



# The Shofar

Seasonal News for the Synagogue of the Hills

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## Even Adam Sandler Could Not Make this Up

Yes my friends, even Adam Sandler's creativity could not make this up. Can we not catch a break anywhere? I mean really - how many times have we heard it, sometimes flippantly, but most of the time out of ignorance - after all, "isn't Chanukah just Jewish Christmas?" This year it almost feels as though the lunar calendar gods are playing into their hands - who are "they?" you ask - of course I'm referring to those who believe that Chanukah is nothing more than "Jewish Christmas" - their proof, of course, is the unfortunate juxtaposition this year of the first night of Chanukah (25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev) and Christmas eve (24<sup>th</sup> of December.) Yes indeed, how unfortunate. But, hey, when Chanukah fell on

Thanksgiving (or thereabouts) did that make Chanukah "Jewish Thanksgiving?"

OK, time to clear up any misgivings or misunderstandings (yes, I realize I'm preaching to the choir.) No matter how one spells or pronounces Chanukah or how one pronounces *latke*, the Festival of Lights (no, not the Parade of Lights) is not and never will be a biblical observance. One might argue that over the years it has not been considered a very important holiday. By some accounts it has even been relegated to a second-rate status because of its post-biblical position. But let's take a moment and consider the historical underpinning of

the holiday and why I would argue it is a very important day in our calendar.

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 were 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.



The story is told that upon seeing the defilement of the Temple, the Jewish troops made a commitment to restore its ritual and spiritual purity. The one cruse of sacred oil that should have only lasted one night, miraculously lasted eight nights thus restoring the palpable and spiritual faith of



the Jewish people. The miracle of Chanukah of course, is memorialized on the four sides of the dreidel with the letters Nun, Gimmel, Hay, Shin - an acronym for the words *Nes Gadol Haya Sham* - "A Great Miracle Happened There." A great miracle indeed.

Notice, my friends, not once in this abbreviated version of the story of Chanukah is there any convergence with the story of Christmas. While other peoples and cultures have been relegated to the trash bin of history, the story of Chanukah stands on its own as a symbol of that beacon in the darkness (so appropriate for the seasonal darkness of winter) of who we are and who we have remained. So let the candles of the Chanukyot illuminate the night, let the dreidels spin, the latkes sizzle - may we never forget who we are and what we believe - regardless of when we celebrate Chanukah, the Festival of Lights.

Steven Benn

President, Synagogue of the Hills



# A Holiday Message from Rabbi Yair



Dear Synagogue of the Hills - -

Happy Chanukah, Hanukkah or any other of the 16 ways to exactly spell this holiday in English. So what is this holiday all about? Below I want to add some things you might not know about Hanukkah.

- 1) Hanukkah is one of the few holidays we have that is not mentioned in the bible. What we know about it is from a patchwork of historical texts and books that were not added to our Tanakh and the Talmud. Firstly, these books are First and Second Maccabees.
- 2) These books tell the story of the Maccabees, a small band of Jewish fighters who liberated the Land of Israel from the Syrian Greeks who occupied it. Under the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Syrian Greeks sought to impose their Hellenistic culture, which many Jews found attractive. By 167 B.C.E, Antiochus intensified his campaign by defiling the Temple in Jerusalem and banning Jewish practice. The Maccabees — led by the five sons of the priest Mattathias, especially Judah — waged a three-year campaign that culminated in the cleaning and rededication of the Temple. We have heard and learned about the miracle of the oil but when we look at what historical accounts have to say they don't mention the miracle of oil at all. What the sources do point out is that since they were unable to celebrate the holiday of Sukkot at its proper time in early autumn, the victorious Maccabees decided that Sukkot should be celebrated once they rededicated the Temple, which they did on the 25th of the month of Kislev in the year 164 B.C.E. Since Sukkot lasts seven days, this became the timeframe adopted for Hanukkah. So it turns out that the original Hanukkah was more about Sukkot than the oil.

Oily food (think latkes and sufganiyot) isn't Hanukkah's only culinary tradition. Traditionally, Hanukkah has included foods with fried cheese in recognition of Judith, whose liberal use of the salty treat facilitated a victory for the Maccabees.

- 3) Gelt as we know it is a relatively new tradition — and no one knows who invented it. While coins — “gelt” is Yiddish for coins or money — have been part of Hanukkah observance for centuries, chocolate gelt is considerably younger. In her book *On the Chocolate Trail*, Rabbi Deborah Prinz writes that “opinions differ” concerning the origins of chocolate gelt: Some

credit America's Loft candy company with creating it in the 1920s, while others suggest there were European versions earlier that inspired Israel's Elite candy company. Prinz notes, as well, that chocolate gelt resembles a European Christmas tradition of exchanging gold-covered chocolate coins "commemorating the miracles of St. Nicholas."

4). The game of dreidel was inspired by a German game played at Christmastime, which is itself an imitation of an English and Irish one. Our Eastern European game of dreidel (including the letters nun, gimmel, hey, shin) is directly based on the German equivalent of the British totum game: N = Nichts = nothing; G = Ganz = all; H = Halb = half; and S = Stell ein = put in. In German, the spinning top was called a "torrel" or "trundl."

5). Oily food (think latkes and sufganiyot) isn't Hanukkah's only culinary tradition. Traditionally, Hanukkah has included foods with fried cheese in recognition of Judith, whose liberal use of the salty treat facilitated a victory for the Maccabees.

I hope you find these fun facts useful. There are many stories associated with Hanukkah and I bless us to have a year full of light and family. I look forward to seeing you all in January. Have a happy new year and a lovely Chanukah.

