

Kislev/Tevet 5776

December 2015

# The Current

“The VOICE over many waters ...” Psalm 29

MAYIM RABIM  
מֵי רַבִּים  
CONGREGATION



Kislev/Tevet 5776

December 2015



## Increasing the Light

There is a debate in the Talmud about how to light the Chanukah candles. Should we start with the entire Chanukiah (Chanukah menorah) fully lit with all eight candles and shamash (helper) candle burning on the first night and decrease the number lit until on the eighth night we are down to one candle plus the shamash? Or should we light one candle the first night and increase the candles lit each night so that by the eighth the entire Chanukiah is ablaze? The great sage Shammai argued that we should take away one candle each night. The great sage Hillel argued the opposite. Obviously, we know Hillel's practice prevailed. Hillel explained that as we increase the light, we increase the holiness in the world. (Talmud Bavli, Shabbat, 21a).

How can we apply this principle to our lives and increase light in the world?

A Chasidic story is told of a man entering a dark room. He is overwhelmed by the darkness.

“Don't worry,” said his friend. “The darkness hits only at first. Soon your eyes will grow accustomed to it, and you will hardly notice the dark.”

“My friend,” replied the man, “that is our problem. Judaism teaches us to distinguish between lightness and darkness. But unfortunately, by becoming too accustomed to the situation, we begin to think of the darkness as light!”

We don't want to become complacent with the darkness in our midst. We call attention to the need to increase light at the darkest time of year, when the days are at their shortest. With the addition of each candle we can reflect on every day as an opportunity to grow and bring light into the world. We need to light candles and make the world a brighter place.

What do you do to bring light into the world in dark times? What do you do to bring light for others in their dark times? What brings light for you in your own dark times? Everyone will have their own answers and I urge you to think how you will illuminate the path for the world, others and yourself at this dark time of year. It may mean speaking up, responding and taking action. It may mean nourishing your own internal flame to be able to withstand darker times.

On Tuesday, December 1 at 7:00 pm we will explore Jewish texts that explore light and darkness. Come discover what our tradition says about the need to illuminate our inner and outer worlds and the connection made to Chanukah.

As we approach Chanukah, the Festival of Lights, I wish you and yours a “Chag Urim Sameach!” May you have a light-filled and joyous Chanukah!

*Rabbi Sharon Stiefel*



## Ritual and Program Schedule



*All events are held at 4401 York Avenue South  
in Minneapolis (Friends Meeting House)  
unless otherwise specified.*

### **Tuesday, December 1, 7:00 – 8:30**

**Light Lessons:** a study session led by Rabbi Stiefel

Chanukah is referred to as the “Festival of Lights.” Explore Chanukah texts that address themes of light and darkness and discover what we can learn about the need to illuminate our inner and outer worlds.

### **Friday, December 4**

**Shabbat Night Out:** Home hospitality potluck dinners  
Please email [isaac\\_kaufman@yahoo.com](mailto:isaac_kaufman@yahoo.com) if you would like to attend.

### **December 7 – 14, Chanukah**

*Light first candle Sunday, December 6.*

### **Sunday December 13, 4:30-7:00 PM**

Chanukah **Party** – candles, food, stories, songs, dreidels, fun!!  
Read the full story in *How are we Celebrating?* elsewhere in **The Current**.

### **Saturday December 19, 9:30 AM – Noon**

#### **Shabbat Morning Service**

Led by Rabbi Stiefel and congregants.  
Torah Portion: Vayigash “And he drew near.”  
A dairy vegetarian potluck lunch follows services.  
Childcare is provided.

### **Sunday December 27, 4:00 – 5:30 PM**

**Book Group**, reading **The Hilltop** by Assaf Gavron  
**Where:** the home of Larry and Ina Gravitz  
(for street address email [office@mayimrabim.org](mailto:office@mayimrabim.org))



*...and in January*

**Saturday January 9, 9:30 AM – Noon**

### **Shabbat Morning Program**

Continental breakfast and study, followed by a brief service. The study session will focus on the use of technology on Shabbat and holidays, led by Rabbi Jeffrey Schein. There will **not** be a lunch following services.

**Friday, January 22, 6:15 – 8:00 PM**

### **Tu B'Shevat Seder and Potluck Dairy Vegetarian Shabbat Dinner**

There will **not** be a Kabbalat Shabbat service this evening.

**Saturday evening January 23**

### **Annual Game Night**

Please bring board games, card games, dice games, drawing games, games of skill, and/or games of chance. Any and all games and gamers are welcome! Expect light refreshments and friendly competition.

