

SIM SHALOM

OUR NEWSLETTER

Kislev-Tevet 5770

December 2009-January 2010

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Dedication



Join us
7 p.m. Friday,
December 11
for a special
Hanukkah
Service and
Temple
Rededication
as we
celebrate
everyone's
efforts to
rebuild and
renew our
temple.

From the Rabbi

Shalom,

This Friday evening we begin our celebration of Hanukkah, which commemorates both the spiritual and military victories of the Jewish people over the Greco-Syrian empire.

In 516 B.C.E., 70 years after the Babylonian Exile, thousands of Jews returned to Eretz Yisrael and rebuilt the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Jewish life was reestablished on a strong foundation of reli-

Continued on Page 3

CALENDAR

FRI., DEC. 11

Shabbat Service, 7 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, 6:30 PM
Shabbat Potluck Dinner

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

SUN., FEB. 21

Religion School, 10 AM

FRI., FEB. 26

Shabbat Service, 7:30 PM

SAT., FEB. 27

Shabbat Service, 10 AM
Havdallah, 6:30 PM

SUN., FEB. 28

Religion School, 10 AM

NEWS AND NOTES

■ Services this Friday, Dec. 11, will start at 7 p.m. Everybody, please bring your Hanukkah (Hanukkah menorah) to light before services start. Fernando is working on a presentation of photos from throughout the temple's history to enjoy at the rededication. Don't miss it!

■ Friday, Jan. 29, will be an early service and potluck shabbat supper. We will start at 6:30 pm. Laurel Steinberg will coordinate the meal, so call her about your contribution (550-9530). Plan to bring a delicious homemade dish.

■ All the stained glass windows have been donated now. Thank you to Bert

and Jamie Wolf for their donation of stained glass window Number 6.

■ The temple community extends its condolences to the Edelstein family on the passing of Ben Edelstein.

■ Thank you to The Harlingen Ob-Gyn Associates, P.A. — Uvaldo Cantu Jr MD FACOB, Ruben M Torres Jr MD FAOBG, Nivia Nieves Fisch CNM, and Joanna Imperial CNM — for their donation to the testimonial dinner ad journal. Their advertisement was inadvertently omitted. The temple greatly appreciates their generosity.

— 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.



ONEGS

Checklist:

- ☐ Decaf coffee
- ☐ Cream & sugar
- ☐ Decaf cold drinks or juice and ice
- ☐ Cups for coffee and drinks
- ☐ Plastic ware, napkins, plates
- ☐ Kosher wine
- ☐ Small wine cups

- ☐ Unsliced challah
- ☐ Table cloth (if one is used from the Temple, please launder it and return it to the Temple as soon as possible)
- ☐ Table decoration
- ☐ Desserts for about 40-50 people (choices of cookies, cakes, nuts, fruit, coffee cakes, or flan)

From the Rabbi

From Page 1

gious practice and autonomy. In time Judea was conquered by the Greeks under Alexander the Great. For many years the Jewish community continued to flourish, and their religious life was undisturbed.

By the middle of the 2nd century B.C.E., however, the classical culture of Greek civilization was replaced by the immoral conduct of a corrupt new Hellenism that lauded decadent behavior. Antiochus Epiphanes, who then ruled over the Jews, forced them to adopt immoral Hellenistic practices.

The observance of religious traditions such as the Sabbath, festivals, circumcision and other sacred rituals was forbidden under the threat of death, and Antiochus tested the loyalty of the Jews by setting up altars throughout Judea. The Holy Temple in Jerusalem was grossly defiled, converted to the worship of Zeus. Torahs and sacred books were destroyed.

Many Jews chose to die as martyrs rather than to surrender to idol worship and paganism. Others, however, chose to rise up in revolt. Under the leadership of a small band of Hasmoneans, also known as the Maccabees, they rallied Jewish forces to victory over their Hellenic oppressors.

Led first by the High Priest Matisyahu and then by his third son Judah, the Jews defeated the pagans, and the temple in Jerusalem was rededicated on 25 Kislev, three years to the day after it had first been defiled.

However, it is not the military victory that is paramount in the commemoration marked by the Festival of Lights. Rather it is the miracle that occurred in the temple. According to the Talmud, when the Maccabees restored the temple in 165 B.C.E., only one vessel of sanctified olive oil was found intact beneath the seal of the High Priest. Only one, enough to burn for one day in the temple's seven-branched candelabra, had not been defiled.

The golden menorah was kindled. Miraculously, this tiny amount of oil continued to burn for eight days, enough time for additional fresh oil to be obtained. The following year, the Hasmoneans designated the observance of those eight days as days of thanks in praise to G-d. This practice was adopted by the sages who ordained its observance from that time forward.

The emphasis on the miracle of the oil, rather than on the Maccabees' success in the military struggle, highlights G-d's role, reminding us that G-d was responsible for the great victory. As we read in the Book of Zechariah during the Shabbat of Hanukkah: "It is not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the L-rd of Hosts."

The spirit of Hanukkah has always been epitomized in the beautiful words of the Al Hanisim Prayer: "Through the power of Your Spirit, the weak defeated the strong, the few prevailed over the many, and the righteous were triumphant."

Our focus in Judaism has always been on the spiritual. It is the spirit of an individual or a group that determines any success!

As we celebrate Hanukkah we are extremely proud of our beloved Congregation Temple Beth Israel. Our numbers may be modest but our spirit soars. We invite the entire community to join us as we celebrate the rededication of our temple and the first night of Hanukkah this Friday evening, Dec. 11.

May Congregation Temple Beth Israel continue to be a wonderful blessing and to enrich the lives of the members of our community for generations to come! Laurie and I wish everyone a wonderful Hanukkah, and we look forward to seeing everyone this coming weekend.

Shalom U'V'Racha
Rabbi Frank Joseph