





January 2024 Tevet/Shevat 5784 Rabbi Eric L. Abbott Rabbi Emeritus Sunny Schnitzer



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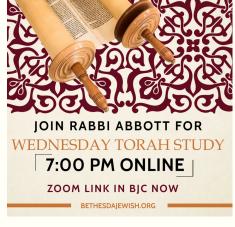
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Rabbi Abbott's
Online Scheduler
is now open!
Want to meet one-on-one?
Click here and pick a time
that works for you.

# **BJC REGULAR PROGRAMMING**







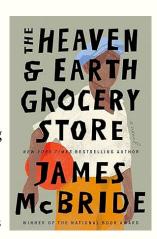




# **BJC Book Club Notice**

The BJC Open Book Club meets virtually at 8 PM on the fourth Wednesday of the month. Our upcoming selection is:

January 24- *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride is a "charming, smart, heart-blistering and heart-healing novel" that tells the story of divisions and misunderstandings between Black and Jewish residents in the close knit Chicken Hill neighborhood of Pottstown Pennsylvania in the 1920s and '30s.



If you are not already on the book club's email list and would like to join us for any or all of our meetings, please let Evelyn Ganzglass at eganzglass@gmail.com know and she will add you to the list.

### **BIC Administration**

### Spiritual Leader

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# THE RABBI'S MESSAGE

Rabbi Eric. L Abbott

It has been twelve weeks since October 7 and the atrocities committed against Israelis and others living in Israel. Twelve weeks of seeing images of desecration. Twelve weeks of hearing of sexual assault and crimes against women and children. Twelve weeks of fallen soldiers. Twelve weeks where some of our very

own friends and family have died. Twelve weeks of innocent Israeli and Palestinian casualties. And in that time, a lot has happened: pauses in fighting; the release of some, but not nearly enough, hostages; the killing of innocents; horrid stories of displaced individuals; slurs against Jews; bomb threats against synagogues across the country...and on and on. The war abroad and the rise in antisemitism at home both continue to scare me.

Lately, one aspect of the war that has laid heavily on my mind is the continued debate around calls for a ceasefire. The conversation shakes me to the core because I admit that I do not know the answer. The challenge for me, in part, is that the demand for a ceasefire is complex and evokes countless emotions. Call for one, and you might find yourself ostracized by the larger Jewish community. Rally against it, and younger generations may turn their back on the Zionist cause. Of course, many discussions lack the nuance needed to hold these conversations—such as recognizing that demands for a ceasefire frequently come alongside a demand for a release of all Israeli hostages. Ultimately, we might ask: Which is the right call? What happens if I am wrong? How will history remember this moment? And what happens when there are no "right" calls?

I do not have the answers—I wish I did! All I can do is share some of my thoughts from the last few weeks. I have been holding one particular rabbinic text in mind:

"If I am not for me, who will be for me? When I am only for myself, what am I?" (Pirkei Avot 1:14)

This quote, from the great sage Hillel, emphasizes the importance of self-care, of self-defense—as well as care for others.

While as an American Jew I feel the effects of this war—seeing friends suffer through October 7, watching Jewish soldiers fight, facing unprecedented acts of antisemitism—I recognize that I do not live in Israel, and so I turn to the experts and the people living in Israel who face the consequences of war directly. In a recent episode of the Shalom Hartman Institute's For Heaven's Sake Podcast, called "Israel at War – Ceasefire?", scholars Donniel Hartman and Yossi Klein Halevi discuss this very idea of a ceasefire. According to Halevi, ninety percent of Israelis support the war—and want it to continue until Hamas is entirely stopped. Who am I to doubt the people living there? Yet beyond the broad support, these two experts frame the war as a moral imperative. The need to destroy Hamas is absolutely essential, they claim. This war is not just about Gaza, but about the larger regional implications—fighting Hezbollah to the north, for instance, or Iran's power in the area. And in that way, as Hartman says, "We are fighting a war for our right to be safe." Or, as Halevi adds, "Our right to be here."

Therefore, I understand the need for continued war. After all, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" Israel's right to exist is at stake. Israel needs this war to rescue its citizens, our fellow Jews, who are still held hostage—including Ariel Bibas, only four years old, and Kfir Bibas, only 11 months old. Israel needs to rid the world of the evil that is Hamas. Israel needs to reassure its citizens that they can live in their homes without fear of rockets or massacres. Israel needs to protect the first Jewish state in nearly two thousand years, an ancient dream restored.