### **Havdalah Service**

**Saturday, January 30, 5:00 – 7:00 PM**

In Jewish tradition, Shabbat ends with Havdalah, a beautiful sensory-filled ritual helping us cherish and remember the joy of Shabbat as we return to our daily lives. Join us to bid farewell to Shabbat together with songs, music, conversation and community.

#### **What: Annual Meeting**

**When:** Sunday, February 28, 2:00 – 4:00 PM

**Where:** Friends' Meeting House, 44<sup>th</sup> St. and York Avenue

The ritual committee will present the proposed Shabbat and Holiday Practices policy. The Finance Committee will present the annual budget. Other issues and committee reports will be presented. Be sure to read January **Current** for more details.



## **Shabbat and Holiday Practices at Mayim Rabim**

A range of Mayim Rabim members have been meeting over the past year to develop a policy that addresses our **communal** Shabbat and holiday practices. Guided by text, tradition and custom (Mayim Rabim's, Reconstructionism's, and others) and our spiritual values and goals, we sought to articulate a policy that embraces our richly diverse community and infuses our practices with holiness and celebration. As you may imagine, this has not been an easy task.

We recognized the need to be aware of and responsive to the varied Shabbat and holiday practices among members of our congregation. The policy addresses a range of practices including business, commerce and communication; monetary transactions; photography and audio/video recording; use of electricity and electronic media; writing; and other practices. Our intention is to create a *Makom Shalom* (place/time of peace and wholeness) while respecting individuals as *B'tselem Elohim* (created in the image of the divine).

The *ad hoc* committee, ably led by Barbara Nordstrom-Loeb and Jeanie Hoffman, guided by Rabbi Stiefel and enriched by active participants Celia Gershenson, Ina Gravitz, Sandra Levine, and Don Masler brought our individual experiences, values and practices to the task along with a shared goal of promoting an inclusive, participatory and accessible communal Shabbat and holiday experience. Using our backgrounds and the shared goal we drafted a policy we shall bring to the Mayim Rabim community for discussion, revision (if needed) and finally, adoption.

Next steps in the policy adoption process include discussion with the Board and Committee Chairs followed by a presentation to the general membership at our Annual Meeting in February 2016 (details to come). In late winter/early spring we will hold several house parties at which members will learn about and discuss the Policy and shape the final Policy, including how it will be communicated to members and attendees at our ritual events. Our hope is to create a Policy that reflects and respects the richness of practices within our community. At all stages of developing this Policy we invite you to contact any Committee member for more information.



If you would like to make a contribution, send it to Mayim Rabim Congregation, 2751 Hennepin Ave S, Suite 236, Minneapolis, MN 55408.

You may also donate online through PayPal on our website:  
[www.mayimrabim.org](http://www.mayimrabim.org)

*We gratefully acknowledge these donors to the general fund*

- Jerri Pumroy — *in honor of the many who worked so hard to make High Holiday services a success*
- Jeanie Hoffman — *in beloved memory of her uncle and aunt, Jack and Aline Zuckerman*
- Amy Sheldon — *in appreciation of Mayim Rabim, from a loyal visitor*

*and these High Holiday donors*

- Carol Siegel
- Rachel English
- Marilyn Habermas-Scher
- Lynn Liberman & Elizabeth Barnard, with thanks for wonderful High Holidays

• Thanks to Ron Giteck for organizing the trip to the Minnesota Jewish Theatre's production of *The Twenty Seventh Man*.

• Thanks to Deborah Tabert for data entry help in changing our mailing list system

• Thanks to Jerri Pumroy for participating in interviews for our Open/Close helper position.



## **Minutes of the October 7, 2015 board meeting**

**Board members attending:** Celia Gershenson, Larry Gravitz, Sandra Levine, Helen Romanishan

**Others attending:** Dana Fox

September Meeting minutes were approved with one change. The Board agreed that it would cover the full cost of the Rosh Hashanah luncheon.

### **Membership:**

The Board discussed the possibility of creating a policy for membership for those in the process of converting. This will be referred to the Membership Committee.

### **Finance Committee**

Reviewed the Income/Expense statement for July 1 – Sept. 29, 2015.

**Fundraiser:** Marc Lamm is coordinating the cabaret for the event to be held Saturday, November 14 at 6:30. Dana is coordinating the silent auction and Larry is handling logistics.

A contribution of \$36 to the InHEIRitance Project (Selichot program) was approved. Larry will notify the rabbi.

### **Administrator**

There is no replacement yet for Randy. The Board agreed to cancel the potluck for October 9. Dana will email members to assist with future potluck meals until a replacement for Randy is found. Sandra will coordinate getting help for the potluck for October 24.

