January/February 2011 Tevet/Sh'vat/Adar I— 5771

#### **RABBI** David Feder

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Morgantown, West Virginia

It is a Tree of Life to those that hold fast to it.

# **ANNUAL MEETING**

# Sunday, January 9, 2011

# 12:00 noon—pizza plus 12:30 pm—Business Meeting

All members in good standing\* are urged to attend.

Major decisions must be made. A quorum is required. Plan to attend and participate.

# Agenda

- Members in good standing\* will vote on a motion whether to re-select Rabbi Feder as our spiritual leader. His current contract expires July 31, 2011.
- Five members of Board of Trustees will be elected. Incumbents seeking another term: Monique Gingold, Marty Sippin, David Rosen, Barry Pallay and Merle Stolzenberg. Nominations will be accepted from the floor.

### Show your commitment to TOL. Attend and vote.

\* Members in Good Standing have made a current dues pledge & fulfilled at least 50% of all commitments (dues, pledges and Religious School).

# From Rabbi Feder



We are taught, "Whoever enjoys produce in this world without pronouncing a blessing is called a robber"

Rabbi Hayim Vital, in Peri Etz Hadar (The Fruit of the Goodly Tree), one of the primary sources for the contemporary Tu B'Shevat Seder asks what this really means. He answers his own question with the following. "By means of the blessing, one draws down shefa (flow of divine energy and spirit). The angel who is assigned to that fruit [which one is eating] is filled by the shefa so that a second fruit can replace the first. One who enjoys the first without blessing it...eliminates the spiritual element it contained. ... As a result, the angel's power is annulled, since it no longer possesses the shefa [that it needs in order to replace the fruit.]

We do not have to take this text literally and believe that each piece of fruit has its heavenly counterpart in order to find the value within its teaching. Divine energy permeates our world. If we just take it for ourselves, hoarding it, and letting our acquisitive nature run unchecked, then we are out of balance and as a result, the world is out of balance. Our spiritual payment for each and every thing that we enjoy comes in the form of a blessing. In offering a blessing, we acknowledge the relationship between ourselves and God and the world around us. Failure to acknowledge that relationship strains the sense of connectedness and our connections to both God and the world are weakened.

Tu B'Shevat, in the depths of a cold and dreary winter reminds us that the world isn't about us; that the universe isn't there to serve us and meet our needs. Instead, the act of blessing, the act of blessing and eating and sharing fruit, reminds us of the reciprocal nature of these relationships. Just as we need to take care of the earth to ensure that subsequent generations have fruits and vegetables and a planet for that matter to enjoy, we also need to take care of the spiritual dimension as well, molding our attitudes and the attitudes of those with whom we come into contact.

As we look forward to the celebration of Tu B'Shevat, may we strengthen those attitudes toward blessing and enabling the flow of divine energy into our world.

### MYTHS OF JUDAISM

Myths are more than folktales and fairytales. Myths are the defining stories of a people, that are important whether or not it is objectively or provably true. Within myth we see the unfolding of our way of viewing the world and the explanation of beliefs and practices.

Judaism has a rich mythic tradition from the narratives of Torah and Tanakh to the midrashim of the rabbis to the symbolic tales of the Zohar and the medieval flights of fantasy. Through these stories we create a Jewish lens for viewing the world.

The themes we will explore include Creation, Reward, Punishment, Holy Language, Holy People, Holy Land, Holy Time, Exile, Redemption and God. The stories or collections of stories include characters ranging from Adam to Zechariah, from Lilith to Metatron, from Rabbi Joseph Della Reina to Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai. Each tale or cluster of tales will shed light on how we look at the world through Jewish eyes.

The class will meet on Sunday evenings at 7:00 pm, beginning on Sunday, January 9<sup>th</sup>.

## MAZAL TOV SHABBAT

Our new Third Friday tradition of offering a special blessing and celebration cake for those marking a simcha that month will continue with our . January 21st and February 18th Mazel Tov Shabbats.



November's Honorees gather for their blessing.

