



Nov/Dec — 2013

Cheshvan/Kislev/Tevet — 5774

Morgantown, West Virginia

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

RABBI

Joseph Hample

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Why Do Trees Need Their Own New Year?

By Rabbi Joe Hample

The expression “New Year of Trees” conjures an unlikely picture of trees wearing funny hats and singing Auld Lang Syne. Why would trees need their own new year?

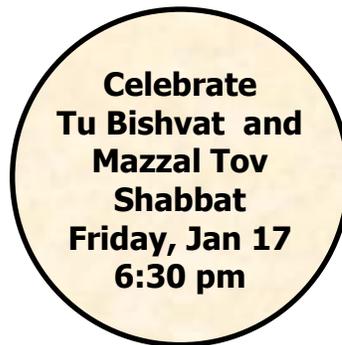
The germ of this kooky idea lies in Leviticus 19:23-25, which specifies that fruit is not to be eaten during the first three years of a tree's life. (Trees don't usually bear a lot of fruit in the beginning anyway, so this isn't much of a waste.) During the fourth year, all the fruit is to be given as an offering to the priest, and only in the fifth year may the fruit be eaten freely by the people. This law implies that you know the exact age of every fruit tree on your property. As it would be wildly inconvenient to remember a different birthday for each tree, the rabbis agreed on a standard birthday for all trees. They settled on the full moon of midwinter (Tu Bishvat) – when, presumably, plant growth is at its slowest – as the new year of trees (Mishnah Rosh ha-Shanah 1:1).

Fast forward to the Middle Ages, when suffering Jewry developed the esoteric doctrine of Kabbalah. Kabbalah proposes that the universe is full of unseen forces which can be harnessed for good or evil by the performance of elaborate ceremonies. Perhaps this idea was

always implicit in Judaism, with its many complicated observances. Surely those observances have a purpose, even if it is unarticulated. The business of Kabbalah is to articulate it.

One of Kabbalah's principles is that there are four worlds, as implied by Isaiah 43:7 (“All those who are called by My name, I have created them, I have formed them, I have made them”). The four worlds are *Atzilut*, the world of God's name; *B'ri'ah*, the world of creation; *Y'tzirah*, the world of formation; and *Asiyah*, the world of action (or making). It is the world of *Asiyah* that we normally inhabit, but perhaps there is some way of paying a brief visit to the higher worlds. The famous mystic Isaac Luria (1534-72) introduced “four worlds prayer,” the doctrine that different parts of the liturgy correspond to the different Kabbalistic worlds. This teaching transforms the worship service into a tour of the four worlds.

In the stressful 17th century, marred by the Chmielnicki pogroms and the false messiah Shabb'tai Tz'vi, the growing popularity of Kabbalah was reflected in a book called *Chemdat Yamim* (“Delight of Days”), which defines Kabbalistic rituals for all occasions.



One of those new rituals was the Tu Bishvat seder, a programmatic dinner like the Passover seder, but relating fruits, nuts, and wines to the four worlds of Lurianic Kabbalah. This is the Tu Bishvat tradition reclaimed in our own time by New Age Jews and ecologically-minded Jews eager to reconnect with nature.

There is no canonical text for Tu Bishvat, but a Tu Bishvat seder with gravitas must invoke the four worlds.

On Friday, Jan. 17, at 6:30 pm, TOL will celebrate Tu Bishvat in conjunction with Mazzal Tov Shabbat, in the social hall rather than the sanctuary. We will enjoy fruits, nuts, wine, grape juice, songs, Biblical texts about trees, and a little taste of Kabbalah. This event is recommended for all ages: but not, alas, for those with nut allergies. Sorry for any inconvenience.

For Your Convenience

By Rabbi Joe Hample

TOL leaders are considering a couple of policy changes in hopes of improving your synagogue experience. You will have a chance to weigh in at the annual congregational meeting on Feb. 9. Please reflect carefully on the tradeoffs.