Yair



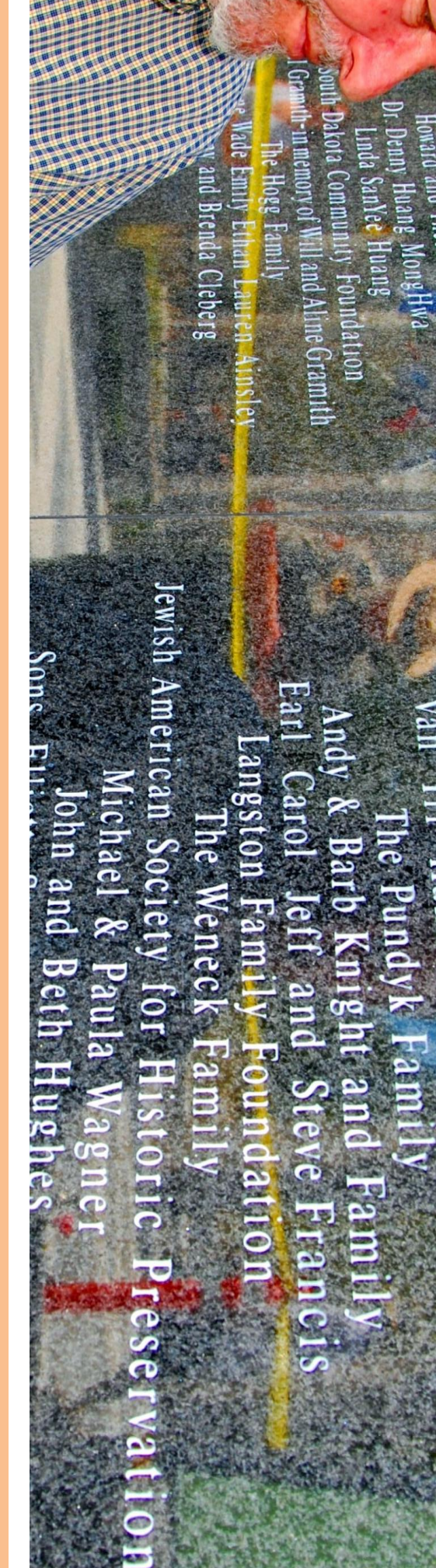
# Any way you look at it . . .

the work of Jerry Klinger and the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation is of great significance to the American Jewish community.

Besides helping the Deadwood Historic Commission to accurately commemorate the contributions of the Black Hills' first Jews with three well-placed markers, Mr. Klinger and the JASHP have brought awareness and honor to many sites across the country where Jews sought to settle. Some prospered and some failed.

JASHP's latest contribution has been to become a member of the Mt. Rushmore Society, recognizing and memorializing the spirit of **all** Americans who have built this country.

You can learn more about the good works of Jerry Klinger and the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation at <http://www.jewish-american-society-for-historic-preservation.org/>



pictured is Jerry Klinger at the Mt. Rushmore's Memorial Wall where the name of his organization is inscribed - JASHP photo

# Current Events



## The Great Hanukkah Blizzard of 5777

Not much to it, but it  
will take a plow or a  
couple weeks of  
sunshine to clear our  
parking lot.

### Watch for . . .

. . . email blast  
from Michele  
and David about  
Hanukkah party  
parking lot  
conditions and  
precautions.

Welcome  
New Member

**Dr. C. Stephen Feldman**

Of Spearfish

# Yahrzeits

“to remember is to keep alive”

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

Mayer Drosin                      5 Hesvan, 5761  
Great grandfather of Michelle Fish

Harriet Pearce                      29 Hashvan, 5742  
Mother of Karen McKinney

Yetta Brooks                      7 Heshvan, 5761  
Great grandmother of Irv Fish

Richard Ingram                      1 Tevet, 5751  
Father of Mary Ingram

William Beard                      3 Kislev, 5743  
Father of Michele Beard

Morris Adelstein                      7 Tevet, 5760  
Father of Stan Adelstein

Bertha Adelstein                      16 Kislev, 5760  
Mother of Stan Adelstein

Rosette Elfassy                      December 21, 2001  
Sister of Georgette Ohayon

Joseph Haber                      4 Kislev, 5748  
Father of Ann Stanton

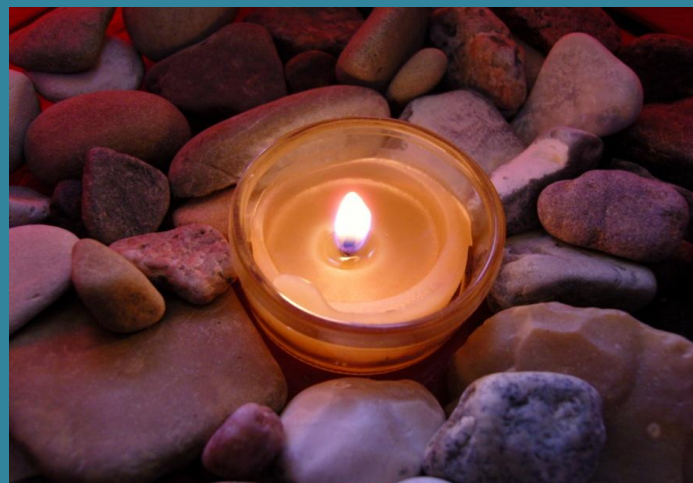
Sadye Weintraub                      17 Kislev, 5761

Lorraine Beard                      28 Kislev, 5753  
Mother of Michele Beard

Esther Drosin                      29 Kislev, 5693  
Great grandmother of Michelle Fish

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)



*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](mailto:bhshul1@gmail.com) or anything in paper form to the address above. Let *The Shofar* be heard!