#### **January Honorees**

Erik Abrahams Justin Addicks Abby Becker Ruth Krawetz Ken Mitchell Samuel Snider Lisa Stern Steven Tanner Eva Segert-Tauger & Mark Tauger Max Weber Sheila Wexler Rachel Works Sylvia Cooper Sylvia and Barry Cooper

#### **February Honorees**

Michael Berrebi Suzannah Bailey Edith and Marcus Levy Muriel and Bennett Millstone Debbi and David Pariser Lee Petsonk Adam Rosefsky Shirley Rosenbaum Eleanor and Leonard Simmons Kathleen Territo Ed Gerson Rich Gutmann David Gutmann Deva Solomon

Send them a card. See page seven.

# **President - Treasurer-Education**



## **President's Report**

This year's Chanukah party was one of the happiest and best attended events I remember. A week later we're talking about an adult Purim party. The winter months continue to warmly reverberate with Jewish tradition and celebration. Some gatherings are a more somber feast.

It was Rabbi Ben Zoma who asked: "Who is wise? One who learns from everyone." One leader does not possess all knowledge or expertise, as many a congregational leader will affirm. Not to mention board members!

Within our walls can occur a winter or

### EDUCATION NEWS

Rabbi Feder

We have reached the conclusion of another semester of learning in our Religious School. Over the course of this semester, we made major changes to our Family Worship Service. We moved the time of the service to 6:30 pm and placed the potluck oneg immediately afterward. Attendance for the service has improved dramatically and most of our students are well on their way to meeting their worship service requirements for this school year.

We were also able for the first time to hold Religious School on Chanukah, moving our start time to immediately prior to the beginning of our Chanukah Party. Our students were able to share the art and music they created during Religious School with the congregation during our party.

Many of our students participated in our Jewish Book Month reading contest. Our  $2^{nd}/3^{rd}$  Grade class

a spring, unfeeling discernment or defiant hope. Leadership needs to learn this from you.

Rabbi Ben Zoma asserted that all reality is about an eighth of an inch thick. Let's say that all reality was encased in translucent parchment inscribed with this: "The congregation's annual meeting is Jan 9. The meeting is especially important this year, as members in good standing will discuss and vote on whether or not to reselect the Rabbi, as his current contract expires July 31st. Additionally, the congregation will vote on the election of congregants to the board of trustees."

In order to read the above inscription from inside Rabbi Ben Zoma's oneeighth of an inch of reality, would you need binoculars or a magnifying glass? Does font choice enter into the equation? I'm not sure if Times New Roman or Helvetia goes best with applesauce or sour cream. Crunchy. I plan to be a good student of this process with your assistance on Jan 9, 2011.

finished with the highest per capita number of books and was able to earn a pizza party in the month of January. Congratulations to Miriam Sokoloff and her class.

Finally, several students participated in the Morgantown Christmas Parade, marching and carrying the Tree of Life Chanukah banner and wearing Tree of Life Chanukah shirts. They demonstrated their pride in Judaism and Chanukah and we are grateful for our Religious School staff (Karen Feder, Miriam Sokoloff and Ariel Wasserstrom) for organizing this event.

We hope that the coming months will have more accommodating weather that we found in January and February of last year. In January, we will be preparing to observe Tu B'Shevat and by the end of February we will be beginning our preparations for Purim. We look forward to marking a happy secular new year as well as a happy new year for trees.





Thank you for your support of Tree of Life Congregation. If you have not yet pledged for this fiscal year, please take the opportunity to do so now. Your contribution is very important to the fiscal stability of our congregation. As a reminder, if you intend to make any payments to Tree of Life before the end of the fiscal year, the IRS requires that your payment must be postmarked by December 31, 2010. The date written on the check is not what counts - it is the postmark on the envelope. I will not make any exceptions to this. I actually hold on to the envelopes with the postmarks for any check that I cannot deposit on or before December 31 in case you are audited. Please contact me at mpstolzen@yahoo.com if you have any questions.

### **TOL Donations**

Tree of Life Donations from October 20 through December 12, 2010. Donations are listed in chronological order.