First, the *oneg* policy. TOL provides wine and *challah* Friday evenings, but additional refreshments are provided by volunteers. Some of those volunteers have been on the job for years, and they need a break. Perhaps we could divide up the membership roster and assign each Friday evening of the year to a couple of member families, publishing the entire chart of families and dates. In other words, your family and one other family would be responsible for providing the *oneg* one Friday evening a year. (Families with kids bring potluck when there's a children's service, so they're off the hook for other Friday evenings.) In case the evening assigned to you is inconven-

ient, you could trade with someone else.

If you have financial, medical, or transportation constraints that make this duty unworkable, of course we understand. But we hope most families will agree to this arrangement. Otherwise, Friday evening worshipers may have to settle for just wine and *challah*, or whatever people spontaneously show up with.

Second, the lists policy. At services we read a list of those who are ill before the healing prayer, and a list of the recently deceased before the mourners' *kaddish*. These lists have grown impossibly long. The intention was to drop names off the healing list after a month, and off the recent losses list after a year, though you could always call and put the name back on. But for fear of inadvertently offending someone, the lists are not being trimmed, and they have gotten out of hand.

I think the answer is to retain contact information for the person who submitted the name in the first place, and notify them when the name is aging off. That will alert them to call in if they want the name to stay on the list, and forestall a hurtful surprise if the name is dropped. (*Yortzait* lists read on the anniversary of a death are unaffected.) When you give us the name of an ailing or departed loved one, be sure to give us your own contact information too. We hope most people will agree to this change, as the status quo is intolerable, and it's hard to say what else could be done about it.

Please contact me, an officer, or a Board member if you want to discuss these proposals. Maybe there's another approach we haven't thought of. Maybe there are needs or concerns we're unaware of. If change is required, we'd like to build consensus so no one feels overlooked or blindsided. The important thing is to keep TOL a place where you feel at home. Please help us figure out how to make that happen.

Yotzer Or (Shaping the Light): Morning at TOL

By Rabbi Joe Hample

To judge from attendance, Shabbat morning at TOL has not been meeting the congregation's expectations. Two hours with a lot of long Hebrew prayers, followed by a skimpy *oneg* or none at all, does not seem to have much appeal. As a result, the Ritual Committee is reinventing the Shabbat morning program as follows.

One Saturday a month, typically the first, we will continue to offer elaborate morning worship including a full Torah service, followed by a potluck. This event is strongly recommended for Hebrew school families, as it models the *bar / bat mitzvah* ceremony.

Two Saturdays a month, typically the second and fourth, we will offer Torah study in lieu of a morning service. This was done in years past and it drew a sizable crowd.

One Saturday a month, typically the third, we will hold a bagel brunch at 10:00, followed by a shorter worship service at 11:00. We gave this a try on Nov. 9 and it was very popular.

When there is a fifth Saturday, we volunteer for the soup kitchen at Trinity Episcopal Church, 247 Willey St. This *mitzvah* is coordinated by Susan Brown.

The morning liturgy, quoting Isaiah 45:7, praises God as *Yotzer Or*, "shaper of light." Let's give God a little help by shaping the morning light in ways that work for us. Please let me know what you think of the new program and how it might better serve your spiritual needs.



SHABBAT SCHEDULE SUMMARY		
SHABBAT EVENING SCHEDULE		
Day	Activity	Time
First Friday	Shabbat Service & Oneg	7:30 – 9:00 pm
Second Friday	Family Shabbat & Potluck	6:00 or 6:30 (check monthly calendar)
Third Friday	Mazzal Tov Shabbat	7:30 – 9:00 pm
(Fourth Friday of five)	Shabbat Service & Oneg	7:30 – 9:00 pm
Last Friday	Wine & Cheese Shabbat	6:30 – 7:30 pm
SHABBAT MORNING SCHEDULE		
First Saturday	Shabbat & full Torah service with potluck lunch	10:00 am – 1:00 pm
Second Saturday	Torah Study	10:00 am – 12:00 noon
Third Saturday	Bagel Brunch	10:00 – 11:00 am
	Worship Service	11:00 am – 12:00 noon
Fourth Saturday	Torah Study	10:00 am – 12:00 noon
Fifth Saturday	Soup kitchen, Trinity Episcopal Church, 247 Willey St.	10:00 am – 12:00 noon
Always check the official monthly calendar as modifications do happen.		

Bagel Brunch Shabbat

What? You haven't tried it? Well then you don't know what you're missing.

