroth**

## Looking for a story...

to read to your children or grandchildren for Chanukah? Visit the Jane Henry Memorial Library. We have many children's books for all the Jewish holidays.

New: "The Seven Species, Stories and Recipes inspired by the Foods of the Bible." This new hardcover book is a unique collection of stories and recipes based on the seven species listed in Deuteronomy 8:7-8. Youth and adults will enjoy reading the stories and maybe even trying the recipes.

TO: Harriet Baskin

*Thank you for all of your years of of hard work with the Membership Committee. We will miss you!!!*

Love,  
**The Membership Committee**  
**Adrienne, Elyse, Esta, Herb, Ira, Jo, Karen, Marty, Mike, Scott, Sue**



UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM'S  
DEPARTMENT OF LIFELONG JEWISH  
LEARNING

## *10 Minutes of Torah*

The Union will send you a **one-page e-mail** each day on a topic of Jewish interest. All you need to do is find **10 minutes a day** to “do Torah.”

### WHO?

Reform Jews committed to having Judaism inform their daily lives are encouraged to participate.

### WHAT?

**10 minutes a day** of personal connection to a Jewish text, issue or topic.

- Monday: Torah
- Tuesday: Social Action
- Wednesday: Israel Connections
- Thursday: Jewish Ethics
- Friday: Jewish World

Select all five days or any combination.

### HOW?

Each weekday morning (Monday-Friday) an e-mail will be delivered to your inbox for you to study at your convenience.

To sign up for *10 Minutes of Torah*, please visit

## Aleph isn't Tough

Hebrew in 6 “Easy” lessons

***Learn the Fundamentals of Hebrew  
with Rabbi Brian Michelson***

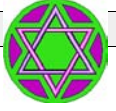
**Sundays, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM**

Dec. 12, Jan. 11 & 25, Feb. 8, 22, 29

Members \$25

Non-members \$40

*Call the Temple office to reserve your spot.*





REFORM CONGREGATION OHEB  
SHOLOM

Affiliated with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations since 1907  
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TIME VALUE

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**no later than** the 5th of the month prior to publication.