#### **General Fund**

Neal and Susan Newfield Alan and Gwen Rosenbluth

#### **Rabbi Discretionary Fund**

Laurie Gutmann in memory of Sandy Gutmann Sharon Hildebrand in memory of Ronald Howard

#### **Holy Days Donation**

John and Carole Wilson

#### **Yizkor Donation**

Alan and Merle Stolzenberg

#### **Prayer Book Fund**

Alan and Merle Stolzenberg

#### Todah Rabah!

# Forum Four by Barry Pallay

The fourth Tree of Life "Town Hall Meeting" or Forum was held November 7, 2010 and facilitated by Barry Pallay. The purposes were to review and discuss the budget deficits for the past 2 years and the projected deficit for this current year, the declines in the religious school student enrollment, the congregation membership, and the participation at activities and events including religious services. Approximately 40 people from the community and congregation attended and offered their thoughts, suggestions and options to address the issues.

The budget surplus/deficit for the last seven years is shown

in Figure 1. Our treasurer calculates a 2010/2011 deficit of approximately \$32, 000. A statistical analysis of the data projects a 2010/2011 deficit between \$23,000 and \$32,000 and a deficit next year of \$30,000 to \$50,000. Whether the actual deficit will be \$23,000 or \$32,000 is not as important as recognizing that without significant changes to income or expenses, the trend is for a continuing significant deficit. Acknowledging this problem, we discussed how to increase income and/or reduce expenses.

Fundraising ideas included: assessing a special one time

fee on all congregants; initiating new fundraising efforts; increasing the number of dues paying members; increasing student memberships; instituting a fee for non-members to attend High Holy Day services; seeking better investment returns; and increasing current dues pledges.

Current expenses are: 67% Rabbi's Compensation package; 18.2% building maintenance; 4.5% religious school and 2 to 3% each for cantor/ritual, office, URJ, and programs. Options suggested for decreasing expenses included: reducing the Religious School subsidy by increasing enrollment; reducing the Rabbi's compensation package by, for example, decreasing his employment term to less than 12 months; deciding to proceed without a full time Rabbi. There was a sense that there was not much room to decrease building, school, cantor/ritual, office, URJ and program expenses. Regarding the religious school, enrollment has dropped from 60 in 2002/2003 to 19 this year. The previous Forum focused on school issues and they were further discussed at this meeting since children are our future and affect us financially as well.





TOL dues paying membership has declined from 95 in 2002/2003 to between 80 to 85 this year. That number does not include the 16 families from Clarksburg and Fairmont who are life members as a result of merging synagogues. Trying to understand these numbers, participants focused on: changing demographics; reluctance of people, especially younger people, to join anything; the problem of community members who attend services and activities but do not join our congregation; the need to be responsive to member needs; and strategies to attract new and retain existing members. Suggestions were made to restart and re-energize the Membership Committee. It was noted that most young peo-

ple, including WVU students, are primarily looking for social interactions and not religious related activities. Efforts and approaches by other groups in this area were noted. The decline in participation in regular religious services and activities was discussed, while the success of recent special events and initiatives was acknowledged.

This was the fourth in our 2010 series of "town hall meetings". The first two Forums began the general dialogue regarding the wants, needs and concerns of the congregation. The third and fourth sessions focused on

specific issues. Congregational input from all these forums provides a record that will guide us as we explore options and make decisions that will affect us all.