Come on down to TOL, 10 am to noon,
on designated third Saturday's and enjoy the food,
the company and the Judaism.

To quote Rabbi Joe: Come for the condiments, stay for the commandments!





Rabbi Hample

Adult Education

By Rabbi Joe Hample

We continue to offer adult education three Wednesday evenings a month. Adult Hebrew, taught by Aric Agmon, has been moved to a more convenient time, 7:00-8:30 pm. It will be held the third and fifth Wednesdays of January, the first and third Wednesdays of February.

My adult ed class is the second Wednesday of every month, 7:00-9:00 pm. In early 2014 we will focus on the gateway to the Talmud, namely Pirkei Avot ("Ethics of the Ancestors"). Pirkei Avot is an accessible, six-chapter compilation of rabbinic maxims and mnemonics, many of which you have probably heard before. It is the perfect introduction to the world of the ancient rabbis. We will study one chapter a month. Chapters 1-4 include

sayings of famous sages like Hillel and Akiva. Chapter 5 contains many lists: the ten primordial miracles, the seven virtues of the scholar, the four kinds of people. Chapter 6 explains the infinite importance of Torah study, which is the core value of rabbinic Judaism.

Our adult ed program is enriched by a diversity of viewpoints. Please come share your perspective. See you Wednesday night!

Children's Education

By Rabbi Joe Hample

Enthusiasm remains strong for our religious and Hebrew school program. We had a special Family Shabbat on Dec. 13, when the older elementary class gave the sermon. Upcoming Family Shabbatot are Jan. 10 (twens) and Feb. 14 (kindergarten – preschool). Upcoming Torah services, recommended for Hebrew school families, are Jan. 4 and Feb. 1.

Our twice-a-month teen program is evolving in response to the enthusiasms of the adolescents. Sports are popular, so we will go ice skating

on Jan. 4 and maybe find another winter sport on Feb. 1. Upcoming movie-pizza nights will screen The Frisco Kid on Jan. 18 and Liberty Heights on Feb. 15.

There are several opportunities for enhancement in our religious school methodology. Lesson plans could be better fitted to the diverse age groups we serve. Activities could reinforce the moral or religious meaning of the weekly story, rather than just reinforce the story. Faculty-parent communication could be improved. It's hard to reinvent the curriculum in the middle of the term, just as it's hard to change clothes while you're running down the street. But it's worth a try.

Everyone, especially parents, is welcome to join the Education Committee. The committee oversees the temple's religious school, Hebrew school, and teen education programs. Meetings are held every one to two months or as needed. The purpose of the committee is to provide feedback and suggestions to the rabbi; brainstorm new ideas; approve the curriculum, policies, and schedule; and help out with special events. Please contact committee chair Brian Lemoff for details.



Zevi Lowenberg leading Conservative style Shabbat Morning Service Saturday, November 23rd

Photo: Heidi Solomon



On Nov 15th Shabbat, Bennett Millstone introduced guest speaker Fred Fields who regaled congregants with his recollections of Jewish Morgantown in the 1950's.

His father, the late Ed Fields was the first TOL president to serve in our newly constructed synagogue, which was completed in 1948. His mother, Belle Fields, who is nearing 101 years of age, was quite active in state and national sisterhood efforts. Both Fred and Belle now live in Columbia, S.C.

Photo: Ed Gerson



*Al
Berrebi*

From the Treasurer

Merle Stolzenberg has completed ~ 13 years of service as our treasurer, and as I take over her position I marvel at her management of the temple's financial affairs so capably for so long. I can assure you that I have NO INTENTION of remaining for that long!

I ask for your patience as I familiarize myself with the various tasks associated with the job- and master the TOL accounting software. I will make every effort to acknowledge special contributions as they come in, but may, on occasion, be delayed by work or family commitments.

Please pledge if you have not already done so, and remember that your checks must be postmarked by Dec 31st in order to qualify for a charitable deduction on your 2013 federal taxes. The Tree of Life needs your support.

I prefer to be reached via my personal email account, aberrebi@gmail.com or by phone 304-296-1019

Checks should be sent to:

Tree of Life Congregation
ATTN: Treasurer
PO BOX 791
Morgantown, WV 26507-0791

Please do not include the physical street address on the envelope.

