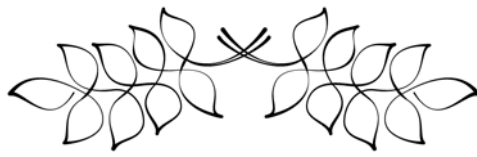


Volume 18 – Issue #4
Fall, 2013
1001 Central Avenue
Wilmette, Illinois 60091
tel: 847/ 251-2675
fax: 847/ 251-6002

www.sukkatshalom.org



CONGREGATION
SUKKAT SHALOM
Bulletin

Rabbi's Message

by Rabbi Sam Gordon

Just as I thought we were finally done with the obsession over the "December Dilemma," we now face the problem of the "November Dilemma." How are we going to be able to celebrate Hanukkah and Thanksgiving at the same time?

For far too long, the American Jewish world worried about the Christmas/Hanukkah conflict. I stopped worrying about that issue long ago. Families figured out various ways of observing one or both holidays, and no one was irreparably harmed by the decision. I

"Families figured out various ways of observing one or both holidays, and no one was irreparably harmed by the decision."

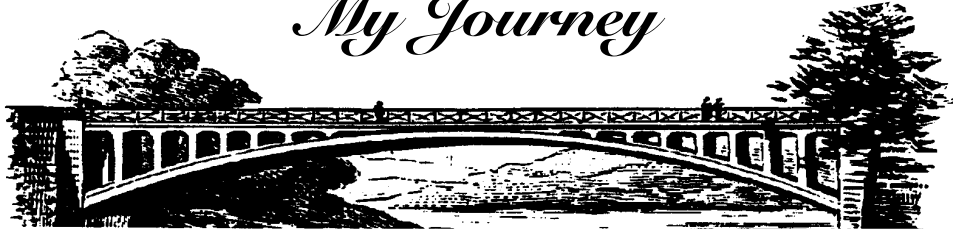
think it's always a good thing to find moments of sacred time in our lives and, if our families have diverse traditions, why not celebrate and find meaning in those occasions?

But now we turn to "Thanksgivukkah." How do we manage that combination? Latkes for stuffing? A Hanukkah menorah in the shape of a turkey? Perhaps potato pancakes dipped in cranberry sauce? Why not be creative?

I offer a few serious thoughts. Thanksgiving is the ultimate American holiday. It is not limited to one religious group or another. No one argues that only descendants of the Mayflower have a legitimate right to observe it. It is a sacred meal, often begun with a prayer or blessing, which is as diverse as the recipes for the

please turn to page 2

My Journey



Turning 50 years old last year proved to be a catalyst for testing my physical and mental limits. While this milestone seemed like an appropriate time to challenge my body, I had no idea that the five-day, 190-mile, 18,000-vertical-feet mountain bike adventure that I committed to was going to be such a spiritual ride.

In 2012, I was coming off of the emotional and physical accomplishment of climbing Longs Peak in Estes Park, Colorado, where 15 friends and I scaled this famous "fourteener" (a mountain that exceeds 14,000 feet above sea level) in a 16-hour summit climb. Frankly, I was feeling like I had just checked a significant box on my bucket list. I returned home to my suburban life with a strong sense of achievement and camaraderie -- not expecting to attempt another significant adventure for many years.

The Longs Peak experience, however, had prompted one of my fellow climbers to plan what appeared to be a similar adventure for his 50th birthday. The trip was planned as a five-day, mostly single-track, extreme mountain bike ride that would depart from Durango and culminate in the small town of Paradox Valley, Colorado -- not far from the

"... I set out with seven other middle-aged men on a life experience that pushed me physically, mentally and spiritually to new heights."

Utah border. I had never done any serious mountain biking and needed to borrow an appropriate two-wheeler for the journey. After three months of flatland training, I set out with seven other middle-aged men on a life experience that pushed me physically, mentally and spiritually to new heights.

Day One of the ride turned out to be the most challenging. My training elevation in Chicago provided no preparation for the 11,000 feet above sea level starting-point of the trip. Even worse, a collective decision to take the "alternative" route versus the "standard" route proved to be almost trip-ending. The dramatic climb of 5,000 vertical feet along a boulder-strewn, single-track route -- roughly 15 inches wide in many spots and not clearly defined -- forced us to walk our bikes more than half the time. It also prompted several moments of my thinking, "What have I gotten myself into?" The obvious call for divine intervention happened more than once in the first three hours, particularly when I watched my close friend Chuck suffer from a severe case of mountain sickness.

The following four days had many ups and downs -- not limited to the terrain. Our daily routine included an 8 a.m. departure after a high-fiber and carbo-loaded breakfast; roughly 6-to-8 hours of technical riding; and unloading our gear from our bikes and

please turn to page 2

Journey, cont'd

turkey and side dishes. Some families might trace their roots back to Colonial times, while others are the newest immigrants. All can observe and celebrate.

