

# Kayruv



# קירוב

**“Judaism for Today In a Warm and Caring Environment”**

December 2015

*Kislev/Tevet 5776*

## FROM THE RABBI



Dear Friends,

There is an old tradition in Judaism – it is roughly 200 years old – that anything that happens in the week can be connected, somehow, to the Torah

portion. In *Pirkei Avot*<sup>1</sup> we have the saying, attributed to Ben Bag Bag, “*hafoch bah, hafoch ba shekulei bah*” - turn it and turn it because all is in it. This is referring to Torah.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Rabbi's Message	Pg. 1
President's Message	Pg. 5
Looking Ahead	Pg. 6
In the Community	Pg. 7
Schedule of Services	Pg. 9

***Kayruv* means “Welcoming.”**

After Wednesday, the connection I found was the despair of Jacob regarding Yosef's death. And mind you, we readers know he was not dead. But to his father, an animal had attacked and eaten him. He goes into such an enormous and deep depression that the *midrash*<sup>2</sup> has the family bringing a young girl, Serah bat Asher, to sing to Jacob that Yosef is alive. They do that, and she begins slowly, and slowly because after twenty-two years of depression the family is afraid that the sudden news will make him have a heart attack. This is how deeply a loss is felt.

Now we know – you have heard it 100 times, and will hear it for another 100 – that each person is a world<sup>3</sup>. Whoever kills one human being kills a world entire. And I am sure that we all felt that when I read, before the Torah reading, the little snippets of the fourteen lives cut short. All these worlds were destroyed, as you know, last Wednesday.

We could have expected it. We, in America. It was just a matter of time for something more horrific and more deadly than Sandy Hook to happen.

But on that Wednesday there were other shootings, that I am quite sure you haven't heard of. Earlier that day, there had been a shooting in Houston, and later, a shooting in

<sup>1</sup> 5:26

<sup>2</sup> Midrash ha-Gadol on Gen. 45:26

<sup>3</sup> Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 37a

Savannah. And, let's not forget, all these came on the heels of the shooting at the Planned Parenthood center in Colorado Springs.

If you understand a mass shooting as an event where a shooter targets and wounds at least four people, since January 1<sup>st</sup> there have been 355 mass shootings in America. In 2014 we finished the year, by that same definition, with 336 events.

In 2015, of the three hundred fifty-five mass shootings, fifty-two of them happened in a school, and left thirty dead and fifty-three injured. And if you want to argue that this is a loose definition...and that to define a shooting you want someone to die...I just want to point out that those who didn't die were shot all the same, and that the fact that they didn't die hinges more on our advances in urgent medical care than in the intentions of the shooter.

And those wounded will never be the same, some paralyzed for the rest of their lives, some with PTSD and a host of other possible problems and conditions.

At the beginning of this year, a few of my colleagues decided that every week they would research as best they could and read a list of those killed by guns in America. If I had done that, we would have read a list like we did today at every Shabbat. Every Shabbat would be marked as a moment of mourning. The single exception was between April 8 and April 15, when for an entire 8 days there was no mass shooting. When I heard of this initiative, I decided I could not do it that frequently – for the simple fact that it transforms Shabbat and colors the entire week. Shabbat, in my opinion, is supposed to be a reprieve from the week. But there are exceptions. There must be exceptions.

Some of my colleagues, however, say they do it by rote. They don't really feel that much compassion anymore. Because there is a limit – a personal one, for sure – above which any

tragedy becomes so common, and so expected, that it is just another part of the service. A part of our lives.

Mass shootings, my friends, are not tsunamis nor earthquakes, not tornadoes and not volcano explosions, not tree fallings nor lightning – for all those, which we cannot prevent in any way, shape or form, we can only send thoughts and prayers and after-the-fact material support to the families. Prayers and thoughts are important in the case of mass shootings, but so is action.

Our action. We are, according to our tradition, obligated to protest.

There is a piece of Talmud – Shabbat 54b – that affirms that “Whoever can stop his household [from doing something wrong] but does not, is punished for [the wrongdoing of] his household; if he can prevent his fellow citizens, he is punished for the sins of his fellow citizens; if the whole world, he is punished for the sins of the whole world” because if you have a voice, and don't use it, you are holding, carrying, the sins that you could have prevented.

