

● CONGREGATION AM HAYAM MIGDALOR

DECEMBER, 2018

From the Rabbi's Study

First Comes Courage

Which act of heroism stands out for you in the Hanukkah story?

For me, it was an act of Mattathias. He was a priest from the rural town of Modi'in. He served in the Jerusalem Temple, but returned home in 167 B.C.E. after the Seleucid Greek ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes enacted persecutions against the practice of Judaism. The Seleucid officials in Modi'in set up altars to the Greek gods in the public square, and required Jews to come and show obeisance to them and their gods. When the first Jew went, Mattathias went and killed him, and then he turned and killed the Greek officials administering the altar area. He then shouted, "Whoever is zealous for Torah and supports the covenant, come with me!"¹ Mattathias took his five sons and went to the Gophna Hills (northeast of Modi'in), where he immediately set up headquarters to begin the guerilla-type warfare to fight against the Syrian Greek tyranny.

I do not picture Mattathias as reacting impulsively, out of anger or contempt. Rather, I picture him as having planned the insurrection, and employed his thoughtful courage at precisely the right time. His act sent a message to his fellow Jews that they did indeed have other options than to quietly capitulate. As a community leader, he put the government's scrutiny directly on himself and his family, thus giving cover and encouragement to others. As a politico-religious figure, he clearly sent a message that Judaism consisted of more than mere rituals, as precious as they might be. But because there was much more, giving up a Jewish way of life was already a death of both the mind and spirit. If not for Mattathias, there would be no rebellion. And without the rebellion, there would be no Hanukkah, no miracle of the oil--and our collective story would be, if not over, then quite different. Instead, one single courageous act of one man rescued an entire people from ignominy and oblivion. No wonder that it is Mattathias, and not Judah Maccabee or anyone else, who merits explicit mention in the amidah (central daily prayer) for Hanukkah and in the insertion for Birkat HaMazon (blessing after meals).

Whence Mattathias' courage? His act reminds me of the incident record in Herodotus' history of the Greek wars. One Athenian soldier was lame, and some of his fellow soldiers laughed at him

¹ 1 Maccabees 2:27.

because of his disability. After trying to tolerate their derision for a while, he finally could stand it no longer. He silenced them, asserting, "I am here to fight and not to run."

This evinces the same spirit as Mattathias, and it is the animating philosophy of all those who have the courage of their convictions:

This was the courage of the first surgeon who dared to cut into a heart in order to repair it.

This was the courage of the first psychiatrist who plunged into the dark pit of the emotions and opened a new door of healing for the emotionally struggling.

This was the courage of

- the first airplane pilot;
- the first person to let a mosquito bite their arm to test an anti-malaria drug;
- the first printer to set type for a free press;
- the first person to call for a strike for living working conditions in the sweat shop;
- the first person to break through a glass ceiling that broadened our human understanding;
- the first person to challenge traditional ideas, norms, and values--not to undermine them but to rescue them and elevate them;
- the first person to say to their family member or friend, "Enough already;"

and all the "firsts" that have helped our lives become more productive, more soulful, and more worthwhile.

That outlook, that fortitude, that grit, can sustain us. As Charles Reznikoff wrote in his poem, "Hanukkah,"²

...The miracle, of course, was not that the oil for the sacred light--
in a little cruse--lasted as long as they say;
but that the courage of the Maccabees lasted to this day;
let that nourish my flickering spirit.

Mattathias' example thus reminds us that courage is the first lesson in the advancement of life. For all of us are here to fight and not to run.

May this Hanukkah remind us that we are all descendants of Mattathias.

May this Hanukkah we find that the lights of the candles ignite our hearts with clarity of purpose.

May this Hanukkah ignite us with thoughtful courage.

Hag ha-urim samei-ah! Happy Hanukkah!

Rabbi J.B. Sacks

² Reprinted in Rubin, Steven J. *Celebrating the Jewish Holidays: Poems, Stories, Essays*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2003, p. 228.

MESSAGE from BRENDA RICH

Greetings: Can you actually believe it is December. Wasn't it just yesterday that we were wishing everyone L'Shanah Tovah. And here it is coming, the secular year of 2019. But first we have December and with December come Hanukkah. We will be celebrating Hanukkah on our first Shabbat in December starting with Erev Shabbat on Friday, December 7th at 8 p.m. Our celebration will continue on Saturday, December 8th at 10 a.m. We will enjoy a delightful Kiddush lunch with latkes and other delights. And we will have double the enjoyment as Fran Lande leads us in the discussion of the Significant Book Clubs selection of *My Glorious Brothers*, by Howard Fast. So be sure to RSVP to Fran Lande at fblande@gmail.com that you will be attending services.

The Migdalor is being sent to you in this manner due to the fact that before Thanksgiving, Bev Rosen suffered severe burns to her right hand in a cooking accident. I know we all wish her a speedy recovery.

Just want to remind you to definitely save the date of Sunday, March 31st for our Taste of Passover. Those of you who were at our Taste of Jewish Kitchen last year know what a wonderful and entertaining that day was. And those of you who missed it, will definitely want to be there.

