

The Shofar

Seasonal News for the Synagogue of the Hills

bhshul1@gmail.com

Synagogue of the Hills - 417 North 40th Street - Rapid City, SD 57702
(605) 348-0805

www.synagogueofthehills.org

It's Chanukah and I Am Confused

So here we are again my friends, it's that time to remember, the story of the Maccabees defeat of the Syrians as we dust off and polish our *Chanukiot* (you know, that eight candle candelabra), grate the potatoes and chop the onions, get out the fry pans and fire them up – I can almost taste the

latkes as they sizzle in the hot oil. In this brief introductory sentence we glean the overlying themes of this joyous holiday – the miraculous defeat of a foe by the few and the miracle of the oil



(OK, so it wasn't sizzling per se,) where we are told that a single cruse of oil sufficient to burn for one night, instead lit up the darkness for eight nights (fake news?). The irony is, of course, that while not a biblical holiday (true 'dat as nowhere in the Torah is Chanukah mentioned) Chanukah has taken on an exaggerated importance perhaps because of the temporal relationship to the Christian winter festival.

How lucky can we be, after all, this year the two winter holidays, Chanukah and Christmas are far enough apart so that we don't get the "isn't Chanukah just Jewish Christmas?" *schtick*. And wait, do we really have to sit through another rendition of Adam Sandler's extolling the virtues of both

his *yarmulka* and a harmonica? No matter how one spells Chanukah (Hanukah, Hanukkah, Chanukah), the question remains WHY? Why do we, the Jewish people celebrate the Festival of lights?

The story of Chanukah dates back to 167 BCE when the Syrian Emperor Antiochus set out to destroy Judaism (one of many personages with a similar, but failed agenda) and the Jewish people by making its observance a capital offense. The Temple was bathed in the blood of pigs and Jews tortured and executed for carrying out religious practices. The scene was ripe for the emergence of a hero, a hero named Mattathias and his five sons, along with their followers known as Maccabees, who initiated and prosecuted the successful revolt against the Syrian monarchy thereby defeating Antiochus and his troops.

I would respectfully submit that the celebration of Chanukah is more than just a

celebration of the miracle of the oil which burned for eight days instead of just one and the celebration of a military victory where a small ragtag group of Maccabees was able to fight off a larger, stronger and better trained Syrian army.

Truth be told, the Jews were neither enslaved or expelled from Judea. Rather the goal of the Syrians was to eliminate Judaism,

to make the Jews no different than any other idolatrous nations. Many Jews assimilated and became one of "them" while the others, refused and banded together

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with Mattathias and his sons to become the Maccabees. As Rabbi Menken notes "we recite in our prayers, 'G-d gave the strong into the hands of the weak, the many to the few, the impure to the pure, the wicked to the righteous, those who provoke to those who involve themselves with Your Torah.'" Yes,

Chanukah, our Festival of Lights, is meant to illuminate the darkness with the strength of our Judaism, not to compete with the lights of our neighbors. The war and the oil are the tangible events that we associate with the victory over those who sought to destroy us by assimilation. Chanukah is a celebration designed to remind us to appreciate the freedom we have to live our lives with purpose and security.

Chag Sameach

Steven Benn, President



A holiday message from Rabbi Rachel



s the days grow shorter, and the nights seem interminably long, the Festival of Lights, Hanukkah, will soon be upon us and Jews

worldwide will be lighting our Hanukkiyot, frying our latkes and gorging on sufganiyot (Hanukkah doughnuts). How very human is it to want to shine light into the darkest nights? Also, who wouldn't love a festival that celebrates the beauty of oil in all things! But where do these rituals come from? The lighting of Hanukkah candles is traced to what's known as the miracle of the oil: After the Maccabees reclaimed the Temple, the story goes, they found a small amount of oil permissible for lighting the sacred sanctuary lamp — enough for just one day. Miraculously, it lasted eight. Jews thus light candles on eight successive nights to recall this great miracle.

Yet, whether the miracle really happened is questionable, and not just because of the empirically proven limits of combustible liquid. As scholars have long noted, there's no reference to the miracle in early sources based on firsthand accounts, including the first book of Maccabees, an insider history written to glorify the new dynasty and its achievements, nor the second book of Maccabees, also a historical account written close to the time of the revolt, although from the diaspora.

The miraculous-oil story seems to be a rabbinic invention transmitted hundreds of years after it allegedly occurred. After the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 CE., the Jews were expelled and religious authority was transferred from Temple priests to diaspora rabbis, who came to codify the Babylonian Talmud as a central text of Jewish law, ethics and customs. In the middle of the Talmudic tractate discussing the proper way to light candles on the Sabbath, as a footnote that seems almost an afterthought, the rabbis included a discussion of Hanukkah candle-lighting along with a telling of the miracle of the oil. It's this written account that made the story last.