		14NIIADY 2011					
			ì			FEBRUARY 2011	
Date	Day	Event	Time	February 2	Wednesday	Hebrew School	5:00  pm
January 1	Saturday	Torah Study	10:00 am			Judaism: The Basics	7:00 pm
January 2	Sunday	NO RELIGIOUS SCHOOL		February 4	Friday	FAMILY SHABBAT	6:30 pm
January 5	Wednesday	NO HEBREW SCHOOL		February 5	Saturday	Torah Study	10:00 am
January 7	Friday	FAMILY SHABBAT	6:30 pm	February 6	Sundav	Religious School	10:00 am
January 8	Saturday	Shabbat Morning Service	10:00 am			Myths of Judaism	7:00 pm
January 9	Sunday	Religious School	10:00 am	- - -	Wednesday	Hebrew School	5:00  pm
		Myths of Judaism	7:00 pm	February 9		Judaism: The Basics	7:00 pm
Tanuary 12	Wednesday	Hebrew School	5:00  pm	February 11	Friday	Shabbat Evening Service	7:30 pm
Juluany 1∠	(mcomo M	Judaism: The Basics	7:00 pm	February 12	Saturday	Shabbat Morning Service	10:00 am
January 14	Friday	Shabbat Evening Service	7:30 pm	F-t13	Sunday	Religious School	10:00 am
January 15	Saturday	Torah Study	10:00 am	repruary 13	•	Myths of Judaism	7:00 pm
January 16	Sunday	Religious School	10:00 am	February 16	Wednesday	Hebrew School	5:00 pm
		Myths of Judaism	7:00 pm			Judaism: The Basics	7:00 pm
Tanııary 19	Wednesday	Hebrew School	5:00  pm	February 18	Friday	Shabbat Evening Service	7:30 pm
t f mmme	(mcomo u	Judaism: The Basics	7:00 pm	February 19	Saturday	Torah Study	10:00 am
January 20	Thursday	Tu B'Shevat Seder	7:00 pm	February 20	Sunday	Religious School	10:00 am
January 21	Friday	Shabbat Evening Service	7:30 pm	5	'n	Myths of Judaism	7:00 pm
January 22	Saturday	Shabbat Morning Service	10:00 am	February 23	Wednesdav	Hebrew School	5:00  pm
January 23	Sunday	Religious School	10:00 am	5	)	Judaism: The Basics	7:00 pm
		Myths of Judaism	7:00 pm	February 25	Friday	Shabbat Evening Service	7:30 pm
January 26	Wednesday	Hebrew School	5:00 pm	February 26	Saturday	Shabbat Morning Service	10:00 am
		Judaism: The Basics	7:00 pm	February 27	Sundav	Religious School	10:00 am
January 28	Friday	Shabbat Evening Service	7:30 pm			Myths of Judaism	7:00 nm
January 29	Saturday	Shabbat Morning Service	10:00 am				
January 30	Sunday	Religious School	10:00 am				
		Interfaith Dinner	5:30 pm				
			ONEO	ONEG SHABBAT SCHEDULE	<b>SAT SCI</b>	<b>JEDULE</b>	
-	Annual		, , , ,				
2	Meeting	Join us for 4	The follov	The following Oneg Shabbats are scheduled:	bats are schee	łuled:	
		Shabbat.		Ionnows 14th Marla and Alan Stalzanhara	nd Alon Stol		
S	Sunday,		• Janua	January 28 Muriel and Bennett Millstone	id Bennett Mi	llstone	
Jan	January 9th	th	If Privil II	to to movido or	Onea for a u	If visited for the second second of the second s	inno ro no
12 n	12 noon pizza	zz	versary fo	r yourself or a l	oved one, plea	versary for yourself or a loved one, please contact Linda Jacknowitz.	
12:30	12:30 pm meeting	eting	A special	thank you to the	ose who provi	A special thank you to those who provided Onegs during November and December.	scember.

#### Visit http://etzhaim.org

Calendars

# Hanukkah Photo Album



To see the rest of the Latke Party photos, please visit etzhaim.org and follow the link.

Visit http://etzhaim.org

# **Community Sharing Page**

# MAZAL TOV WISHES

Linda Herbst has designed and hand colored special greeting cards to be used for our new Mazal Tov Wishes project.

On page 2 of this newsletter, and on our web page, etzhaim.org, there are lists of birthday and anniversary celebrants for January and February.

For a minimum donation of ten dollars to Tree of Life, we will prepare and mail your personalized message to any or all of the honorees. A sample message is below. If you prefer a different text, we will accommodate.

In Honor of your January Birthday a gift has been made to Tree of Life Congregation by Jane and John Doe

#### Mazel Tov!

Interested? Contact Linda Herbst (leherbst@gmail.com or 304 599 6947) to place your orders. Let your Mazel Tov wishes be a simcha.

Remember a loved one with a YAHRZEIT PLAQUE \$400 DONATION Contact: Bennett Millstone

### CLERGY HOSPITAL VISITATION

The law (HIPPA) prohibits The Temple and our clergy from obtaining clergy sheets and religious census information from hospitals.

