

Sim Shalom

Adar-Nisan 5775
February-March 2015

THE NEWSLETTER OF TEMPLE BETH ISRAEL, HARLINGEN TEXAS

1702 E. Jackson
P.O. Box 3398
Harlingen, TX 78551
(956) 423-2928
www.harlingentemple.com

Rabbi Frank Joseph
1832 Cooper Dr.
Irving TX 75061
214-293-6515
frank@
rabbifrankjoseph.org

TRUSTEES

Abby Warshowsky,
President
956-412-3520
956-536-0705 cell
gonsky@sbcglobal.net

Richard Newman,
Vice President
718-419-6202
rocknewman@gmail.com

Anne Weiss,
Treasurer/Secretary
956-433-6318 (cell)
aweiss44@yahoo.com

Susan Ander,
454-4647
sbethmark@aol.com

Alma Russek
956-970-7722
AlmaFRussek3@aol.com

Joel Smith
956-534-8883
jpsm31@sbcglobal.net

Bert Wolf,
956-535-6629
bertwolf3@gmail.com

Rollins Koppel,
Trustee Emeritus
956-428-1789
rkoppel@rkoppel.com

Temple Beth Israel

invites you to a

*Dinner at the Temple
Honoring Our Friends*



Bill Berg and Laurel Steinberg

for their leadership and commitment

Saturday, February 21

6 p.m.

Cover: \$40

RSVP 956-970-4005

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Wow, I don't even know where to begin. We have been blessed with a flurry of joyful activities lately. We had our first blood drive at Temple Beth Israel. We had support from some members of both the Brownsville and McAllen Jewish communities. We had enough donations to potentially save eight lives. Since we say when you save a life, you save the world, we can applaud our Temple's efforts in saving the world. Thanks to everyone who helped out.

This month we have the great pleasure of honoring two wonderful members of our community at a dinner on February 21, 2015, at 6:00 p.m. Laurel Steinberg and Bill Berg deserve our thanks and recognition for all their contributions over the years. In a Temple our size, often the distribution of work falls disproportionately on the shoulders of some dedicated members. Laurel and Bill have always stepped up to carry their weight and more. Bill has served as our
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Calendar

FEBRUARY

- 20-22 *Rabbi in town*
 20 7:30 p.m. Shabbat services
 21 9 a.m. Shabbat service, with Torah discussion and breakfast to follow
 21 6 p.m. Berg-Steinberg Tribute Dinner
 22 10 a.m. Religion School

MARCH

- 4 Purim Party, Megillah reading
 5 Purim
 6-7 *Rabbi in town*
 6 7:30 p.m. Shabbat services
 7 9 a.m. Shabbat service, with Torah discussion and breakfast to follow
 7 6:30 p.m. Havdallah service with discussion
 22 Annual Congregational Meeting
 29 Temple Clean Up and Work Day

SPECIAL PROGRAM



FROM THE PRESIDENT

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Gabbai for Torah readings for which we are very grateful. He volunteered as a Sunday school teacher and has been an active member of our community for many years. Laurel has been a Sunday school and Hebrew teacher. She was our President for three years as well as a Board member for several others. Laurel continues to coordinate Onegs and potlucks, and she sends out the mass email announcements. These contributions are what keep us going as a community. We do not have staff. We are dependent completely on the community for financial donations as well as personal time and effort. These two great members have tirelessly given the kind of push our Temple needs to keep going. Thank you Bill and Laurel for everything!

On a personal note, when we first started the Sunday school, the parents would often gather to make lunches together. This time gave us opportunities to discuss parenting and the education of our children. This turned out to be invaluable. I was given suggestions by Bill and Laurel regarding the direction of my kids' education, which turned out to be so helpful. I think that parents of our Sunday school

children have benefitted from these sorts of discussions because we share similar goals for the education and success of our community. I think Bill and Laurel's selflessness has set a standard from which we all benefit. Thank you both from our community and from me personally because I am truly grateful that you have been a part of my family's life.

Additionally, on February 12, 2015, we had the honor of welcoming our newest member to the community. Charlie and Karina Hernandez who are new members brought their son, Mateo (Hebrew name: Caleb), for his Brit Milah. Rabbi Kogan from McAllen, who is also a Mohel, led the service. We had members of the Brownsville Jewish community and the McAllen Rabbi in our Temple. My hope as President has been that we can share with our greater Jewish communities especially for such joyous celebrations. It is such an uplifting occasion to welcome a new young life to our Temple. Thank you Charlie and Karina for sharing this joy with us, and Mazel Tov!