Albert Berrebi
Treasurer

Thank you from Ed and Donna to all who helped them November and December

The last six weeks have been physically painful as I received third degree burns late Nov 2 and received skin grafts at Western Pennsylvania Hospital Burn Unit on Nov 5. I returned to Morgantown one week before Thanksgiving.

Within hours of the fire Marty Sippin and a neighbor had boarded up our home. Donna began managing our immediate needs with impressive devotion. A temporary apartment, furniture, overseeing storage of our possessions; she also saved important computer assets and other equipment.

We especially thank Rabbi Joe. He came to Ruby Trauma Center and stayed with me until I was transported to West Penn; he then took Donna to her friend's home. His calls and visits have meant so much to us.

More help came from Tree of Life such as transporting Donna to and from West Penn. At least nine visitors came to West Penn and several have visited us since I returned home.

Donna and I wish to express our profound gratitude to the Tree of Life Family. We received many cards, emails and phone calls expressing concern and encouragement. To fully recognize everyone publicly is an awkward task. You remembered us, we will never forget your kindness and selflessness.

Shalom,
Ed and Donna Bolyard Gerson

A Hadassah Thanksgivukkah

On the seventh night of Hanukkah ... Hadassah lit candles, sang songs, made Thanksgivukkah cards and, of course, shared latkes and lots of other delicious treats. Once again we were able to light all the menorahs without setting off any smoke detectors ... always a concern! Our hostess was Linda Herbst. She had her house completely decked out with Hanukkah decorations which contributed to the festive nature of a most enjoyable gathering.



Photos: Heidi Solomon



Toda List: November/December 2013

The TOL Board wishes to thank members and friends of our congregation as follows:

- **Continued Special thanks:** to those offering support to Sylvia Cooper, and to Ed & Donna Gerson during these past few weeks.
- **Rabbi Joe:** for his very interesting Adult Education workshop, “Our Love-Hate Relationship with Chasidism,” Wednesday eve, Nov. 13 at TOL.
- **Lee Kass:** for organizing and staffing the Judaica Shop sale Wed/Thus, Nov 13/14.
- **Rich Cohen & Brian Lemoff:** for leading services on Friday, Nov 15.
- **Our guest speaker Fred Field hosted by the Millstones:** for his presentation on the history of the Morgantown TOL Congregation and Temple, Friday Nov 15. Fred is the son of Edward Fields, who was the first TOL President to occupy the newly erected building (1948).
- **Rich & Laura Cohen:** for organizing Oneg, Friday, Nov 15.
- **Lee Kass:** for organizing and staffing the Judaica Shop sale Thus, Nov 21;
- **Robert Klein & Michelle Leverage** for opening the shop at alternate times.
- **Alex Behr and Boy Scout Troop 46:** for spending Saturday raking leaves in the yards of older Morgantown residents.
- **Muriel Millstone, Lee Kass, Margalit Persing:** for organizing Oneg, Friday, Nov 22, and congregants who assisted with clean-up.
- **Zevi Lowenberg, Hillel student president:** for leading Conservative-style Shabbat morning service, Saturday, Nov. 23.
- **Morgantown Soup Kitchen Lunch Volunteers:** Nov. 30, the TOL congregation made the lunch at the Morgantown Soup Kitchen at the Episcopal Church.
- **CARE Committees’ good work:** making and distributing Chanukkah gift bags for friends confined to their homes; and congregants who helped with their tasks.
- **CARE Committee:** for organizing visit to Heritage Point, to bring Chanukkah gifts and songs to Jewish residents of Heritage Point, Saturday, Dec. 7, 5:30-6:30 pm.
- **Adam Rosefsky & Lee Kass:** for organizing Silent Auction for Post-Chanukkah party 8 Dec.
- **Adam Rosefsky and Rich Cohen:** for organizing the Latke brigade and for their wonderful & plentiful latkes, and **Marty Sippin** for purchasing supplies.
- **Adam Rosefsky and Lee Petsonk:** for their lay-leadership at Shiva and Funeral Services for the family of Harold Klein
- **Merle Stolzenberg** for her years of dedicated service as TOL Treasurer, with much gratitude for a job well done.

