



THE SHOFAR
שופר

United Synagogue of Hoboken

SIVAN/TAMUZ 5779

July 2019

**Whose Words Should We Write
On Our Wall?**
By Rabbi Robert Scheinberg



Like many synagogues around the world, our synagogue is adorned with the most famous words from the Torah portion of Balak (to be read this year on July 20). Above the entrance to the social hall are the words *Mah tovu ohalecha ya'akov, mishkenotecha yisrael.* "How good are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel." This verse is also among the first words uttered in every morning's synagogue service, based on a long-standing tradition of identifying the "tents" in the verse with the synagogues constructed by the Jewish people in all our communities.

This famous verse, however, raises an uncomfortable question. When we read these words in their context in this week's Torah portion, we see that they are uttered by Balaam, the sorcerer who was hired by the Moabite king to curse the Israelites. Balaam is powerless to deliver a curse that goes against God's wishes, however, and he finds that his intended curses are transformed into blessings. Balaam is always reckoned among the arch-enemies of the Israelites. It is peculiar, and even disturbing, that words uttered by a would-be destroyer of our people are accorded such honor, adorning so many synagogues and helping to frame each day's prayers.

The early 20th-century sage Barukh Halevi Epstein discusses this issue in his commentary on the prayerbook, *Barukh She-Amar*. Epstein notes that there is certainly no lack of statements in the Torah and the rest of the Bible, spoken in the name of righteous people, that are equally laudatory of the people of Israel and their dwelling-places. At first glance, it seems surprising that words that emerged from the mouth of one who hated the people of Israel are given the privileged position of opening the daily service.

But Epstein concludes that it is an erroneous assumption to believe that Jewish liturgical and legal texts will try to avoid drawing upon the statements of enemies of our people. On the contrary; Epstein provides numerous examples of Jewish prayers, laws and customs which are derived from the words and actions of wicked people in the Torah. For example, the traditional blessing given to a bride immediately before the wedding, "Our daughter, may you become thousands of myriads," is first found in the Torah as a direct quotation of Rebekah's father and brother, Betuel and Laban, both of whom are painted as particularly negative characters in the Torah and in rabbinic literature. Similarly, a number of Jewish laws and traditions related to marriage are derived directly from the statements and actions of Laban (now in his position as Jacob's father-in-law), one of the most negative characters in the book of Genesis. Epstein also lists ten legal discussions in the Talmud on which the words of Balaam are deemed to shed light.

(continued on Page 2)

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 2019

- 8 USH at the Shelter 6pm
- 9 USH Board of Trustees at USH 7:30pm
- 12 Shabbat in the Park 6pm
- 12 First Fridays 7pm
- 17 Torah on Tap at USH 7:30pm
- 23 Women's Torah Study Group 7:30pm
- 25 Beer Mitzvah 6:30pm
- 26 Shabbat in the Park 6pm
- 26 First Fridays 7pm

Friday night services 7:00 pm

Saturday morning services 9:30 am

Thursday Torah Study 9:30am

See www.hobokensynagogue.org and the USH Facebook page for more info on these and other upcoming events!

Tisha B'Av

the Jewish fast day commemorating the destructions of the city of Jerusalem in 586 BCE and 70 CE, as well as other tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people over the centuries

Evening service:

Sat. August 10

Study and discussion at

8:30pm, followed by the

service and reading of the Book of Eicha (Lamentations) at 9pm

(The fast day of Tisha B'Av continues until nightfall on Sun. August 11)

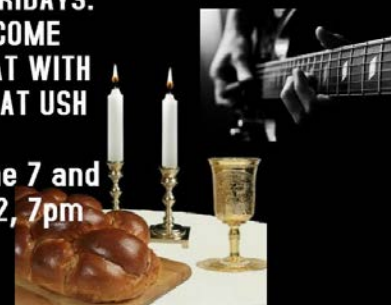


115 Park Avenue

More info -- (201) 659-4000,
www.hobokensynagogue.org

**FIRST FRIDAYS:
WELCOME
SHABBAT WITH
MUSIC AT USH**

**Fri, June 7 and
July 12, 7pm**



Welcome Shabbat with vibrant music and community - for all ages. With Adam Laden, Rabbi Rob Scheinberg, Siobhan Barry-Bratcher, Adam Parker, Howard Olah-Reiken, Pamela Strell, and other musicians from our community!