Though the miracle of the oil may be a much later Rabbinic invention--a beautiful fairytale if you will--I believe that there is still something miraculous to be found in the history of the holiday. There was indeed a Maccabean revolt, the result of which was the founding of a sovereign Jewish nation that existed from 140-37 BCE. Though this may feel like a small period of time, let's remember that such a nation would not exist again until the State of Israel was created in 1948. The miracle that is overthrowing oppressive regimes and succeeding, the miracle of Jewish survival throughout a tumultuous history, these are the real miracles of Hanukkah. That, and the latkes.



Wishing you all the happiest of Hanukkahs this year!
Student Rabbi Taylor Baruchel

Journey



Georgette and Phil traveled to Georgette's homeland to participate in the rededication of an early 19th century synagogue. Here are a few of her photographs and the story of their extraordinary trip.



Phil and I just returned from Morocco where we attended the rededication of a beautiful small synagogue in the town of Essaouira. Our friend, Haim Bitton, took on this project some years ago with the goal



of not only saving his childhood synagogue which dated from the early 1800's but also of keeping alive the presence of Judaism in 'Mogador' as it was known in antiquity. Before 1960, the Jewish quarter (Mellah) housed a large vibrant community of Yehudim, the name for Jews in the local Moroccan Arabic dialect. And at one time, Mogador

reputedly had more Jews than Muslims. The joke then was that you might have a difficult time finding a Muslim in Mogador.



Today Essaouira is a charming coastal port city with massive ancient ramparts and a very intriguing old market (Medina). The historic Jewish quarters lay along the famous sea wall. Mogador is also where my mother was born and ,in her youth, it



seemed that every corner in the neighborhood had its own house of prayer. Essaouira at one time boasted 28 synagogues. SLAT LKAHAL, the focus of Haim's work, is just such a neighborhood synagogue. I will try to provide a more detailed history of this amazing shul later when Haim Bitton and I write an article.



The inauguration coincided with "Le Festival Des Andalouses Atlantiques", four days filled with of music, discussion groups and much dancing and singing till the early morning hours. This

event each year highlights many forms of music and dance from the region surrounding Essaouira. This year, the central theme was the collaboration of Muslims and Jews in sharing traditional forms of music throughout Essaouira's and Morocco's long history. Musicians and other participants also worked to create a path for the



younger generations of

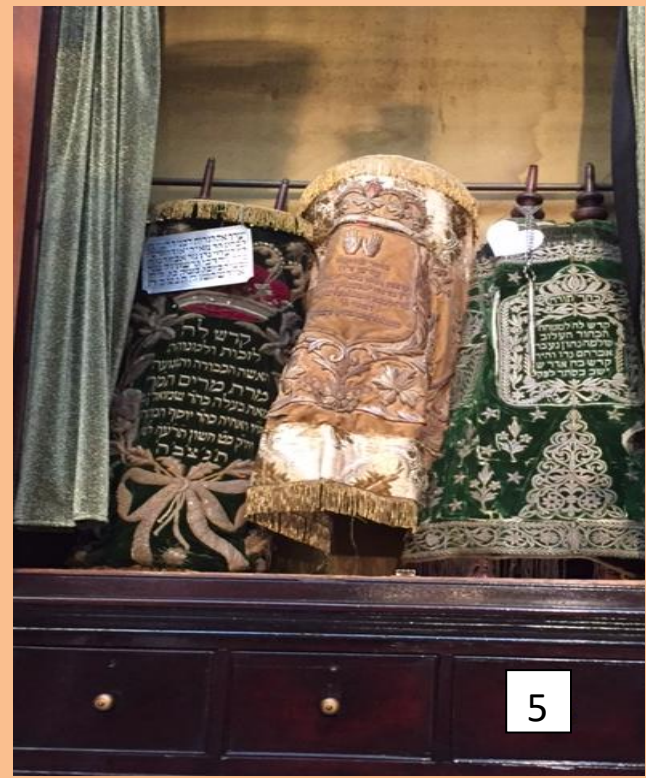
both faiths to start sharing their own music and new customs. I will include some photos but the fuller story will have to wait for a future Shofar.



Besides spending time in Essaouira, I traveled to Tangiers where I visited the beautiful and well maintained main synagogue and also the old Jewish cemetery. Next, I ventured to Casablanca where I revisited my father's grave. He died in 1959 and the Jewish cemetery where he is buried is still in use.



I will share one more small observation. Several Mellahs and synagogues I visited are right on the water, next to the sea wall or beach. I am not sure if they knew at the time that waterfront property would be so sought after in future times or if they lived close to the water to facilitate a hasty exit in troubled time.



There is a video of the inauguration in which everyone is speaking French. Here is the link for those who are interested. You can also check out Slat Lkahal's website.