Dr. Aryeh Cohen, who taught me that piece, affirmed that in a democratic society, where we all vote, we all have a voice, we all can protest against wrongdoing – we are all, every single one of us, responsible. We carry the wrongdoings against which we don't protest.

All shootings have something in common, whether they are politically motivated, or a personal grievance; whether they only wound four or kill one, or they kill fourteen adults and wound twenty-one; or kill twenty children and wound six adults ... Yes, the third anniversary of Sandy Hook is upon us in ten days.

All of them have one thing in common – guns. There is an incredibly easy access to guns in this country, and an ever-growing sense that you don't need to voice your opinions, nor discuss them. You only need a gun.

America is exceptional. It truly is in many ways, and I am not being facetious when I say that. I owe my entire rabbinic career to America. This week, however, I saw yet another reason why America is exceptional.

It is exceptionally easy to die by gunshot in America, compared to any other advanced country. Twenty times easier.

In a poll of thirty-two countries, only Mexico ranks higher than the US in terms of gun deaths – and Mexico is not on the list of “advanced” countries. We, my friends, are exceptional.

With three hundred fifty-five mass shootings this year alone, with an average of one gun per citizen, we live in a country where any altercation in traffic can turn deadly.

This year, we had two citizens in Florida who disputed a parking space. Both had guns in their car. Both shot. Both died. This was not a mass shooting.

In Mississippi a man was told by a waitress that he could not smoke in a Waffle House. He shot and killed her. This was not a mass shooting.

Stories like this abound. The fact that anyone, regardless of their previous behavior, is able to purchase a gun at any time leads to fifty-two women being shot and killed by their domestic partners every month. Yes, that is almost two per day. Not mass shootings.

It is because guns are everywhere that the first forty-three weeks of 2015 had an equal amount of shooting accidents by toddlers aged three or younger. In thirty-one of those forty-three cases, a toddler found a gun and shot himself or herself. One toddler shooting per week. Not mass shooting.

Guns killed more Americans in the last twelve years than AIDS, war, and illegal drug overdoses combined in the same period.

It is amazing to me that the same legislators that can deem everyone at risk, if it suits them politically, cannot admit risk in the case of guns. Thirty-two babies and toddlers died in ten years because of drop-side cribs, and those cribs were banned. In the last ten years, 28,000 children died due to gun shots. Not a change in sight for guns. To certain legislators, guns don't kill people; people who don't have guns allow themselves to be killed. The only solution, for them, is to make even more guns available.

What can YOU do? You, each and every one of you, can protest. You can call your representatives. You can search the internet for petitions towards gun control – every week, I assure you, I sign one. You can donate to groups that gather to put pressure to find solutions for this problem, which has nothing to do with taking away rights. You can e-mail your congressperson. You can call those who are the ones you deem responsible to protect and care for you by making laws. You can and should scream.

What you cannot do, as a Jew, and as a decent person, is to allow yourself to fall silent.

Do not be convinced by those seeking yet another rationalization for this shooting.

Those who say we can only offer prayers and thoughts really imagine that there is no correlation between the presence of guns and guns being used against people, and this simply flies in the face of statistics.

Those who say we can only offer prayers and thoughts, that we should not make these tragedies political really are the only ones who benefit from not making it political. They are the ones receiving anywhere between 5 and 30,000 dollars from the NRA for their campaign funds. Because of their pockets, they would rather convince you that nothing can be done. They are selling innocent lives for money – as our haftarah mentions.

Those who say we can only offer prayers and thoughts really imagine that if someone has a motive, nothing will stand in their way. Not true. Motives matter, and we should talk about motives in another moment, but access and availability of guns matter more. Sure, there is more to the story behind the San Bernardino attack than guns, as there was more behind Sandy Hook, as there was more behind the Umpqua Community College, as there was more behind Charleston and all the others.

But being able to get guns, and not just one or two, but 14, 15 military grade weapons; is an appalling, humongous piece of those stories. They make it easier to destroy, and kill, and maim, regardless of what you think, want or need. But diminishing the number of guns on the streets is possible.

