

SIM SHALOM

OUR NEWSLETTER

Early Shabbat
service Nov. 20:
7:30 p.m.

Cheshvan-Kislev 5770

November-December 2009

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Gala dinner

honoring Fernando and Alma Russek

The testimonial dinner for Fernando and Alma Russek was a gala affair. Over 50 people came to honor the Russeks and enjoy the dinner.

The dinner committee felt that the best way to honor the Russek family was to dedicate a pew in their honor.

Rabbi Joseph spoke of the many things the Russeks do for our community and presented them with a plaque that they could place on the pew of their choice.

Counting the donations made in honor of the Russeks, the proceeds of the dinner, the sale of the painting donated by Liliana Cohen and the proceeds of the ad journal, over \$4,000 was raised for the temple.

— Janet Wilder



Fernando and Alma Russek

More photos, Pages 4-6

From the President

I recently discovered that I can predict the future.

Yes, after so many years of living, I just realized how to harness the power to anticipate future events. In the last Sim Shalom I shared with you the teachings

Continued on Page 3

From the Rabbi

Shalom,

We celebrate the great American festival of Thanksgiving on Thursday, Nov. 26, two days before we read the Torah portion of *Vayaitzay*, which contains the first mention of giving thanks.

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CALENDAR

FRI., NOV. 20
Shabbat Service, 7:30 PM

SAT., NOV. 21
Shabbat Service, 10 AM
Havdallah Movie Night
6:30 PM

SUN., NOV. 22
Religion School, 10 AM

SUN., DEC. 6
Religion School, 10 AM

FRI., DEC. 11
Shabbat Service, 8 PM
Temple Rededication
First Hanukkah light

DEC. 12-18
Hanukkah

SAT., DEC. 12
Shabbat Service, 10 AM
Havdallah 6:30 PM

SUN., DEC. 13
Religion School, 10 AM
Student Hanukkah Party

SUN., DEC. 24
Student Lock-in

SUN., JAN. 10
Religion School, 10 AM

SUN., JAN. 17
Religion School, 10 AM

SUN., JAN. 24
Religion School, 10 AM

FRI., JAN. 29
Shabbat Service, 8 PM

SAT., JAN 30
Shabbat Service, 10 AM
Havdallah, 6:30 PM

SUN., JAN. 31
Religion School, 10 AM

SUN., FEB. 7
Religion School, 10 AM

SUN., FEB. 14
Religion School, 10 AM

NEWS AND NOTES

■ The congregation is urged to get the *Valley Morning Star* on Sunday, Dec. 13. It is believed that there will be a piece about the temple in that issue.

■ **Movie Night:** After Havdalah at 6:30 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21, we will show *Praying with Lior*, an award-winning documentary about a boy with Down Syndrome who has a special gift for prayer. "The movie poses difficult questions such as what is 'disability' and who really talks to God?" — <http://www.prayingwithlior.com>

■ We only need one more **stained glass window** (Number 6) to be donated so that we can dedicate all of them at the Temple rededication on Friday, Dec. 11. So if you have been thinking of donating a window in honor of someone you love, now is the time to step up and do it. Call or email any board member -- only \$800. And don't forget the pews. Dedicate a refurbished pew for \$1,250!

■ We will officially celebrate our newly renovated and repaired temple at the Redication and Hanukkah Shabbat on Friday, Dec. 11. This will be the first night of Hanukkah, so bring your Hanukkah, and we will light them all together before services.

For all Religion School students, remember to work on your handmade original Hanukkah for our annual contest. The one who creates the most awesome Hanukkah will get \$50! They are due by Friday eve services, Dec. 11. And on Sunday, Dec. 13, the school will organize a potluck lunch and Hanukkah party. The whole temple community is invited to participate. There will be a latke contest, to honor the creator of the most delicious latkes. So try out your recipes now, and bring enough for the judges and at least some of the people.

— Laurel Steinberg

TRIP TO ISRAEL

Temple Beth Israel is planning a Congregational Trip to Israel. We will leave on May 20, 2010. The tentative cost is approximately \$3,500 per person/double occupancy, which includes airfare. We will have more accurate price details as the date approaches.

Please see this web site for the itinerary: <http://www.americaisrael.us/old-new.html>

The company is willing to offer us an extra day at no additional charge.

We have sent a copy of our notice about the trip to Israel to the Brownsville and McAllen congregations. The Brownsville congregation has disseminated it to all of their members. It would be really nice to have a Valley-wide "pilgrimage" to Israel.

Dyan Banks and Janet Wilder are putting the trip together. Please contact Dyan at (956)421-3252 or Janet at (956)423-2910 if you are interested in going with us.