<https://ben-bitton87.wistia.com/medias/hncwp3azhe>

1. From the window looking at the ramparts and the ocean.
2. Photos of the newly inaugurated Synagogue Slat lKahal in Essaouira with details of the new Taiba or bema - the details are replicated exactly as the destroyed one. The floor tiles are also exact replicas of the originals.
3. Entrance door to the neighborhood synagogue in the Mellah or Jewish quarters.
4. Eating dafina at the Shabbat lunch with our Muslim friends
5. The affluent Synagogue in Tangiers

You and your family are invited to our home for an evening of good food, catching up with friends, and in general, just having a night out during the dark of winter! It's open house but an RSVP would be nice. Call and leave a message, (605) 342-1761 **Michele and Dave**

TIME: 6 PM to 10 PM, December 17, 2017

LOCATION: 1101 Ridgeland Loop, Rapid City, SD

(Directions from Rapid City. Go west on Omaha, which turns into Chicago, which turns into South Canyon Road which turns into Nemo Road. About three miles out of town you will see an interpretive site on the left, immediately followed by a left turn lane onto Schroeder Road, turn left onto Schroeder. Take it as it winds around the top of the plateau. Towards the end you will go down into a small ravine, first left, then right then left. As you come out of the ravine, after the left, Ridgeland Loop is almost immediately to the right. Turn right there, go about 100 yards then turn left as the road forks. Go up the hill, our drive way is marked with a long string of blue lights. Park on the right side of that road.)



INVITATION to Interfaith Day for the start of the 2018 Legislative Session



South Dakota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

November 20, 2017

*"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you...
and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." - Genesis 12:2,3*

Dear Senator Adelstein:

Grace and peace be with you from the God who calls us into dialogue with our neighbor.

On January 10, 2018, the South Dakota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota will be hosting an Interfaith Day at the State Capitol in Pierre for the start of the 2018 Legislative Session.

While God calls for us to serve the neighbor, we believe that to serve the neighbor is to listen attentively and to care actively about the whole person and the quality of their life in the whole community. We would be grateful if you would join us, and other faith leaders, for a day at the Capitol as we stand in solidarity for all those who call South Dakota home.

The schedule for the day is as follows:

- 9:00 AM** - Morning Coffee and Briefing at Lutheran Memorial Church in Pierre, SD
- 9:30 AM** - Meet in the Capitol Building Rotunda
- 10:30 AM** - Morning Prayer and Introductions.
 - Following the morning prayer, lunch (kosher and halal) will be served at Lutheran Memorial Church.
- 12:00 PM** - Legislative Session Begins.
 - Please be in location by the House or Senate for introductions
- 1:00 PM** - State of the Judiciary by Chief Justice Gilbertson

We hope that you will be able to accept this invitation and extend our invite to those in your faith community to represent our journey for peace and unity among all. Please respond regarding your availability by email to Sawyer Vanden Heuvel (svandenheuvel@sdsynod.org) or call 605-274-5035 by **December 8, 2017**.

In His Holy Name,

Bishop David B. Zellmer
South Dakota Synod, ELCA

Betty Oldenkamp, President & CEO
Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota

RECEIVED

NOV 28 2017

OFFICE OF
STANFORD ADELSTEIN

South Dakota synagogues were featured in the Fall issue of the ***Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest GENERATIONS*** newsletter. It is refreshing to see how SOTH is perceived by those from outside the local viewpoint.

You can read the article and whole JHSUM newsletters online at <http://www.jhsum.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/JHSUM-Newsletter-Fall-Web-Final.pdf>



For want of a hinge the little shed may well have been lost to the ravaging winds . . . but, thanks to Dan (and Barb,) 48 fasteners and considerable torque, the doors have been restored to better than before. Thank you very much!



Yahrzeits

“to remember is to keep alive”

The following *yahrzeits* will be observed:
Attendance at services is encouraged so *Kaddish* may be recited.

William Beard 3 Kislev, 5743
Father of Michele Beard

Lorraine Beard 28 Kislev, 5753
Mother of Michele Beard

Joseph Haber 4 Kislev, 5748
Father of Ann Stanton

Esther Drosin 29 Kislev, 5693
Great grandmother of Michelle Fish

Bertha Adelstein 16 Kislev, 5760
Mother of Stan Adelstein

Richard Ingram 1 Tevet, 5751
Father of Mary Ingram

Sadye Weintraub 17 Kislev, 5761
Grandmother of Irv Fish

Morris Adelstein 7 Tevet, 5760
Father of Stan Adelstein

Rosette Elfassy December 21, 2001
Sister of Georgette Ohayon

Death is merely moving from one home to another. The wise man will spend his main efforts in trying to make his future home the more beautiful one.”

-Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgenstern
of Tomashov (the Kotzker Rebbe)



Thank You

for your contributions to
the Synagogue of the Hills

Mike and Lesta Turchen
Dan and Barb Ames

The Shofar is how the members of the Synagogue of the Hills communicate with each other. That is, *The Shofar* is a periodic forum for matters of interest that are a bit more formal than a remark over a cup of coffee, but a bit less formal than a written statement to the Board of Director. It could be a birth announcement, a press release, a public service blurb, a letter to the editor (that's me, Leonard Running), a joke, a cartoon, an opinion, anything that YOU think might be important or entertaining to our family.

Your contributions are welcome . . . no, critical to the well being of the synagogue. You can send emails to bhshul1@gmail.com or anything in paper form to the address above. Let *The Shofar* be heard!