After a mass shooting in 1996, which killed thirty-five and wounded twenty-three, Australia banned most private gun sales, bought back hundreds of thousands of firearms, and severely restricted who was legally allowed to own them. It hasn't had a mass shooting since. The political process took all of twelve days.

In 1987 the UK saw a mass shooting. Fifteen killed and fifteen wounded. The horror repeated itself in 1996, when sixteen elementary school children and their teacher were killed before the shooter committed suicide. On both occasions gun legislation was passed, and gun violence in general dropped in the UK. In all of England and Wales, fifty-nine people died by gunfire in 2011.

Japan, where guns are incredibly difficult to find, sees two gun homicides a year – and in 2006, when eleven of those happened, it became a national scandal.

So it can be done. It is not impossible. As with any man-made tragedy, there are man-made solutions. Do not look at these tragedies as a tsunami.

This is man-made.  
You must act.  
Rabbi Nelly Altenburger

## **DONATIONS NEEDED!**



### **FOR OUR LOCAL FOOD PANTRIES!**

This is CBI's ongoing project to help our local food pantries. Items most in need are dried/canned beans, canned fish, peanut butter, jelly, fruit juice, sugar, flour, personal care items such as soap and shampoo. (The pantries get cereal, canned veggies and rice from area supermarkets.)

CBI is a generous and caring community and as always, we thank you for your donations and support as they are truly appreciated.



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## FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

Ordinarily, I would start this column off with some thank-yous for something big and bold. For example, I would relate the story of Rabbi Altenburger's very sudden departure for Brazil

three weeks ago after her mother's injury and hospitalization (recovering well since, thank goodness), and how Sarah Namer put together a marvelous Shabbat morning service with all the trimmings in less than 48 hours, including an erudite *d'var torah* by Rochelle Hutchings and knock-your-socks-off Torah reading by Howard Weiner. I'd be sure to include my awe and gratitude for the "depth of our bench".

I'd follow up with some thank-yous for something new and innovative. For example, I'd mention the new Spirituality Forum starting up this month that Rochelle Hutchings and Paul M Simon are facilitating on Saturday afternoons at 1:00 P.M. after the kiddush. It's an opportunity for Jewish spiritual exploration and discussion in a relaxed and informal setting, with the potential to make connections to others in the broader Jewish community beyond our members, since we're advertising it both inside and outside B'nai Israel. I'd encourage you to join me, because I plan on being a regular myself.

Well, that's what I would ordinarily do. But last week I read a thoughtful and thought-provoking column by Arthur C. Brooks in the November 21<sup>st</sup> New York Times titled "Choose to Be Grateful. It Will Make You Happier" that has me pondering an intriguing idea: that regardless of how we feel (even if we're a bit grumpy about having to come up with an article for the Kayruv every month, as a completely random example), experiencing and expressing gratitude can make us happier and bring out the best in those around us. Mr. Brooks ends the article with

an admonition to give thanks for the small, easily overlooked things in life: "truly happy people find ways to give thanks for the little, insignificant trifles."

Who doesn't want to be truly happy? I'll sign up for that! So let's try this out on all of the innumerable, infinitesimal details of life here at B'nai Israel, and see how it goes. I'd like to thank the people who stick around after the kiddush on Saturday afternoons and help clean up. I'm indebted to all the folks who keep an eye on the kids (like my daughter) when they're running around, keep them safe, and keep a lid on the overall level of havoc. I'd like to praise the people who make a point of reaching out to newcomers, introducing themselves and schmoozing. It's wonderful that so many of our members get together outside of shul, invite each other over for dinner and go out to events together. I'm tremendously grateful to everyone who visits the sick and comforts the bereaved. I really appreciate those folks who just go out and get stuff for the synagogue, or see something that needs to be fixed and fix it. And I can't thank enough those congregants who never kvetch, are always willing to help out, and who always seem to have a kind word and a cheerful disposition. Yes, really, there are quite a few of them!

I could go on and on, but I'm already seeing a pattern: every single one of these acts of kindness may be individually small and easy to take for granted, but collectively, they make our congregation a warm, welcoming, and wonderfully caring place to be. Hey, it works! Thanks, Mr. Brooks—I feel happier already!