From the Rabbi

From Page 1

Leah, the wife of Jacob, was the first one to thank G-D for the blessing of children. She named her fourth son Yehudah ("thank G-D") because she was grateful for His wonderful gift.

As descendants of Yehudah, we are called Yehudim or Jews, and thanking G-D is one of the most frequent expressions of our people. Every Jewish prayer either begins or concludes with a blessing. The first words we recite every morning upon awakening are *Modeh Ani* — "I thank G-D. I am grateful."

When you ask a traditional Jew, "How are you?" invariably the answer includes, "Thank G-D."

Our sages tell us that in the Messianic Era when all is perfect, we will still continue to daily recite Psalm 100, "A Psalm of Thanksgiving."

As Jews we are required to recite at least 100 blessings of thanks each day. Giving thanks is more than a habitual phrase. It reflects an abiding faith in a benevolent G-D and expresses the unwavering optimism of the Jew. A dismal past or present ALWAYS gives way to a hopeful future.

As we are about to celebrate Thanksgiving we are extremely grateful to G-D for all the many wonderful blessings He has given us. We are especially grateful for our friends in the Rio Grande Valley and happy to be a part of such a wonderful congregation as Temple Beth Israel.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving, may we all be extremely grateful to G-D for all He continues to bless us with every day!

Have A Wonderful Thanksgiving!
Shalom U'V'Racha
Rabbi Frank Joseph

DONATIONS

■ From Rabbi & Laurie Joseph in honor of Janet W, Dyan B, Amy K and all who helped put together the testimonial dinner for the Russeks.

In honor of Fernando and Ama Russek:

- From Dr. Jorge Herszage,
- From Lewis and Dena Levine
- From Richard and Judy Berkowitz

In honor of Lewis Levine's 80th birthday:

- From Richard and Judy Berkowitz

From the President

From Page 1

of Rabbi Israel Salanter about the *midos* (traits) that we should work on everyday to better ourselves.

One could think that the practice and application of these traits are important for the great decisions in life. But after meditating and trying to see things through a different colored glass, I realize that the practice of these *midos* is most important in the small everyday decisions that we normally do not consider very carefully.

If we master the *midos* on these small decisions, we will be prepared to apply them to the important actions, reactions or inactions in life. As I see them, three of the 13 *midos* have to do with the way we talk to others:

Menuja — (tranquility) do not be overwhelmed, always act with deliberation.

Najas — (gentleness) speak in a gentle manner, and always try to speak softly.

Shtikah — (silence) deliberate on the ramifications of our words before using them.

It was after trying to practice these *midos* that I realized in a certain way we can predict the future. Every time you talk to somebody, if you deliberate on what will happen, you can determine what their reaction will be to the words you are about to utter. You can see in your mind a mini-movie of a possible future reaction those words will have, and this will give you an advantage in choosing the most correct way to speak. This is most difficult not with strangers but with the people closest to us whom we love the most. In many cases we don't stop to consider and deliberate.

Since I have done this, I have been feeling better.

Alma and I once again want to thank everybody who worked so hard to organize and prepare the dinner in our honor.

We will have the rededication of our Temple at 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 11. We will unveil a plaque in honor of this event, followed by lighting the Chanukah candles, a short Sabbath service and oneg featuring a slideshow of congregational photos. I'd like to ask all of you to help me gather some old pictures of the Temple to be scanned or better yet please scan them yourselves and e-mail them to me at uniquefarjr@aol.com.

Please come and invite your friends to join us in this simcha.

Shalom,
Fernando A. Russek Jr.



Gala Dinner

honoring Fernando and Alma Russek

A huge *Todah Rabah* and Thank You Very Much to Janet Wilder and Dyan Banks for organizing the Testimonial Dinner and Ad Journal in honor of Fernando and Alma Russek on October 22. They did a superb job. The dinner was delicious, and the temple looked elegant.

So thanks to the whole dinner committee: Dyan B., Janice C., Nivia F., Patty G., Veronica H., Tori K., Amy K., and Janet W.

And thanks to the others who donated and helped:

Bert and Jamie Wolf for the journal printing, Ron Banks for wine and postage, Abby W. for the water, Alma R. for decorations, the Confirmation Class for setting up and serving, and Rabbi Joseph for his lovely talk in the Russeks' honor.



— Laurel Steinberg



Special thanks

Artist Liliana Cohen donated her beautiful painting of Jerusalem imagery, which was auctioned during the dinner. Happy bidder Dyan Banks, left, walked away with the prize.



Janet Wilder,
Liliana Cohen
and Jose Cohen