Free and open to the public, followed by refreshments.



115 Park Avenue, Hoboken N.J. More info: hobokensynagogue.org

(continued from Page 1)

Thus *Mah Tovu* is certainly not the only case in which we find the words of an enemy of the Jewish people sanctified and incorporated into our sacred texts. Epstein concludes that it makes no difference in Jewish tradition that these words, prayers and teachings have their origin in the mouths of those who sought to destroy our people. If the words are words of truth, they are to be adopted, whatever their source.

Epstein's comments carry a significant message for our contemporary world. We are often quick to judge a statement, not on its own merits, but by its source. The credibility of an opinion often has more to do with who said it than with its content.

Certainly, the reputation of the speaker is one of the factors we use when we determine the value of a statement. However, whether in the realm of politics, institutional planning, or Jewish law and tradition, excessive reliance upon the authority of particular speakers - unaccompanied by a rigorous analysis of the contents of their statements - can lead us to become lazy and imprecise in our own thinking and decision-making.

Pirkei Avot, the Ethics of the Fathers, teaches us that the truly wise person is *ha-lomed mikol adam*, the one with enough courage to learn something from each and every person - the one who is willing to seek out unconventional sources of wisdom. And this is the courage we must demonstrate, for the sake of our tents and dwelling-places★

TORAH ON TAP

Join us for an opportunity to unwind with a selection of wine and beer as Rabbi Scheinberg leads a discussion regarding the week's Torah portion, as well as the ethics and wisdom from *Pirkei Avot*.

July 17th
7:30 pm
USH Back Patio
or Social Hall (weather pending)



MITZVAH DAY IS COMING!

Mitzvah Day will be held on September 15, 2019. Please mark your calendars and look out for updates later this summer around activities and sign-up.

We need help from the entire community to collect travel-sized toiletries this summer. As a reminder, a Mitzvah Day team creates individual care packages of these toiletries and provides them to the Hoboken Shelter. If/when you travel this summer and stay in a hotel, please collect toiletries (shampoo, conditioner, soap/body wash, body lotion, toothpaste, individually wrapped toothbrushes) and bring them to USH. A box will be placed in the lobby for collection. A few guidelines:

- 1) All bottles/packages must be unopened
- 2) We do not accept mouthwash
- 3) Many hotels will supply items like toothbrushes/toothpaste, deodorant, etc upon request. Please ask!


Thanks in advance for your help and have a great summer!

- *The Mitzvah Day Committee*

Women's Torah Study Group

Come join us to schmooze, nosh, and study torah and liturgy with a lively group led by Anne Pettit.

We meet at USH on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:30pm



To RSVP or be added to our mailing list please email ritual@hobokensynagogue.org

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The USH "Pair for Prayer" Initiative

The skill of leading Jewish prayer services has long been an important aspect of Jewish leadership. A knowledgeable Jewish community like ours has many people who have these skills (and all bar/bat mitzvah students in our community acquire some of these skills), but we can always use more. You are invited to fill out the form at http://bit.ly/pair_for_prayer_USH_2019, to indicate what skills you have and what skills you are willing to teach as a volunteer. We will then make an effort to pair people together to acquire these skills. Many recordings, texts, etc are available to assist you, whether you are a teacher or a learner, at rabbischeinberg.blogspot.com.

Shabbat Dinner Initiative

We would like to try a new approach to encouraging people in our community to share shabbat meals together. We invite you to fill out this questionnaire (http://bit.ly/USH_Shabbat_Dinner_Initiative_2019) and to indicate if you are interested in hosting a shabbat dinner and inviting others from our community, and/or in being a guest at a shabbat dinner. We also invite you to indicate your approximate age and life stage, if you would be interested in connecting with others who are demographically similar to you. We will then work with the hosts to help them to invite people who have indicated a desire to be guests. We also have resources available to help people to learn and lead the Shabbat evening rituals (see <http://rabbischeinberg.blogspot.com/p/resources-for-hosting-shabbat-dinner.html>). It is our hope that this initiative will strengthen the bonds that connect us to each other, as well as strengthen our connection to Shabbat. There is also an opportunity on the questionnaire to indicate if you would like to assist in organizing this initiative.