In similar fashion, Hanukkah has become a particularly American Jewish holiday. It is observed in other countries, but the American Hanukkah experience is different. Second only to Passover, it represents one of the most observed Jewish holidays on the calendar.

We have elevated Hanukkah to a far more important holiday than it might deserve to be, but that is okay. We use Hanukkah as a good excuse to celebrate with family and friends. We sing songs, play games, share some favorite foods, and tell stories of the Maccabees.

The Maccabees fought the Syrian Greeks in order to establish the Jerusalem Temple as the home of the One God. Their victory was short lived, however. Less than 250 years later, the Temple was destroyed by the Romans. Worship in the Temple ceased.

In certain ways, the synagogue became the spiritual home for Judaism, but in a far more important sense, our own homes replaced the Temple. *“These rituals remind us that our homes are sacred places where we celebrate with family and friends.”* Our dining room tables are the centers of the key Jewish rituals of Shabbat and Passover. On Hanukkah we gather to light candles, play with dreidels and share special foods. These rituals remind us that our homes are sacred places where we celebrate with family and friends.

This year, with the unique confluence of Thanksgiving and Hanukkah, let us create moments of holiness and blessing for us and for our families and community.

backpacks at strategically placed huts about 30-to-40 miles from the previous location. The huts provided eight dry bunks, a well-stocked array of non-perishable food, and a moderately clean outhouse. With no electricity, but plenty of water, they were a safe haven to recharge and enjoy spectacular vistas amongst the San Juan Mountain range.

Each day provided adventures that ranged from some riders getting lost for four hours without water to a rider suffering a serious wipeout that required five stitches -- administered in the field by a physician who was part of our group.

Amazingly, I seemed to grow stronger as the trip progressed. Despite the fact that I felt physically in shape, I found myself several times searching for the inner strength to justify the pain I was putting myself through. The trip came at the proverbial “bad time,” with a pending career promotion and a heavy business travel schedule. I felt burdened to rationalize a week away from the family to pursue another crazy item on my bucket list.

Searching for a spiritual safe-zone was a daily occurrence, often prompted by the Alan Goodis tune “Shiru L’Adonai” blasting on my iPod. I found myself praying many times during the most grueling parts of several mind-numbing climbs in the burning, midday sun. These prayers weren’t always for the obvious (“God, get me through this”); in many instances, they were for answers to the question: “Why did I do this trip?”

I can’t honestly say that I had a divine moment or a “parting of the sea” intervention. But it’s clear to me in retrospect that, without spiritual aid, this trip would have been significantly less bearable. The simple reality is that this trip was a not-so-subtle reminder that we are dependent on a greater power. I’m fairly certain there isn’t a formal prayer to ask the Almighty for stamina on a mountain-climb or a chain-link replacement. But, in looking back, the spiritual Gatorade that shared my saddlebag with a few bike shorts and a headlamp was a significant force that got me home safely.

Upon greater reflection, there are many common links between my trips and the themes woven into our congregation. From my lens, those who have chosen Sukkat Shalom as their spiritual home bring a level of commitment to community that is not motivated by a public acknowledgment. Much like the tolerant and accepting aura of our congregation, the teams that I have

“Upon greater reflection, there are many common links between my trips and the themes woven into our congregation.”

traveled with supported their fellow enthusiasts unconditionally and with a sense of shared purpose.

These days, silent prayer during our services jogs my memory of sitting at the edge of a canyon rim or a jagged outcrop and not needing to speak, while getting lost in the expansive power of something greater.

Sukkat Shalom: By the Numbers

High Holy Days Attendance

Erev Rosh Hashanah	389
Rosh Hashanah Family Service	399
Rosh Hashanah Adult Service	578
Kol Nidre	569
Yom Kippur Family Service	301
Yom Kippur Adult Service	557
Healing Service.....	137
Yizkor	246
Havdallah	325

Key to Spiritual Learning: Just Do It!

by Alissa Zuchman, Director of Family Education

All of us are shaped by our education, which is why family learning is so central to the mission of Sukkat Shalom. Many of you are aware that I attended the Jewish Theological Seminary/University of Judaism in Los Angeles and was fortunate to receive an outstanding Jewish education. I majored in Bible/Rabbinic Literature and discovered the right to question Torah, argue with God and, most important for me, the need to teach.

I had the opportunity to examine religious texts in their original language and view them with my unique personal lens and point of view. These ancient texts have so much



to offer in our modern, technological world. The question that I continue to ask myself is how to put the wonder of faith and spirituality into the hands of Sukkat Shalom families and get you as excited about it as I always have been.