Please let us know if we have omitted your contribution, and we apologize for any oversights

POSIT

By Linda Stern Zisquit

"Ten measures of beauty came down into the world;
Nine were taken by Jerusalem, one by the rest of the world."

Tractate Kiddushin

"Ten parts of suffering came down into the world; nine were taken by Jerusalem, one by the rest of the world."

Avot d'Rabbi Natan

Had Rachel not looked up
Jacob would not have seen her.
There would have been no water,
no winding dream,

no tribe or unrelenting
portion of sadness
dispersed on his land, his Jerusalem,
and I would not have promised

to gather then home. But Rachel
saw him and he loved her.
She was barren and she suffered
and she followed him.

So I have this heaviness
to bear. Her life before him
had also the dailiness of lives,
an hour at which she would rise and go

to the well. Then out of the blue
her future came crashing against her lids
when she looked up, those hours changed,
and I was moved to his, another well

Snow

By Frederick Seidel

Snow is what it does.
It falls and it stays and it goes.
It melts and it is here somewhere.
We all will get there.



A Letter Sent to Summer

By Jane Shore

Oh summer if you would only come
with your big baskets of flowers,
dropping by like an old friend
just passing through the neighborhood.

If you came to my door disguised
as a thirsty biblical angel,
I'd buy all your hairbrushes and magazines.
I'd be more hospitable
than any ancient king.

I'd personally carry your luggage in!
Your monsoons! Your squadrons of bugs!
Your plums and lovely melons!
Let the rose let out its long long sigh.
And desire return to the hapless rabbit.

This request is also in my own behalf.
Inside my head it is always snowing,
even when I sleep. When I wake up,
and still you have not arrived,
I curl back into my blizzard of linens.

Not like winter's buckets of whitewash.
Please wallpaper my bedroom
with leafy vegetables and farms.
If you knocked right now,
I would not interfere.
Start near the window.
Start right here.



Late Latkes are a Success

photos: gerson



**Thank you
to
Lance & Carol Kann
of Fort Myers FL
for their generous
contribution to the
CHARM fund.**

*Donations to all
TOL funds
will be acknowledged
in future Newsletters*

CHARM CAMPAIGN

Tree of Life
Building for our Future
Please join the effort

Send your
Pledge/donation
To our treasurer
Al Berrebi

at
Tree of Life, PO Box 791,
Morgantown, WV 26507-0791



A few more photos before
we let Hanukkah go for
the year ...



TOL offers many donation opportunities.

For a complete listing
please visit
[http://www.etzhaim.org/aboutus/
temple/](http://www.etzhaim.org/aboutus/temple/)

*We note with sorrow
the passing of*

Harold Klein

*May his memory
be a blessing*



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.