The Friends are getting new signage for the building. They want their sign to be dominant, colorful and with better lighting. They prefer separate signage for our congregations but zoning allows just one sign in the yard. The Board discussed the option of mounting our sign on the corner of the building. The Board preferred asking the Friends to try to find a way for our sign to continue to be displayed together with the Friends' sign. Dana is the Mayim Rabim representative.

### **House**

We are still looking for a House Chair.

### **Youth Programs**

Patty will coordinate childcare and events. We asked Patty to track attendance to see if childcare is necessary. She will coordinate leadership for the Chanukah Party and Purim. Patty wishes to transition her role no later than next summer (Spring preferred).

### **Other**

The high holidays were well attended. The board stated its appreciation of the Ritual Committee for all its work on making the High Holidays successful.

At December's meeting the Board will discuss possible changes to the bylaws.

The board discussed having more information on us and Reconstructionism on our website.

The Board will meet next on Wednesday Nov. 5, place TBD.



# How are we Celebrating?

**WHO CAN RECALL THE THINGS THAT BEFELL US?**

**WE CAN!**

Please join us on Sunday on December 13  
from 4:30 to 7:00 PM  
at the Friends Meeting House,  
44th and York Avenue South, Minneapolis for .....



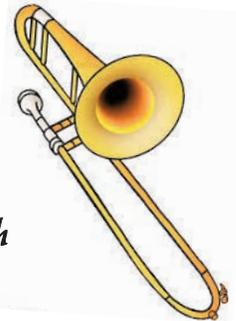
## the annual Mayim Rabim Chanukah party!

*Candles will be lit, stories told, songs sung, and dreidels spun.*

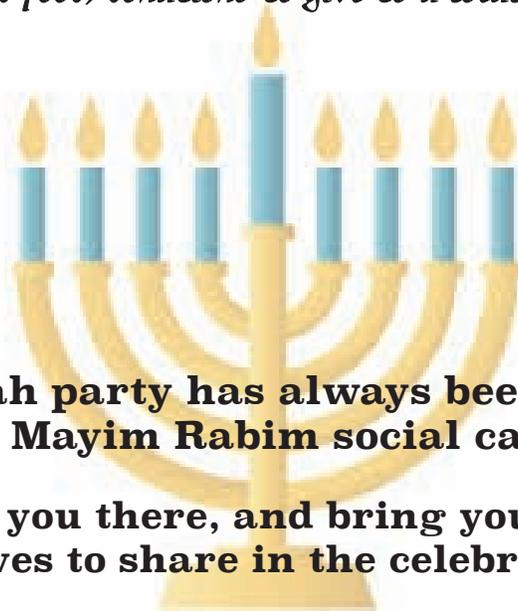
*Enjoy lots of delicious food, both traditional (latkes) and nontraditional (Taiwanese takeout).*



*We are asking for donations of \$8 per adult, \$2 per child (maximum \$20 per family) to offset the cost of the food. In the spirit of Tikkun Olam, we will also be collecting cash (not canned food) donations to give to a local food bank.*



*A Chanukah story will be told at 5 PM. Dinner is at 5:15, followed by dreidel games and other fun activities*



*Candle lighting and songs will begin at 4:45 (bring your chanukiah and candles.)*

**The Chanukah party has always been a high point on the Mayim Rabim social calendar.**

**We hope to see you there, and bring your friends and relatives to share in the celebration!**



## HOW ARE WE HAVING FUN?

Our Cabaret and Silent Auction FUNdraiser was a success on all fronts — show, auction and food. The performers delighted the audience with diverse and impressive talents. Rabbi Sharon and Good Sport Davida performed a most educational (??) hand washing demonstration (See photo). A good-sized crowd shopped and noshed at a silent auction. So far gross proceeds from donations at the door and the auction are over \$1500. We are still doing some post-event sales of auction items and calculations of expenses.

The generosity of all who contributed time, support, musical and artistic talent, goods, services and all who attended the event made it a success.

Mayim Rabim thanks ...