# **THE RABBI'S MESSAGE** (cont)

Rabbi Eric. L Abbott

Nonetheless, while I can comprehend all this, I cannot help but remember the rest of Hillel's teaching: "When I am only for myself, what am I?"

For even as I understand the moral justifications, even as I know we need to protect the Jewish state and its citizens of all religions and ethnicities, even as I know that this will protect my friends and family over there, I cannot help but think of the innocent lives lost to this war.

Do not get me wrong—I blame Hamas for starting this war, for continuing the war by advocating for October 7 to happen again and again, and for rejecting plans that would release the hostages and achieve Israel's goal of toppling Hamas. I might question the Prime Minister's decisions, IDF tactics, or policies around the occupation or democratic values, but I do not blame Israel for being forced to confront this situation—I blame Hamas. I also recognize that many of the calls for ceasefire come from ignorance at best and antisemitism at worst.

Yet even knowing all of this, even knowing that Hamas is evil, I cannot also help but feel for the innocent families and individuals caught in the mess of war. As a son, father, and husband, my heart aches for the families torn apart. My gut turns every time I see pictures of children covered in the ash of a fallen building. As one rabbinic colleague put it, it is okay to mourn for the loss of civilian life in the region, regardless of citizenship, ethnicity, or religion.

Thus, as I look at the situation, see the moral imperative for war and also reel from its implications on real lives, I am left holding both. On the one hand, I recognize the need for this war, the imperative to defend against the arc of Iran's influence and maintain Israel's right to exist. And, on the other hand, I feel for the innocents—Israeli and Palestinian; Jewish, Christian, and Muslim; child and adult—who have been killed, injured, and displaced by this war.

# And so, I pray:

I pray for all hostages to return home.

I pray for an end to Hamas's authoritarian hold on the people of Gaza.

I pray for the leadership of the United States and of Israel to make wise decisions.

I pray for Israelis and Palestinians to live side by side in peace, safety, and freedom.

I pray for Jews across the globe to feel secure in their homes.

May my—and our—prayers come true. Amen.



# FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Issie Resti

Does the Jewish New Year feel different to you than the secular one? For me, one of the main differences is that Rosh HaShanah is a time when I turn inward to think about the words I've said, the actions I've taken, and the things I want to do better in the upcoming year. January 1st is more a contemplation of my external

life; this year, I find myself reexperiencing the joy of my son's bar mitzvah, of my daughter (and me) surviving her first year of high school, of finding the perfect home health aide to care for my mother. Of course, I also look back with a twinge at the more challenging moments of 2023.

There was so. much. loss. Loss in my own life, within the congregation, and in the wider community. What strikes me about these seemingly dichotomous moments – those that brought happiness and those that brought sorrow – is that BJC was a part of all of them for me. And, more importantly, the presence of congregants always served to magnify my joy or moderate my pain. While kneading dough at the challah bake, walking the halls between events on Rosh HaShanah, standing in the parking lot after Shabbat services, it's my BJC people who heard the most about the highs and lows of my life this year, and I theirs.

It's the people of BJC that showed up in stunning numbers for the bar mitzvah and that offered muchneeded advice, hugs, and love whenever I was struggling. Knowing that I have this community to share both the glorious and the gut-wrenching is a true blessing. BJC has given me so much, and in return, I want to do everything I can to help sustain it. This includes not only making a contribution to Hineini, but also showing up for events and encouraging the people I love, members and non-members alike, to do the same.

I can't begin to guess what 2024 will bring, but it's just as impossible for me to imagine the events of 2023 without my BJC family. For that, I say thank you to all of you.

May 2024 bring joy, love and health to everyone.

B'shalom, Issie issieresti@gmail.com (301) 326-9142

# **YOUTH EDUCATION 2023-2024**



# BJC Youth Education Shoshanah Drake & Kaitlin Blackburn Education Committee Co-Chairs

It was wonderful to see so many families join us for the Hanukkah celebration. A very special thank you to Marissa Gould for chairing the event. It was such fun to light the candles together, sing songs, and play dreidel as a community.