We haven't forgotten about the showing at the Skirball Museum of Ruth Bader Ginsberg . Please hold the date of Sunday, January 27th open. More details will be coming.

Shalom

Brenda

MONDAYS with MORT

During the month of December there WILL BE sessions of Mondays With Mort at CAH at 10:30 AM on every Monday except for Monday, December 10th.

Question of the Month:

Who is not allowed to receive a gift?

The answer can be found at <http://www.mondayswithmort.com/doyouknow.htm>, Also be sure to check out the entire Mondays with Mort website at <http://www.mondayswithmort.com> and the CAH web site at www.amhayam.com .

Mort

IN HONOR OF

Boris Korsunsky IHO Rabbi Sacks

Eva Lowe IHO Good health report

IN MEMORY OF

Marcia Perlmutter IMO Hyman Paper

Ruth Resnick IMO Sally Resnick

Irv Bergman IMO Joseph Bergman

Florence Beck IMO Milton Beck

Roz Resnick Pittsburgh Memorial

Mildred Rubinstein IMO David Rubinstein

TRIBUTE CARDS

Eva Lowe IHO Rabbi Sacks

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

December 3 Neill Fingerhut

December 3 Myrna Winer

December 16 Gail Packer

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

December 14 Betty & Neal Abramson

December 16 Arlene & Gerald Davis

GET WELL

Bob Packer

Sheila Myles

Fran Lande

Gail Packer

Irv Jacobs

Arnie Rich

Nancy Stein

Donna Gustafson

Jerry Cordova

Judith Jacobson

Judye Newberger

Steven Karash

Eva Lowe

Fil Barton

Norma Van Riper

Mort Resnick

Dianne Ruthman

Ann Sperber

Herb Stein

Roz Resnick

Lee Rothschild

Beth Morales

Betty Abramson

Bruce Irvine

Lois Lebman

Bev Rosen

SIGNIFICANT BOOK CLUB DISCUSSES MY GLORIOUS BROTHERS

The next book will be *My Glorious Brothers* by Howard Fast. *My Glorious Brothers* is a historical novel depicting the 167 BC Maccabean revolt against the Greek-Seleucid Empire. The novel, which deals with Jewish independence and self-determination, was published in 1948, during the Israeli War of Independence.

The discussion will occur after services on Saturday, December 8, 2018 as part of our celebration of Hanukkah. Participants will enjoy the kiddush while discussing the book. One does not have had to read the book to learn and enjoy the learning.

For more information and to RSVP, please contact Fran Lande, Adult Education Chair, at fblande@gmail.com.

SIGNIFICANT BOOK CLUB: THE BETRAYERS

The next book for the Significant Book Club will be *The Betrayers* by David Bezmozgis. Donald Weber, a reviewer for the Jewish Book Council writes the following:

In his richly-imagined novel, Bezmozgis focuses on a major chapter in recent Jewish political and social history:- the ordeal experienced by “refuseniks”—Jews who sought to emigrate from the Soviet Union but were “refused” exit by the implacable Russian State.

David Bezmozgis’s Jews are haunted by the traumas and indignities of modern history. Drawn with psychological nuance, historical acuity, and deep compassion tinged with irony—in the tradition of great storytellers like Isaac Babel and Bernard Malamud—Bezmozgis’s Jews tend to find themselves on the edge of history: displaced, in transit, suitcases already packed, seeking spiritual and physical asylum.

We will be discussing this book on February 16, 2018 after Shabbat morning services. We will have food from the Kiddush and then sit and have a meaningful discussion. All our welcome, even if you are unable to read the book.

The book can be purchased at Amazon, using Amazon smile to benefit CAH or at any book store.

For more information and to RSVP, please contact Fran Lande, Adult Education chair, at fblande@gmail.com

YAHREZEITS

December 7

*Saul Kupperman, Father of Mark Kupperman

*Max Sperber, Father-In-Law of Ann Sperber

Goldie Stein, Mother of Herb Stein

December 21

Regina Spunt Hacker, Mother of Fil Barton

Leah Dennis, Mother of Renee Becker

Benjamin Dennis, Father of Renee Becker

*Irving Prilook, Father of Elaine Hanig

*Sol Kozak, Father of Maurice Kozak

Sylvia Fogel, Grandmother of Myra Matlin

Albert Zeller, Father of Sheila Myles

Ruth Hochberg, Mother of Miriam Rubinstein

Maurice Ruthman, Father-In-Law of Dianne Ruthman

**THE MIGDALOR IS BEING SENT THIS WAY DUE TO BEV ROSEN'S ACCIDENT.
NOT EVERYTHING HAS BEEN INCLUDED IN THE MIGDALOR.**

PLEASE CHECK OUR WEBSITE - www.amhayam.com

PLEASE CLICK ON THE TABS TO FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**PLEASE CLICK ON THE CALANDAR TAB TO SEE THE CALENDAR FOR
DECEMBER**

THANK YOU !!

Brenda Rich, President