Send information to Rabbi Joe or
Margalit at
nmpersing@yahoo.com

Share Your Simcha Buy a Leaf on THE SIMCHA TREE

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



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

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2014			
Date	Day	Event	Time
1/1/14	Wednesday	Sorry, no Adult Hebrew	
1/2/14	Thursday	Rabbi's drop-in office hours	1:00-5:00 pm
1/3/14	Friday	Shabbat service & oneg	7:30-9:00 pm
1/4/14	Saturday	Shabbat & full Torah service & potluck	10:00 am-1:00 pm
1/4/14	Saturday	Teen shmooze & ice skating	7:00-9:00 pm
1/8/14	Wednesday	Adult ed: Pirkei Avot chapter 1 ("If not now, when?")	7:00-9:00 pm
1/9/14	Thursday	Rabbi's drop-in office hours	1:00-5:00 pm
1/10/14	Friday	Family Shabbat & potluck (tweens)	6:30-8:00 pm
1/11/14	Saturday	Torah study	10:00 am-12:00 noon
1/15/14	Wednesday	Adult Hebrew	7:00-8:30 pm
1/16/14	Thursday	Rabbi's drop-in office hours	1:00-5:00 pm
1/17/14	Friday	Tu Bishvat seder & Mazzal Tov Shabbat	7:30-9:00 pm
1/18/14	Saturday	Shabbat bagel brunch & morning service	10:00 am-12:00 noon
1/18/14	Saturday	Teen movie-pizza night: <i>The Frisco Kid</i> , Wild West comedy with a Jewish twist	6:00-8:00 pm
1/23/14	Thursday	Rabbi's drop-in office hours	1:00-5:00 pm
1/24/14	Friday	Shabbat service & oneg	7:30-9:00 pm
1/25/14	Saturday	Torah study	10:00 am-12:00 noon
1/29/14	Wednesday	Adult Hebrew	7:00-8:30 pm
1/30/14	Thursday	Rabbi's drop-in office hours	1:00-5:00 pm
1/31/14	Friday	Wine & cheese Shabbat	6:30-7:30 pm
2/1/14	Saturday	Shabbat & full Torah service & potluck	10:00 am-1:00 pm
2/1/14	Saturday	Teen shmooze (winter sport or movie)	Time TBA
2/5/14	Wednesday	Adult Hebrew	7:00-8:30 pm
2/6/14	Thursday	Rabbi's drop-in office hours	1:00-5:00 pm
2/7/14	Friday	Shabbat service & oneg	7:30-9:00 pm
2/8/14	Saturday	Torah study	10:00 am-12:00 noon
2/9/14	Sunday	Annual Congregational Meeting	2:30 pm
2/12/14	Wednesday	Adult ed: Pirkei Avot chapter 2 ("It is not for you to finish the task...")	7:00-9:00 pm
2/13/14	Thursday	Rabbi's drop-in office hours	1:00-5:00 pm
2/14/14	Friday	Family Shabbat & potluck (preschool - KG)	6:00-7:30 pm
2/15/14	Saturday	Shabbat bagel brunch & morning service	10:00 am-12:00 noon
2/15/14	Saturday	Teen movie-pizza night: <i>Liberty Heights</i> , suburban Jewish family saga	6:00-8:00 pm
2/19/14	Wednesday	Adult Hebrew	7:00-8:30 pm
2/20/14	Thursday	Rabbi's drop-in office hours	1:00-5:00 pm
2/21/14	Friday	Mazzal Tov Shabbat & oneg	7:30-9:00 pm
2/22/14	Saturday	Torah study	10:00 am-12:00 noon
2/27/14	Thursday	Rabbi's drop-in office hours	1:00-5:00 pm
2/28/14	Friday	Wine & cheese Shabbat	6:30-7:30 pm
3/1/14	Saturday	Shabbat & full Torah service & potluck	10:00 am-1:00 pm

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

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Mazal Tov Shabbat

December and January recognitions will be combined in January. February will be on the third Friday as usual. Join us for a festive Oneg with lots of good cheer. Errors? Omissions? Contact Linda: ljackowitz@frontier.com

December 2013

Kathleen Abate
Roger Abrahams
Paul Brager
Daniel Berrebi
Sheryl Grossman
Bob Hunt (Kass)
Art Jackowitz
Zulie Jacobsohn
Martha and Norman Lass
Emily Lederman
Muriel Millstone
Keith Newman
Julie Penn
Linda Rosefsky
David Rosen
Stephanie Savitch
Lindsay and Andy Trimpe

January 2014

Annabel Brazaitis
Ken Mitchell
Aleeza Price
Samuel Snider
Lisa Stern
Eva Segert Tauger and Mark Tauger
Max Weber
Sheila Wexler
Rachel Works
Sylvia Cooper
Ilan Wright

February 2014

Michael Berrebi
Suzannah Bailey
Sony Lemoff
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



Save the date: Empty Bowls Soup and Bread Luncheon February 22, 2014

Tickets are \$15 donation per person. All money goes to feeding the hungry locally.

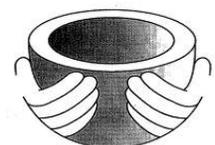
Empty bowls is also raffling off a beautiful wood sculpture and a WV sesquicentennial Quilt.

Raffle tickets are \$5 or 6 for \$20.

If you are interested in tickets or have any questions please contact Linda Herbst at

304-599-6947 or at
leherbst@gmail.com.

**EMPTY
BOWLS**



Visit <http://etzheim.org>