As we move into January, please start the month off joining BJC for our Tot/Family Shabbat services on January 5th. You can RSVP on the BJC website. During religious school, the students will be studying the value of *Achrayut* -- doing what you can to make the world a better place. The students will celebrate with a Family Tu-Bishevat Ice Cream Seder on January 27th. It's an event you won't want to miss!

We are always looking for volunteers to help with different events. If you are interested in volunteering, please let either of us know and we will make sure to match you with something that fits the amount of time you have to give. Thank you!





# **SNAPSHOTS**

# Getting Together for Worship, Meaning, and Fun

# **WORSHIP SCHEDULE UPDATE**

BJC continues our Friday night worship at 7:30 PM. Saturday morning services begin 10:30 AM. Consult BJC Now for the latest information and for links to services if you prefer to worship virtually.



# UPCOMING EVENTS



# **SNAPSHOTS**

Getting Together for Worship, Meaning, and Fun







BJC runs on volunteer power! Grab your preferred Oneg date while you can. Dates in January and February are available. Thank you for your generosity and time! Click here to sign up for a Friday Night Oneg.

# N CASE YOU VISSED T



# **CONCERT FOR ISRAEL**

BJC was honored to have Dylan Schenker on piano in concert to raise funds for Magen David Adom.

Dylan Schenker, 16, is a pianistcomposer based in Bethesda, MD. Since the age of five, he has studied piano with Mary Kading. Dylan has won numerous

competitions and awards for both piano and composition, and he has performed in venues ranging from Carnegie Hall in New York to the Sony Auditorium in Madrid, Spain.

It was an amazing hour of incredible music. If you missed it, here is the YouTube link.

## Program:

Hatikvah Traditional
Consolation No. 3, S. 172 Franz Liszt
Nocturne No. 4, Op. 38 Lowell Liebermann
Arabesque No. 1, L. 66. Claude Debussy
Ballade No. 1, Op. 23 Frédéric Chopin
Short Intermission
Four Impromptus, Op. 90
Allegro molto moderato
Allegro
Andante
Allegretto

Franz Schubert

Thank you to all who came for your support! Donations can be made to Magen David Adom here.

# N CASE YOU VISSED T



# Hanukkah Celebration

Hanukkah at BJC was a blast!

We had a yummy dinner, lit the candles, and sang along with Rabbi Abbott and Shoshanah Drake. Great job to all the dreidel games winners, we hope you liked the gift swag!

It was lovely to see how many menorahs we had lit in the Gathering Space, and to see all the different ones, from colored glass to a gold T-Rex. Which one was your favorite?

Thank you to everyone in the BJC community who came out to celebrate. You make the holiday special!

# **SOCIAL ACTION**

# Winter Will Be Warmer At Stepping Stones

By Harri j. Kramer and Terri Reicher, SAC

We did it! THANK YOU to all the contributors of coats, hat, mittens, gloves, and scarves. We delivered almost 70 coats – far exceeding our goal of 50 coats – to a very worthwhile organization, Stepping Stones

located in nearby Rockville.

Here's the final count:

Kids: 27 Women: 28 Men: 13

Gloves: 32 pair, mostly kids.

Hats: 27 Scarves: 16

Kids' Boots: 4 pair

Other miscellaneous items, such as socks



Stepping Stones is a shelter committed to "Moving Families Forward" and provides emergency food and shelter to Montgomery County families experiencing homelessness, and has been doing so for 40 years. BJC has a long history of providing meals once a month for the residents. Picking up pre-made food or putting together an easy dinner for about 8 adults and 17 children is a great way for an entire family to get involved in act of Tzedakah. (And, students can earn up to 3 SSL!) Information about this program is here. To learn more about BJC's dinner effort, contact our coordinator, Terri Reicher at tlreicher@gmx.com .

Stepping Stones also has an "Urgent Needs List" that assists families leaving the shelter for housing. Go here to learn more about what's always in demand and how to donate.

We hope that this first involvement with Stepping Stones is not your last. Please continue to support this shelter by making a meal and donating urgently needed goods. It's a great way to help those less fortunate in our own backyard.