SHABBAT IN THE PARK

Join us for song, prayer and friends
to welcome Shabbat!

**Bring a Picnic Dinner (Kosher or Vegetarian, Please!)
and We'll Provide the Challah and Grape Juice!**

Free and open to the community, special activities for families with
children 5 and under. RSVP appreciated

FRIDAYS AT 6 PM

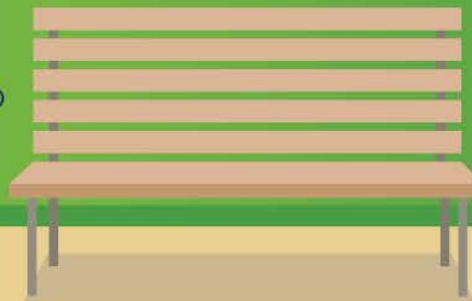
•WEATHER PERMITTING•

(Please note: regularly scheduled service takes
place at the synagogue at 7pm as usual.)

2019 Dates & Locations*

- | | |
|--------|---|
| May 31 | Church Sq. Park - Ice Cream Party! (5th btw Park & Willow) |
| Jun 14 | Maxwell Place Park (11th and the river) |
| Jul 12 | Church Sq. Park |
| Jul 26 | Van Vorst Park (Montgomery
btw Jersey & Barrow in Jersey City) |
| Sept 6 | USH - Pizza Party! (115 Park Ave)
(5:30pm start time) |

*Starts at 6pm unless otherwise noted



To RSVP or for more information please
contact ushpreschool@gmail.com

115 Park Ave Hoboken, NJ 201-653-8666 www.kaplancooperativepreschool.org

5/2019



July 12

In conjunction
with Shabbat in
the Park @
Church Square
Park
6pm

FAMILY VOLUNTEERING PROGRAM: CARE KITS

What will families do?
Families will create bags of high-need toiletry/self-care items for
people experiencing homelessness or poverty.

Whom will the service benefit?
This project will benefit our friends at The Hoboken Shelter on
Bloomfield Street by providing items to support their comfort, safety
and health.

Why does this project matter?
There are people in the community whose basic needs are not being
met; this is one small way to provide comfort and dignity!

Do a Mitzvah today!

Best for
families with
children
through age 8

USH takes the W!

Following a crushing 16-13 loss in the first game of the Summer Softball Series between USH and Beth-El, the Hoboken Conservatives, along with members of TRIBE, came back with a force and held on for a 12-11 victory to even the Synagogue Summer Series at one apiece. Special thanks and Kol HaKavod to our Kehilla that came together to get the win!

ROSTER (pictured above)

(top row l to r)

Kent Harber
Sammy Friedman
Jake Becker
Logan Weiss
Alan Welner
Craig Teitelbaum
Drew Nathanson

(bottom l to r)

Jordan Firestein
Adam Gendelman
Frank Rosner
Adam Hoch
Cara Rosner

Interested in joining the squad? Send an email to jfirestein@gmail.com



Feel free to bring
travel size
products to
donate (check
your hotel stash
under the
cabinet!)



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Jeremy Morley

I could not be more enthusiastic about **taking** on the presidency of our beloved synagogue. I am honored to have been asked to serve. But I'm all too well aware that I'm totally new to this job and the accompanying responsibility.

I serve with a board of fantastic trustees. We are all volunteers with busy lives and loads of responsibilities outside USH. But volunteering is fundamental to who we are as members and supporters of our very special synagogue. The shul was rescued by an all-volunteer team of Jewish Hobokeners who saw both the need and the opportunity and then put in collective sweat equity to make it happen.

For myself, I realized a few years ago that I had a choice. I could continue as a member who was looking in from the outside. Or I could volunteer and be a full participant. I dived in as Shofar editor and I have never looked back.

So I invite all of you to jump in and support the work of planting and renewing the spark of Judaism in each person, and building a vibrant, fun-loving community of "aspiring Jewish mensches."

As I learn by doing, my request to all of you is to give me - and my fellow board members - your positive energy and good vibes, your coaching, advice and your support, your passion and your enthusiasm.

We're a community of spirited people who get the job done. Thankfully, we are not a bunch of moaners and groaners.