The Jewish Theological Seminary's Davidson School of Education has been asking these same questions and has begun a new think

tank called "ReFRAME" to explore them. Its purpose is exactly what the name implies -- to look at how to reinvent traditional Jewish education for the 21st century.

“Study after study tells us that what works to bring Jewish education alive is the camp experience and trips to Israel.”

Too often and for too long, religious education has been taught in the same way – despite huge changes in our culture and technology. So many parents say to their children, “I had to suffer through Sunday School and so do you.” This attitude needs to change.

Study after study tells us that what works to bring Jewish education alive is the camp experience and trips to Israel. I translate that to mean that experiential education is the best way to impart the beauty of our traditions to our children and families -- not by

just talking about it, but by doing it.

The reason that camps are so successful, besides the obvious appeal of trees, lakes, sports and friends, is that the students are living their Judaism. They are not just talking about Shabbat, but getting dressed up, singing, eating and celebrating. All of the senses are brought into play and the need to explain becomes moot.

With limited time during the school year -- and no ready access to cabins, water-skis and horseback riding -- Family School cannot replicate camp. But we can use the effectiveness of experiential learning to change how we teach.

I believe that a spiritual education has something important to offer, and the most important responsibility I have is to ensure that this education is vibrant, creative, inspiring, relevant, thorough and meaningful. I look forward to meeting this challenge, and I welcome your thoughts, ideas and advice.

Life After Family School: Alex Robb and Jimmy Rothschild

Following graduation from Brown University in May of 2008, **Alex Robb** spent a year taking additional science classes at Connecticut College, where he was an assistant coach to the men's and women's water polo teams. He also worked as a volunteer in an animal rescue clinic in Providence, Rhode Island.

The following fall, Alex entered the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University in Grafton, Massachusetts. He received his Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine in May of this year. While living in nearby Wellesley, Massachusetts, he coached the Wellesley College women's water polo club team for two seasons.

During his summer breaks at vet school, Alex participated in trips to Guatemala, Nicaragua and Costa Rica with World Vets to provide free veterinary care in impoverished communities. He currently has a veterinary internship in emergency and critical care at the Wheatridge Veterinary Hospital in Denver, Colorado, where he focuses on small animals.

Alex is engaged to marry Jenna Tjossem next August in Vail, Colorado. Jenna is currently in her third year of medical school at the University of Colorado.

After graduating from Evanston High School, **Jimmy Rothschild** attended Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. He majored in religion -- in part because of an interest sparked by Sukkat Shalom's partnerships with other faith communities. As a junior in college, he spent a semester in Namibia studying global development.

After his graduation from Carleton in 2012, Jimmy moved to Madison, Wisconsin, and began working as an implementation consultant at Epic Systems, a medical records software company. Jimmy enjoys his work and loves living in Madison, where he remains a Bears fan in Packers country.

[If you have a post-graduate you would like to highlight in our newsletter, please contact Judy Buckman.]



Tikkun Olam

Repair the World

“Share the Harvest” of Thanksgiving Blessings on November 17th

As the leaves turn color and the temperature starts to drop, I am reminded of the warmth in the hearts of our congregation. Last year, through the generosity of members of Sukkat Shalom, we supplied Thanksgiving dinners to 54 families (276 people) who otherwise would have lacked food for their holiday table.

This year, we ask you once again to join us as we “Share the Harvest” by working with three local agencies to help our neighbors in need. Collection will take place before Family School on Sunday, November 17, at the Wilmette Community Recreation Center. For more information or to sign up, please contact the temple office.



Touchpoints Initiative Moving Forward; Volunteer Drivers Needed

by Beth Gomberg-Hirsh,
Co-Chair of the Hineinu (We Are Here) Committee

A friend recently sent me this quote from the famous American-Jewish theologian and philosopher, Abraham Joshua Heschel:

"The task of a lifetime is to face sacred moments."

I think this speaks eloquently to our new Touchpoints initiative, as our congregational community attempts to face those sacred moments together. In late-September, 58 people attended the Touchpoints kick-off event. The guest speaker, Rabbi Richard Address, spoke about "sacred aging" and the challenges we face on our life's journey. Four breakout sessions followed on various aspects of life's transitions. It was a stimulating afternoon that opened a conversation containing many questions.

We are following up with more events to continue this conversation. Rabbi Marc Rothschild will lead a workshop on writing ethical wills. And we are scheduling a speaker after the New Year who will explore issues of aging as a community and in our individual relationships.

Several of our Sunday morning Caffeine for the Brain speakers and other guests will be touching on relevant subjects that can be explored through follow-up discussion groups, if so desired. Some of these include: (Dec. 8) Rabbi Daniel Greyber, *Faith Unravels*; (Jan. 12) Letty Cottin Pogrebin., *How to be a Friend to a Friend Who is Sick*; (Jan. 25) Patricia Gottlieb Shapiro, *The Privilege of Aging*. We welcome any ideas or suggestions for the Touchpoints initiative, and look forward to your participation.