# Start the New Year Off Right by Doing a Mitzvah



Did you know that January is National Blood Donor Month in the United States? With increased holiday celebrations, cold, flu, and Covid season upon us, the winter often reduced donations and, therefore, a greater likelihood of shortages.

While BJC no longer sponsors a blood drive at 6601 Bradley, there are many other locations where you can donate. By clicking here you can find a convenient blood donation center. Or you can go through the American Red Cross by clicking here.

By donating blood, you're doing a mitzvah – performing a potentially life saving act. Please consider taking a small amount of time and doing this good deed.

# **PERSPECTIVES**

# Fighting for our Jewish Future by Karen Levi, Social Action Committee Chair

(Some points were obtained from an opinion piece written by Arthur Slepian, The J, December 18, 2023, entitled "We must relearn our history to fight for a Jewish future: four ideas.)

Antisemitism along with its attendant conspiracy theories are rampant in the United States today. For American Jews, a touchpoint was the Charlottesville, Virginia march and demonstrations in 2017.

Antisemitic actions have increased, not decreased. Hatred builds on itself and grows more deadly as a mudslide roars down a hillside creating havoc. Since October 7, we have witnessed fellow Americans yelling tropes without understanding. "From the river to the sea..." is but one example which essentially means Israel--the Jewish state-should be destroyed.

It is acceptable in college social science departments to view the world "through a framework of simplistic and false binaries." People are being labeled as either "colonizers or the colonized, the powerful or the powerless." For example, the Jewish pioneers who left Europe for Israel in between the world wars to escape anti-Jewish discrimination, are now characterized as white imperialists with the sole aim of stealing land from the indigenous people of what is now Israel; even though these Jewish farmers descended from those who have lived on the land hundreds and thousands of years before they resettled.

We assimilated Jews of the 21st century are ultimately responsible for changing the course of contemporary antisemitism. We cannot sit back and expect someone else to do our work, meanwhile pretending life is good for us. We have learned through history that others do not have a vested interest in our survival.

Below are some suggestions for combating hard times, like now when the rhetoric becomes disturbing or when what is not said is hurtful.

- Learn Jewish history from biblical times to the present. Know the accomplishments and catastrophes.
- Educate yourself on the blood libel. Understand the history of antisemitism. Become knowledgeable about the Spanish Inquisition, pogroms, the scope of the Holocaust. Discover local Jewish history. Did you know many suburban neighborhoods in the United States had covenants prohibiting Jewish families from buying property?
- Talk with other Jewish and non-Jewish friends about heartfelt concerns and explain what and why a particular statement is detrimental to the Jewish community.
- Join other community groups to build partnerships with religious, racial, and ethnic groups to build cross cultural understanding
- Don't be afraid to go to synagogue or the Jewish Community centers. Stand tall and be proud. (Most institutions have security and police protection.)
- Be honest about the mistakes and bad actors and be open to dialogue.

# HINEINI ANNUAL GIVING CAMPAIGN



Scan the QR code to donate today or click here.



Our main goal is 100% Participation towards our \$95,000 benchmark

Where do your donations go?

**Sustain Programming:** Your donations enable us to host a wide range of events and programs that cater to the needs and interests of our diverse congregation. From Shabbat and holiday services to community outreach, religious school, and social gatherings, your support ensures that we can offer enriching experiences for everyone.

**Provide Financial Aid:** We believe that no one should be denied the opportunity to participate in our synagogue, religious school, or other vital programs due to financial constraints. Your donations allow us to provide financial assistance to families in need, ensuring that all members of our community can fully engage in their faith and heritage.

**Operating Costs:** Our dedicated rabbi, educators, and administrative team work tirelessly to serve the needs of our congregation. Your donations enable us to compensate them fairly for their vital contributions to our community. In addition, your gifts maintain our sacred partnership with 6601 Bradley Blvd.

Bethesda Jewish Congregation (BJC) is a 501(c)(3), which means your donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

L'Dor V'Dor: \$15,000 and above Eternal Light Supporter: \$5000 to \$14,999 Rabbi's Circle: \$1000-\$4999 Torah Guardian: \$361-\$999 Sustaining Donor: \$18-\$360

We are pleased to accept checks sent directly to the office or members can donate through the Member Portal on the website. Nonmembers are welcome to make a donation by credit card or by sending a donation to our office.