I would be remiss if I failed to wish Laurie Joseph a Happy 50th Birthday!!!

And many, many more....

—Abby Warshowsky

NEEDED:

A volunteer to write thank you cards and yahrzeit reminders on behalf of Temple Beth Israel.

Contact Abby
956-536-0705
or gonsky@sbcglobal.net

DO YOU BUY GROCERIES? DRINK COFFEE? SEE MOVIES?

Help Temple Beth Israel at no additional cost while you do the things you always do. Buy gift cards for HEB, Wal-Mart, Cinemark, Starbucks, Target etc. before you go, and the Temple will receive a percentage.

Please support our scrip card program!
See Alma Russek or call her at 970-7722.

Oneg Shabbat

Each member household is asked to host one Shabbat oneg during the year. Remember hosting now involves setting up, cleaning up, and providing challah, Kosher wine, grape juice, paper/plastic goods, coffee and drinks. You can bring other treats you like, but the congregation will share the responsibility of bringing snacks and desserts. If you cannot be a host on the date assigned, please call Laurel Steinberg at 550-9530.

ONEG HOSTS

February 20: Tammy Spink, Sharon Fulton

March 6: Victor and Judy de Leon, Bert and Tori Keyes

Thank You

DONATIONS

SHABBAT BREAKFAST

Russek Jr Fernando & Alma	In Honor Laurie Joseph's Birthday
	In Honor of Bill Berg and Laurel Steinberg
	In Honor of Caleb Hernandez's Brit Milah
	In Honor of Charlie & Karina Hernandez's for their conversion to Judaism

GENERAL FUND

Weiss Robert I & Anne B.	
Koppel Rollins and Amalie Foundation	
Hernandez Family	In Honor of Caleb Hernandez's Brit Milah
Greenfeld Sheila	Yarzeit for Gertrude Greenfeld

GENERAL FUND: In Honor of Bill Berg and Laurel Steinberg

Alpert Emily and Bertha A Janis,	Harriet Denise and Lindsey N Joseph
Alpert Leonard and Elinor	Lawrence A Victor and Lynn K Victor
Ander Susan	Lazaro and Sara Kisel
Berkowitz Richard & Judy	Light Harriet and Jere C
DeLeon Victor and Judy	Rosalie Berg
Eva Silberman	Spink Tamarah S.
First Community Bank	Warshowsky Mary H.
Fisch Stan & Nivia	Weiss Robert I & Anne B.
Greenfeld Sheila	Wolf Bert & Jamie
Guerta Rubinsky	

Celebrations

BIRTHDAYS

2/4	Fernando A. Russek
2/7	William C. Stewart
2/10	Laurie Joseph
2/15	Joshua Jacobson
2/18	Brett Wolf
2/20	Bill Berg
3/14	Gerald Sondock
3/16	Meredith Linsky
3/19	Bert Wolf
3/22	Dan Simha
3/31	Gilbert Weisberg
4/5	Alma Russek
4/5	Jamie Wolf
4/6	Dagan Wise-Herring
4/11	Andre Suissa
4/15	Jonathan Berg
4/16	Brittini Elise Greenfeld
4/17	Sophia Simha

ANNIVERSARIES

2/6	Christine & Richard Newman
2/7	Jose & Liliana Cohen
3/7	Dr. Stan & Nivia Fisch
3/20	Paul & Sofia Shirazi
5/29	Bill & Monica Stewart
5/30	Bill Berg & Laurel Steinberg
6/20	Lewis & Dena Levine
6/29	Harry & Elizabeth Holzman
6/30	David & Laurie Jacobson
8/14	Gilbert & Susy Weisberg
8/19	Luis Gonzalez & Abby Warshowsky
8/22	Bert & Jamie Wolf
8/25	Rabbi Frank & Laurie Joseph

Did we miss you?

Please send birthdays & anniversaries to laurie.b.joseph@gmail.com.

FROM DEBORAH RUSSEK

I wait for the train home as the winter winds blow around me, and it literally rains dirt. I think about what I can possibly write about this past year and a half.

As you all know, I made Aliyah in 2013 after deciding I wanted to come back to Israel and join the Israeli military instead of going straight to university, and I drafted November 2013 after 8 grueling months of daily fighting with the infamous IDF bureaucracy.

I started off as everyone always does, with basic training, where I slept with 10 other girls in a tent, learned the basics about the Army, slept out in the wilderness, learned how to shoot an M16, did guard duty for hours on end, and learned how it's possible to shower in less than a minute. And had a surprisingly really fun time.