#### We need your help!

Please notify Kathy Abate, xuaf@aol.com co-chair of the CARE Committee of any serious sickness in your family or hospital admissions.

Thank you.

THE MEMORY LINGERS ON From Daya Solomon

We were using the recipe the TOL Latke Brigade handed out. Matanya and I made the batter and left it for Dan to fry. That night, when Dan began frying the latkes, I was 100 miles away, driving in Pittsburgh. My car began to fill up with that indescribable smell of latkes cooking. This is a true story (and no slivovitz was involved).

#### MI SHEBEIRACH / WELLNESS PRAYERS

Please remember to consult with those who are in need of healing, before publicly adding their names to the Mi Shebeirach list. With their permission, we would like to add whatever support we can to their recovery and healing.

Visit http://etzhaim.org

We note with sorrow the passing of **Ronald Howard** 

May his memory be as a blessing



To the TOL community - thank you to each and everyone for all of your kind words, guidance, and support to our families as we mourn the loss of our mother/ grandmother, Sandy Gutmann. She placed great value on the Jewish community here for many years. Again, thank you.

Laurie Gutmann, Richard Gutmann, and Joan Gutmann Roberts and their families

> Share Your Simcha Buy a Leaf on

THE SIMCHA TREE

\$250/leaf \$2500/Small Stone \$5000/Large Stone Contact Merle Stolzenberg/ Barbara Jacowitz



# Cheryl's Corner-TuB'Shevat

#### Sick

by Shel Silverstein

"I cannot go to school today," Said little Peggy Ann McKay. "I have the measles and the mumps, A gash, a rash and purple bumps. My mouth is wet, my throat is dry, I'm going blind in my right eye. My tonsils are as big as rocks, I've counted sixteen chicken pox And there's one more--that's seventeen, And don't you think my face looks green?

My leg is cut-my eyes are blue--It might be instamatic flu. I cough and sneeze and gasp and choke,

I'm sure that my left leg is broke--My hip hurts when I move my chin,

My belly button's caving in, My back is wrenched, my ankle's sprained,

My 'pendix pains each time it rains. My nose is cold, my toes are numb. I have a sliver in my thumb. My neck is stiff, my voice is weak, I hardly whisper when I speak.

My tongue is filling up my mouth, I think my hair is falling out. My elbow's bent, my spine ain't straight,

My temperature is one-o-eight. My brain is shrunk, I cannot hear, There is a hole inside my ear. I have a hangnail, and my heart is-what?

What's that? What's that you say? You say today is. . .Saturday? G'bye, I'm going out to play!"

# [Where do words come from?]

by Vénus Khoury-Ghata translated by Marilyn Hacker?]

Where do words come from? from what rubbing of sounds are they born

on what flint do they light their wicks what winds brought them into our mouths

Their past is the rustling of stifled silences the trumpeting of molten elements the grunting of stagnant waters

Sometimes

they grip each other with a cry expand into lamentations become mist on the windows of dead houses

crystallize into chips of grief on dead lips

attach themselves to a fallen star dig their hole in nothingness breathe out strayed souls

Words are rocky tears the keys to the first doors they grumble in caverns lend their ruckus to storms their silence to bread that's ovened alive



JEWISH CHRISTIAN MUSLIM TRIALOGUE

Join us on Sunday, January 30 at 5:30 pm at the Mediterranean Deli to take part in dinner and conversation with members of the First Presbyterian

Church and the Islamic Center of Morgantown. Let us take some time to break bread with our religious neighbors and continue the process of getting acquainted with each other. We will explore our similarities as well as our differences for an evening we hope to be able to repeat on a regular basis.



Visit http://etzhaim.org

## TU B'SHEVAT

Rabbi Feder



The 15th Day of the Hebrew month of Shevat is one of four new years in the Hebrew calendar. The most fa-

mous of these new year celebrations is Rosh Hashanah on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Tishri, but the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nisan marks the beginning of the festival calendar and the new year for vegetation and the 1<sup>st</sup> of Elul marks the new year for cattle. The 15<sup>th</sup> of Shevat marks the new year for trees, when, according to tradition, sap begins to flow once more, and the date used for determining when to begin tithing the tree's fruit. Because the Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 1:1) refers to this as Rosh Hashanah L'ilan - the New Year of the Tree, our mystics have taught that the Tree refers to the Tree of Life. The significance of trees and the natural world have made this a celebration of Jewish environmental ethics. And the founding of Israel has made this a natural means of strengthening our ties with Israel.