**Give Appreciated Stock.** Consider transferring stocks to BJC for a tax-deductible contribution that will support our Jewish community and BJC programs. Check with the office for details.

**Direct an IRA Withdrawal to BJC.** If you are age 72+ and have an IRA with a mandatory minimum withdrawal, consider supporting BJC's programs with a charitable gift from your IRA. There may be added benefits to giving through an IRA.

Write BJC into your Will/Estate Plan. After you have taken care of your family and friends, naming BJC and other charitable organizations in your will is a true mitzvah —a lasting gift expressing your commitment to BJC.

# **OUR MEMBERS**

# REMEMBRANCES

Ever confused about when we remember the yahrzeit of your loved one? You can choose to remember this special date according to the Hebrew or English calendar. Get in touch with Geryl Baer in the office to review and verify the accuracy of your records.

## **Shloshim**

**Dr. Robert Fischel,** father of Rabbi Eliana Fischel, father-in-law of Rabbi Eric Abbott, grandfather of Ezra and Rebecca **Gerald Lawrence Fine,** father of Ken Fine **Phyllis Diane Goldberg,** sister of Bruce Baum

# Yahrzeits January 2024

Amy Barsky, sister of Lisa Strauss Edward Baum, father of Bruce Baum Ida Benderson, mother of Eric Benderson Jacob Benderson, father of Eric Benderson Harold Bernard, brother of Cathy Bernard Norma Bernard, mother of Cathy Bernard Phyllis Blumenthal, cousin of Diane Blumenthal Frederick Brucker, father of Anita Farb Dylan Buckner, grand-nephew of Howard Teitelbaum Mildred Busman, mother of Bruce Busman Irving Cassell, father of Wynne Busman Meyer Chabot, grandfather of Elliot Chabot, father-in-law of Aleen Chabot Charles Coplan, father of Lois Rose Frank Cover, father of Albert Cover William David, grandfather of Wynne Busman Hyman Dubrow, father of Laurie Dubrow Elizabeth Eig, mother of Jonathan Eig Jack Fagen, grandfather of Karen Jerome Cecelia Folsom, mother of Henry (Al) Folsom Mordechai Frank, father of Stuart Frank Sol Goodman, grandfather of Sunny Schnitzer Matilda Greenberg, mother of Carol Ann Greenberg George Isaacs, father of Virginia Cover Nettie Jacobs, grandmother of Donna Goldberg Ilse Judas, mother of Allen Grunes Edward Kerwin, father of Aleen Chabot, grandfather of Elliot Chabot

Nathan Kramer, uncle of Harri Kramer
Ike Mosher, grandfather of Rachel Mosher-Williams
Charlotte Panton, sister of Barbara Faigin
Roman Poogach, grandfather of Robert Poogach
Barbara Schwartz, mother of Melissa Schwartz Klein
Lou Slifman, father of Larry Slifman
William Sternfeld, father of Eliot Sternfeld
Jacob Tanner, father of Olivia Fechter
Solomon Teitelbaum, father of Howard Teitelbaum
Ann Umans, mother of Dorothy Umans
Maurice Umans, father of Dorothy Umans
Miriam Walders, sister of Larry Walders

# LET THE RABBI PROVIDE PASTORAL SUPPORT

Please be in touch with me in times of joy, sadness, or illness in your life or in the lives of a loved one or another member of the congregation. If you have a pastoral need, please call the BJC office at (301) 469-8636 or email me at rabbiabbott@bethesdajewish.org. For a lifecycle emergency during non-office hours, please call (301) 664-4585. When I am away, please contact Geryl Baer in the BJC office at (301) 469-8636, admin@bethesdajewish.org. She will know how to contact me or my substitute.