Meanwhile, the Hineinu Committee continues its monthly delivery of Shabbat bags to those congregants who have experienced a loss or a recent birth. We are always in need of driver/deliverers, so please call the temple office to volunteer.

We are also trying to set up a bank of drivers who might be willing to pick up congregants who are no longer able to drive, especially to nighttime events, and thus are unable to attend. If you would be interested in getting rides or occasionally providing them, please contact one of the co-chairs. It is our goal to make our community inclusive, accessible and available to everyone.

Members of the Hineinu Committee wish you a joyous "Thanksgivukkah" -- a once-in-a-lifetime experience. May you enjoy latkes with your turkey!

Sukkat Shalom's New Spiritual Home Wins Preservation Award



Rabbi Gordon and Board President Fred Wilson accept an award last month from the Wilmette Historical Society for the re-use and sensitive historical renovation of an existing structure -- the former Christian Science Church that is now Congregation Sukkat Shalom. Mazel tov to all who were involved in that sacred project.

Musical Notes: Finding Our Voice as a Community and Congregation

by Alan Goodis, Music Specialist

It's hard for me to remember a time when music wasn't part of my life. I have fond memories of riding in the *way-back* seat of a station wagon with my pre-school carpool buddies, singing at the top of my lungs.

When I turned six, my grandpa gave me my first guitar. I started taking lessons, learned a few chords and how to strum and pluck along to simple songs like *This Land is Your Land*, *Get Back* and *Take Me Out to the Ballgame*. For my 12th birthday, I got my first electric guitar. I grew my hair long and learned to play Jimi Hendrix and Nirvana

songs. This went on for most of my teenage years. I was finding my voice.

I went to URJ Goldman Union Camp in Zionsville, Indiana, for the first time when I was four years old. My mom, a Jewish educator, went to camp to serve on the faculty for two weeks and brought my sister and me along. I was hooked immediately. I loved swimming in the pool, playing on the sports

field, chasing the fireflies and making s'mores around the campfire. But what I loved most of all was the sound of camp.

More often than not, that sound was singing. Music was everywhere. First thing in the morning, the entire camp would gather and sing morning blessings. At the end of every meal, at services in the outdoor sanctuary, at campfires and even before bed each night, we would sing.

This music was different than anything I had ever heard before. It wasn't one voice singing to a room full of people. It was every voice singing together. What I came to realize, as I got older, was that we weren't just creating a sound together; our sound was creating a community.

My professional life now is rooted largely in building relationships and community through music. I give concerts and lead services and workshops about 150 times a year all over the country -- at synagogues, conferences and summer camps. I feel really fortunate to be able to do this work because it gives me a unique

perspective on what's happening in Jewish communities around the country. It allows me to grow and continually challenge myself to re-imagine what worship and music can sound like.



Last January I visited Sukkat Shalom's Family School for the first time to give a concert for Tu Bishvat. I had a blast! There was great energy in the sanctuary -- a sense of connection and real community. It was clear to me immediately that Sukkat Shalom is a special place.

It often seems easier to build community at a summer camp than it is in a temple.

At camp, people are away from home, living in close quarters, eating together, praying together and doing pretty


much everything together. I am constantly asking myself, what makes this so difficult to replicate?

A friend posed this question to me in a different way: "How much community can people actually build on a Friday night between the Bar'chu and a brownie?" It's a great question, and one I often think about.

This year at Sukkat Shalom I am approaching this challenge of building community with open arms. I look forward to meeting and singing with you at Family School, once a month for Shabbat services and at other special events. In singing together, we will find our voice.

"...we weren't just creating a sound together; our sound was creating a community."

"How much community can people actually build on a Friday night between the Bar'chu and a brownie?"



CONGREGATION
SUKKAT SHALOM

CONGREGATION SUKKAT SHALOM
1001 CENTRAL AVENUE
WILMETTE, ILLINOIS 60091
847/ 251-2675
www.sukkatshalom.org

Rabbi Samuel Gordon
Executive Director Judy Buckman
Cantorial Soloist Adam Davis
Director of
Family Education Alissa Zuchman
President Fred Wilson
Vice President Jill Schoeneman-Parker
Treasurer Joel Fliegel
Secretary Cary Nathenson

Beth Gombert-Hirsch
Clive Hohberger
Ken Kraus
Pamela Kraus
Ken Obel
Miles Paris
Anne Ryan
Marilyn Schonthal
Debra Shore

Jesse Peterson Hall, Ex Officio President
Liz Sciortino, Ex-Officio President
Jane Rothschild, Ex-Officio President
Andrew Werth, Ex-Officio, President
Matt Baker, Ex-Officio, President

Bulletin Editor John Kupper
Layout and Design Deborah Harris