Traditional observances for Tu B'Shevat include making a special effort to eat fruit, some eating seven Biblical species (wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates), others eating fifteen fruits. Many attend a Seder Tu B'Shevat, a mystical observance having its origins in the early sixteenth century, and others see Tu B'Shevat as a special time to purchase trees for the land of Israel.

This year Tu B'Shevat falls on Thursday, January 20. We will celebrate Tu B'shevat with a seder on Thursday evening, January 20, at 7:00 pm, emphasizing more of the mystical elements of this observance. Our Religious School celebration on Sunday, January 23, will emphasize our connections to nature and to the land of Israel.

# Hadassah/Sisterhood

### HADASSAH

Monique Gingold

Shalom le-culam (shalom y'all). Hope you are keeping warm in all the snow! We had a wonderful opening meeting in September at Gwen Rosenbluth's house. All previous Hadassah presidents were honored. Our much anticipated Chanukah meeting at Joan Addick's house was creatively and diligently planned by Daya Solomon and Sherry Hildebrand. Unfortunately, the above mentioned snow forced cancellation of this meeting. Daya and Sherry promise to do the program next year when, hopefully, the weather will cooperate.

Fear not. We have an exciting calendar to come. We will have an upcoming Rosh Chodesh meeting in February or March. Purim 2011 is Hadassah's 99th Birthday. Stay tuned for meeting details.

As usual, we will bring our year to an end with our book exchange meeting. We nosh, shmooze, nibble, kibbitz, and share books we have read and enjoyed this last year.

I must tell you all that I have bought the beautiful Hadassah Centennial key necklace as a gift for my daughter and myself. This key is based on the original key to Hadassah Hospital that was found when Israel regained Mount Scopus during the Six Day War. It is made of silver and Swarovski crystals. I wear this necklace proudly because not only is it beautiful, not only does it represent Hadassah hospital, but also because purchasing this key supports the wonderful work provided by Hadassah Hospital.



replica brass key.

### Sisterhood

Tree of Life Sisterhood is an auxiliary of the congregation. Our goal is support of the Religious School and congregational projects. We encourage all women in the Tree of Life family to be members, and help us maintain our strong link in the Morgantown Jewish community. Please choose one of the levels of membership, and become an active participant in our good causes. We look forward to a great year!

# Sisterhood Dues

Below please find a Sisterhood dues statement to send with your check for 2010-2011. If you prefer, you may mail your check alone directly to the Treasurer, Eva Segert-Tauger, at the following address:

Treasurer TOL Sisterhood P.O. Box 4051 Morgantown, WV 26504-4051

Name:

Preferred e-mail address:

#### **DUES LEVELS:**

Standard membership level	\$25.00
Sarah membership level	\$36.00
Rivka membership level	\$72.00
Leah membership level	\$90.00
Rachel membership level	\$100.00
Miriam membership level	\$108.00+
Existing Life members	\$18.00
(New life memberships are not avai	lable at this time at this 1

(New life memberships are not available at this time at this level)

TOL Sisterhood is a non-profit organization, and the entire amount of your dues may be tax-deductible, depending on your individual situation. (For more details, please consult your tax advisor.)

The TOL Sisterhood pays \$15.00 each year per member to Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ), and \$2.00 each year to the WRJ regional organization. The remainder of the dues directly benefits the Tree of Life Congregation. (As of August 15, 2010, we have not yet received a dues statement from WRJ for dues levels for 2010-2011.)

If you have any questions about your dues, please call Eva at (304) 599-4268 or send an e-mail to esegert@gmail.com . A printable copy of this form can be found at http://www.etzhaim.org/community/sisterhood/

### **December Mazal Tov Shabbat**





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Tree of Life Congregation PO Box 791 Morgantown, WV 26507-0791 (304) 292-7029 http://etzhaim.org



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