After four weeks, I finished and was sent to my new unit -- the Foreign Relations unit. I nervously waited to see where they would send me, not having a clue what the actual job was, and was assigned to be a Liaison NCO on one of Israel's borders. I only got out twice a month, but I loved my job. I made incredible friends and did things I'll never be able to tell anyone about. I felt like I was making a difference in and contributing to the efforts of the IDF.

After about 7 months in the army, my commander called me in and asked me, "Do you want to become an officer? You have one day to decide, and if you wait, it might be too late next time."

How does anyone make a decision like that in one day? To go through six months of intense training and be a commanding officer at the age of 20? Hesitant at first because of my age and knowing that if I did it, I'd only get out minimum at age 23, my father who was also an officer in the Mexican Army, convinced me. I liked my job anyway so why not?

I went through the first selection process, suitability tests and interviews, and passed. So far so good. Then Operation 'Protective Edge' started two weeks before I was set to start the preparatory stage of the course. Everything continued as planned, of course, but every day we woke up dreading to see who's names we'd see on the news that morning. Everybody knew somebody. Everybody had somebody inside or right outside. Brave soldiers, only mere boys, fighting to defend this beautiful country and its citizens fell on an almost



daily basis, including Sean Carmeli. Sean of South Padre Island, with whom I wasn't close but learned with in Sunday school as children and saw around from time to time as he was friends with my friends.

It was a low blow. Every soldier that fell hurt, but this was unbelievable. The entire country found out by text, a text with the names of that day that had leaked. The war continued for fifty days with thousands of rockets, missiles, mortars launched at Israel, constant terrorist infiltration attempts, the sirens becoming a daily part of life, and the constant tracking of news.

I finished my preparatory course — next stop Bahad 1 — the Israeli officers school. The first week, thousands of cadets arrived, waiting to see who would make the cut. After several exams, the March came. If you made to the March you were in. After 8 kilometers through the hilly desert while carrying all of our equipment, we stood at the top of the Ramon Crater as the sun rose and the Israeli flag blew in the wind, and received our tags.

Two and a half difficult months of learning all day long, guard duty, learning how to run a shooting range, guarding settlements in the West Bank, visiting Jerusalem, closing Shabbats, staying up all night and all weekend working on assignments, having no life, failing tests, crying, laughing, and asking ourselves what we have done.

Then the final stage — where you learn to your specific unit. Two months of finally going back to what I loved, foreign relations and liaison. I managed to make it through, excited to finally finish and get my new assignment, never thinking I'd make it.

Who would've thought? A little ol' girl with not so great Hebrew from Harlingen, Texas, who make it to become an officer in the Israeli Defense Forces? I've now been almost two months in my new position as an officer in what's called the Military Strategic Information Section. I have four soldiers who all happen to be lone soldiers between the age of 22-27 and have degrees that I need to command.

It's a completely different range of work. It's not easy, and every day I learn a little more. It's not the job I particularly wanted, but it's an important and difficult job nonetheless, and I wouldn't change my decision for the world.

Who knows where I'll end up? Chief of Staff anyone?

BLOOD DRIVE

Dear Alma:

United Blood Services congratulates and thanks you for organizing the recent blood drive at Temple Beth Israel. Your drive will help to assure that blood is available for patients in need.

At the blood drive, 18 people registered to donate, which resulted in 15 units of lifesaving blood for our community.

Your efforts and the support of Temple Beth Israel are greatly appreciated and will go a long way toward assuring a strong blood supply and ultimately saving lives.

Again, thank you for your contribution and ongoing support of the community blood program. I enjoyed working with you and look forward to our next meeting to plan your upcoming blood drive.

Sincerely,

Candy Sorayah Iannelli

Donor Recruitment Representative

United Blood Services



TU B'SHEVAT



We had our Temple's annual Tu B'Shevat picnic with a Scavenger Hunt.

Team members included Melanie Goldstein, Isaiah Newman, Yossi Gilbert, Joshua Cavazos, Zendaya Newman, Shirit Campos, Sandra Campos, Johanan Campos, Jaziel Campos, Christine Newman, Malka Gilbert, Rebekah Russek, Benjamin Newman, Andrew Newman, Risk Newman, Roman Newman, Yafah Russek, Jacqueline Goldstein, Tehila Gilbert, Joseph Newman, Norma Gaytan, Braulio Gaytan, Alma Russek, Shoshana Gilbert, Charlene Moskal, Fernando Russek. They were separated on teams that followed clues and questions and activities related to the holiday.

We went to Ramsey Park in Harlingen, and every one had a great time that ended with a lunch that included beautiful tasty fruits.

— *Fernando A. Russek*