Together with gratitude and thanksgiving,

Kennis Koldewyn

## LOOKING AHEAD

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR EVENTS COMING UP!

#### January 29, 2016 Foods by Dudes

Join us for the annual **Peter Ohring Foods by Dudes Dinner!** A culinary delight of scrumptious delicacies! Our wonderful “dude” chefs will be making a meal from soup to nuts. This event has become one of CBI’s favorite and most anticipated events. Everyone is welcome. Bring your friends, neighbors or co-workers and introduce them to B’nai Israel.

Time will be announced in next month’s Kayrux.

**Cost:** \$12.00/adult, \$25.00/families.

**RSVP** is a **MUST** by January 25, 2016 to help our chefs plan their menu needs.

#### Super Bowl “50”



Get ready for **Super Bowl “50”**. This year the game will be held on **Sunday, February 7, 2016**. We will be awarding a first place cash prize of \$600.00 as well as a half-time prize of \$150.00. The price of boxes is the same as previous years, **\$50.00 for one** and **\$100.00 for three**. We will be following the same ground rules as we have in past years. The random selection of boxes will be made at the synagogue on the morning of February 7<sup>th</sup>.

We plan to email each participant, whose email address we have, a copy of the grid indicating which boxes belong to whom.

### Stew Leonard's Gift Card Fundraising Program



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## IN THE COMMUNITY

### PJ Library Hanukkah Party





### ***A BRIGHTER CHANUKAH FOR ALL***

*Have you ever noticed that people seem to be more caring in December? Whether it's holding a door open or giving a friendly smile, there is something about getting ready to celebrate Chanukah that makes us act a little kinder. We are getting in the spirit of giving as well.*

*Giving Chanukah gelt to children-it's one of our beloved Chanukah traditions, along with lighting the menorah, eating latkes and playing dreidel. But there's another Chanukah tradition that we cherish: donating gelt as an act of tzedakah for those in need.*

*Each night, as we light the candles of the menorah, we are illuminated with warmth, both physically and emotionally...but not everyone is as fortunate. This year, as you set aside gelt for your own family, I ask that you think about setting aside a bit more for the Jewish Federation of Western CT. Because through Federation, your gelt can make an impact around the globe, helping people who are truly in need.*

*When you give gelt to Federation, you are bringing light and warmth into Jewish lives here in our community and in over 60 countries around the world. Your gelt is bringing food and comfort to the elderly in the Ukraine and trauma counseling to families in Southern Israel.*

*But you don't need to look far to see a family whose life could change with your gift of Chanukah gelt. Just beyond your own menorah-lit window, in our own communities, there are so many people in need.*

*Your support of the Federation today will make a difference for the vulnerable in our communities-and the entire Jewish community-in countless ways. By helping a hungry family buy dinner, by warming a young child shivering in bed on a cold winter's night, or by giving an extra hand to a working mom just trying to make ends meet, your gift to the Federation builds a community at home, in Israel and worldwide.*

*So this Chanukah, give what gelt you can to Federation. To each of the Jews being helped, your gelt is more than a holiday tradition. It is their security net. It is their means of survival.*

*Give generously; you may be surprised how much you get in return from helping your Jewish community! And when you give by December 31, your gift is tax deductible. Wishing you and your family a Chanukah filled with much happiness.*

*Chag Sameach,  
Lisa Miller, Federation President*



## SCHEDULE OF SHABBAT SERVICES

☆ **Shabbat, 30 Kislev, December 12, Miketz:**  
Joseph's powers as a dream interpreter bring him to Pharaoh. *Haftarah:* Zechariah 2:14-4:7

☆ **Shabbat, 7 Tevet, December 19, Vayigash:**  
Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and reunites with his father. *Haftarah:* Ezek. 37:15-28

☆ **Shabbat, 14 Tevet, December 26, Vayhi:**  
Jacob blesses his sons before he dies.  
*Haftarah:* 1 Kings 2:1-12

☆ **Shabbat, 21 Tevet, January 2, 2016: Sh'mot:**  
The Israelites are enslaved and Moshe is called by God to confront Pharaoh.  
*Haftarah:* Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23

☆ **Shabbat, 28 Tevet, January 9, 2016: Va'era:**  
**Va'era:** Pharaoh refuses to set the Israelites free and Egypt is beset with plagues.  
*Haftarah:* Ezek. 28:25-29:21

## CANDLE LIGHTING

December 11, 2015:	4:06 P.M.
December 18, 2015:	4:08 P.M.
December 25, 2015:	4:11 P.M.
January 1, 2015:	4:17 P.M.
January 8, 2015:	4:23 P.M.