I wish to thank David Swirnoff for his wonderful service to the synagogue as President. I suspect that many members might be quite unaware of just how much time David has devoted to this work, handling the innumerable daily issues that arise and creating effective procedures to manage the work of the synagogue especially. I am the very fortunate beneficiary of coming to this work after David has created such a strong platform. And thank you to David's wife, Merry, whose support behind the scenes helped David achieve so much.

Please contact me at any time with your thoughts and ideas for improvement and growth, and let me know how you might wish to support our sacred work.

And now please allow me to plant a seed for your thoughts: Rachelle Grossman, who is far and away the best preschool director on the planet, and Grace Gurman-Chan, who is far and away the best Learning Center Director on the planet, have until now shared one teeny tiny space in the back of our small, cramped, hot and noisy office. Rachelle will shortly relocate her office to a storage closet between the fun room and the rabbi's office. Grace and Rhonda will then share the little back area of the office. This is clearly not a long-term solution. We have no space! We need more room ☆

DONATIONS

General Fund

Thomas and Dayna Sessa, in honor of Livia Danielle Sessa

Alyssa and Daniel Kane, in honor of Jared Lee's Bar Mitzvah

Jewel, Robert, and James Brenner, in honor of Dr. Michael Edwards becoming a member of the TRIBE!

Alix Biel

Special Needs Fund

Jonathan Zaid

CONDOLENCES TO:

Erica Guarna on the loss of her mother Rona Lee Berrebi, and to her husband David and to her father Charles and her sister Allison.

Thank you for sponsoring Kiddush:

June 1: Andrew and Shana Goldberg-Lee in honor of Jared's bar mitzvah.

June 8: Sean and Amy Kron in honor of Nate's bar mitzvah.

June 15: Susan and Andy Aaronson in honor of Micah's bar mitzvah.

June 22: Lizzie Komar and Ricky Ouriel in celebration of their aufruf.

June 29: Joel and Marilyn Freyser

Congratulations to:

Jared Lee on his bar mitzvah, and to his parents Andrew Lee and Shana Goldberg-Lee and to his sisters, Alexandra & Elizabeth.

Nate Kron on his bar mitzvah, and to his parents Sean and Amy Kron and to his brothers, Sawyer and Malcolm.

Micah Goodman, and to his parents Seth Goodman and Elissa Aaronson and to his brother Adam and to his sister Talia.



אֲדַבְּרֶם אֶת־הַגֵּר כִּי־גֵרִים הֵיְתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt

On Sunday May 19, about 10 volunteers came together and assembled 117 "Stamp Out Despair" folders for First Friends to distribute to people detained by ICE in our local NJ prisons. Each folder contained paper, cards, and envelopes so that the detained people can maintain contact with friends and family. These folders are a wonderful lifeline for recipients and reminds them that they are not forgotten. Thank you to everyone who contributed supplies and came out to assemble folders. Thank you all for your continued support!

One important issue that refugees and asylees face is finding well-paying jobs that offer prospects for advancement.

We are seeking the help of everyone in the USH congregation with this effort.

So how can you help?

1. We want to help people who have skills connect with people who can help them in their area of expertise. We are looking for two contacts: one to help people with financial services skills and the other to help an experienced video cameraman. Do you know of an opportunity in either of those fields? Or, do you know of someone who would meet with an asylum seeker about how to enter these fields in America?
2. We also are interested in finding good entry level positions for refugees. The best way to find opportunities is to pay attention to "Help Wanted" signs that appear in our neighborhoods. If you see an ad, take a picture with your phone and send it to us. We'll call the employer and figure out if it is worth pursuing.

If you see or have a job opportunity or a networking opportunity, please contact Fred Miller (fredmiller00@comcast.net, 201-805-6327) or Bess Morrison (bessmorrison@gmail.com, 917-715-8356).



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**UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF
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115 Park Avenue, Hoboken, NJ 07030
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www.hobokensynagogue.org

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NEXT BEER MITZVAH with USH Men's Club
Benefitting the Hoboken Shelter
Thursday July 25th 6:30 pm
Come Grab a drink at House of Que (340 Sinatra
Drive), and make sure to bring toiletries for the
Shelter!!!!!!

Reach out to mark@markglass.com for further
details!!!!

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