# **OUR MEMBERS**

# **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**

Carol Ann Greenberg

# **NACHAS NOTES**

Editor's Note: Share the joys in your life! Send to: amy@bethesdajewish.org

# **THANK YOUS**

# **DONATION GENERAL**

Burt and Peg Bachrach in Memory of Phyllis Goldberg
Bruce and Linda Baum in Memory of Dr. Robert Fischel, father-in-law of Rabbi Abbott
Diane Blumenthal and Craig Winslow in Memory of Alan Wolfe, uncle of Shoshanah Drake
Diane Blumenthal and Craig Winslow in Memory of Herbert Blumenthal
Helen Dalton in Memory of Zena Feldman
Martin and Barbara Faigin in Memory of Marty Ganzglass
Carie Schaffer in Memory of Jeff Schaffer

## HINEINI- HERE I AM

Nancy Allinson and Martin Dickinson

Peg and Burt Bachrach

**Geryl and Louis Baer** 

Diane Blumenthal and Craig Winslow

Diane Blumenthal and Craig Winslow in Honor of Jeremy Mendelson

Diane Blumenthal and Craig Winslow in Honor of Liz Sloss and Jim Korelitz

Richard and Bea Blumstein

**Cindy Bogorad** 

Bruce and Wynne Busman in Memory of Dr. Robert Fischel

Bruce and Wynne Busman in Memory of Gerald Fine

**Charles and Linda Cole** 

**Helen Dalton** 

Shoshanah and Brian Drake in Honor of Jim Korelitz and Liz Sloss for all you do for BJC

Shoshanah and Brian Drake in Honor of Maran Gluckstein for all you do and have done for BJC

Shoshanah and Brian Drake in Honor of Cindy Bogorad to say thank you for all you do and for being a part of BJC

Shoshanah and Brian Drake in Memory of Gerald Lawrence Fine, father of Ken Fine

Shoshanah and Brian Drake in Memory of Dr. Bob Fischel, father-in-law of Rabbi Abbott

Michelle and Stuart Frank

Maran Gluckstein

Miles and Ronnie Haber

Lindsey and Evan Jacobson

Karen Levi

Jim Korelitz and Liz Sloss

Jeremy and Sarah Pelter

**Ruth Salinger** 

Carie Schaffer 15

# THANK YOUS (CONT.)

# HINEINI- HERE I AM

Robin and Stuart Sorkin in Honor of our grandchildren, Addison Belle Sorkin, Atlas Locke Mazur, Riley Theo Sorkin
Norma and Edward Stern
Howard Teitelbaum
Steve Turow and Linda Blumberg
Lorrie Van Akkeren
Gerson and Shirley Yalowitz

# RABBI ERIC ABBOTT'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

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# MARAN GLUCKSTEIN EDUCATIONAL FUND

Diane Blumenthal and Craig Winslow



# CONSULT BJC NOW FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION AND LINKS TO CONNECT VIA ZOOM

# **CALENDAR for JANUARY 2024**

Day	Date	<b>Starting Time</b>	EVENT
Wednesday	1/3	7:00 PM	Torah Today
Friday	1/5	5:30 PM	Tot Shabbat- Covenant Hall and Online
		6:00 PM	Family Service Dinner
		6:45 PM	Shabbat Services- Covenant Hall and Online
Saturday	1/6	9:00 AM	8
		9:30 AM	3 0
		10:30 AM	Shabbat Services- Covenant Hall and Online
Sunday	1/7	2:00 PM	Krav Maga Class- Chevy Chase
Wednesday	1/10	7:00 PM	Torah Today
Thursday	1/11	11:00 AM	Programming Committee Meeting- Online
		2:30 PM	Rosh Chodesh Circle
		7:00 PM	BJC Board Meeting
Friday	1/12	7:30 PM	Shabbat Services- Covenant Hall and Online
Saturday	1/13	9:00 AM	Adult Hebrew Class- Lounge
		10:30 AM	Shabbat Services- Covenant Hall and Online
Wednesday	1/17	7:00 PM	Torah Today
Thursday	1/18	7:00 PM	Mahjongg
Friday	1/19	7:30 PM	Shabbat Services- Covenant Hall and Online
Saturday	1/20	9:00 AM	Adult Hebrew Class- Lounge
		9:30 AM	BJC Religious School
		10:30 AM	Shabbat Services- Covenant Hall and Online
Wednesday	1/24	7:00 PM	Torah Today
		8:00 PM	
Friday	1/26	7:30 PM	Shabbat Services- Covenant Hall and Online
Saturday	1/27	9:00 AM	Adult Hebrew Class- Lounge
		10:30 AM	
		1:00 PM	Tu B' Shevat Ice Cream Seder- Memorial Hall
Wednesday	1/31	7:00 PM	Torah Today
		8:00 PM	Book Club- Online