## YAHARZEITS

### 3 Tevet, December 15, 2015

Pearl Winkelstein (Susan Tritter)

### 6 Tevet, December 18, 2015

Simon Markind (Sam Markind)

### 9 Tevet, December 21, 2015

Lila Adams (F. Richard Steinberg)

### 10 Tevet, December 22, 2015

David Lampell (Shalom Lampell)

### 11 Tevet, December 23, 2015

Ralph Blumenthal (Susan Tritter)

### 13 Tevet, December 25, 2015

Israel Nurenberg (Carol Nurenberg)

### 19 Tevet, December 31, 2015

David Slavin (Natalie Slavin & Evelyn Weinstein)

### 20 Tevet, January 1, 2016

Anna Berman (Sol Berman)

### 22 Tevet, January 3, 2016

Norman Bass (Gail Boms)

### 28 Tevet, January 9, 2016

Chaim Berman (Sol Berman)

## THANKS! THANKS!

### For the General Fund

☆ Barbara Weisblatt in memory of Sol Lepson and Cheryl's husband Richard

### For Their Generous Kiddush

☆ Doreen Waver

☆ The Altenburger's in honor of Michaela, Nathaniel, Elliott and Ariella's birthdays

☆ Paul M Simon in memory of his parents

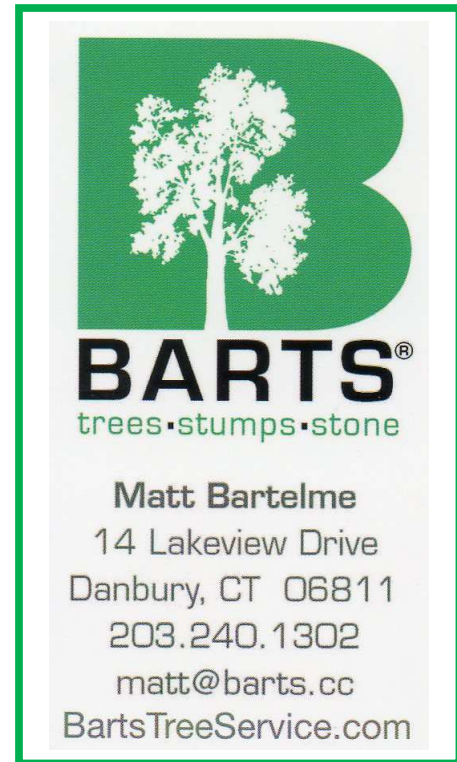
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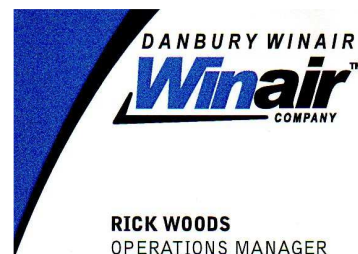
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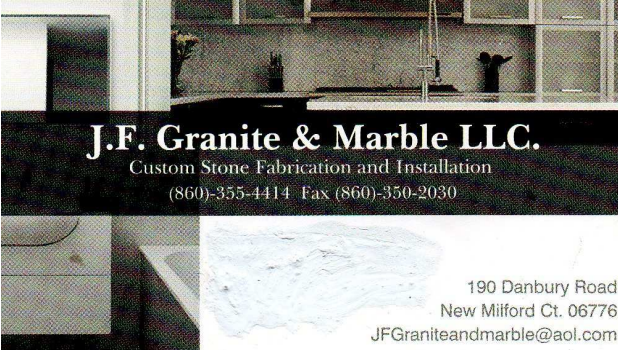
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