### the event organizers:

Dana Fox, Elaine Frankowski, Larry Gravitz, Sandra Levine, Marc Lamm

### the performers:

Jim Miller, Marc Lamm, Josie Winship, Isaac Kaufman, Arlo Abrams, Felix Abrams, Jeff Schein, Sharon Stiefel, Davida Alperin, Claire Diamond-Wheeler, Jack Wheeler, Sam Diamond, Howard Goldberg, Jeanie Hoffman

### the auction donors:

Davida Alperin and Sharon Stiefel, Roz Baker, Martha Baxter, Carolyn Belle and Sandra Levine, Robin Brown, Denise Pasmarter, Isles Bun and Coffee, Linda Crawford and Jo Devlin, Barbara Davis, Patty Diamond, Dana Fox, Elaine Frankowski, Larry Gravitz, Karen Helfand, Joke Joint, Isaac Kaufman, Robin King Cooper, David Liss, Barbara and Bruce Nordstrom-Loeb, Ann and Felix Phillips, Jerri Pumroy, Barbara Sarapas, Jeff and Deb Schein, Charlotte Sniderman, Deborah Tabert, Josie Winship

### the setup/cleanup, refreshment preparers, greeters & auction helpers

Carolyn Belle, Patty Diamond, Dana Fox, Ina Gravitz, Larry Gravitz, Isaac Kaufman, Dave Kopperl, Ellie Kopperl, Sandra Levine, Jerri Pumroy, Pat Levine, Deborah Tabert, Jack Wheeler

the caterers: Martha Baxter, Elaine Frankowski,

Ina Gravitz and the videographer: Howard Goldberg.





## **What are we Reading in December?**

Please plan to join our next Mayim Rabim Book Discussion Group.

### **The Hilltop: A Novel**

By Assaf Gavron

Sunday, December 27, 2015 @ 4:00 to 5:30 pm.  
at the home of Ina and Larry Gravitz

Mordantly funny and deeply moving, this award-winning novel about life in a West Bank settlement has been hailed as “brilliant” (*The New York Times Book Review*) and “The Great Israeli Novel [in which] Gavron stakes his claim to be Israel’s Jonathan Franzen” (*Tablet*).

On a rocky hilltop stands Ma’aleh Hermesh C, a fledgling outpost of Jewish settlers in the West Bank. According to government records it doesn’t exist; according to the military it must be defended. On this contested land, Othniel Assis—under the wary gaze of the Palestinians in the neighboring village—lives on his farm with his ever-expanding family. As Othniel cheerfully manipulates government agencies, more settlers arrive, and a hodge-podge of shipping containers and mobile homes takes root.

One steadfast resident is Gabi Kupper, a former kibbutz dweller who savors the delicate routines of life on the settlement. When Gabi’s prodigal brother, Roni, arrives penniless on his doorstep with a bizarre plan to sell the “artisanal” olive oil from the Palestinian village to Tel Aviv yuppies, Gabi worries his life won’t stay quiet for long. Then a nosy American journalist stumbles into Ma’aleh Hermesh C, and Gabi’s worst fears are confirmed. The settlement becomes the focus of an international diplomatic scandal, facing its greatest threat yet.

This “indispensable novel” (*The Wall Street Journal*) skewers the complex, often absurd reality of life in Israel. Grappling with one of the most charged geo-political issues of our time, “Gavron’s story gains a foothold in our hearts and minds and stubbornly refuses to leave” (*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review).



## **Tuesday, December 1, 2015, 6:30 – 8:00 PM**

**What:** Contemplative Chanting

**When:** First Tuesday of the month, 6:30 – 8:00 PM throughout the year

**Where:** Beth El Congregation, St. Louis Park

**Led by** Cantor Audrey Abrams

## **Thursday, December 3, 2015, 7:00 PM**

**What:** a reading and book sale by Sheyna Galyan, author of **Strength to Stand**

**Where:** Beth Jacob Congregation, 1179 Victoria Curve, Mendota Heights

**Cost:** \$7.00

A snow-covered December in the Twin Cities Jewish community serves as the backdrop for local author and publisher Sheyna Galyan's nail-biting thriller, **Strength to Stand**, the second novel in the Rabbi David Cohen suspense series. Rabbi David Wolpe, best-selling author of **Making Loss Matter**, calls the novel "A smart mystery full of Jewish learning and lore."

The Twin Cities Jewish Book Series is presented by the St. Paul JCC in partnership with the Sabes JCC and generous support from The Friends of the St. Paul Public Library and the George Kaplan Memorial Foundation. This event is presented in partnership with Beth Jacob Congregation.

## **Saturday, December 5, 2015 — evening**

**What:** Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis benefit — "Laugh on Their Behalf"

**Where:** Hilton Minneapolis, 1001 Marquette Ave. South

**Tickets:** start at \$50. To order, call 952-542-4878 or visit [www.jfcsmpls.org](http://www.jfcsmpls.org).

Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis (JFCS) invites you to "Laugh on Their Behalf" at its 27th Annual Benefit, a night of hilarious comedy, socializing and goodwill featuring comedian Michael Ian Black. The Candice and Charles Nadler Family will be honored with the JFCS Friends of the Family Award at the event.

Events include a silent auction, a 40 and under pre party at 8:00 PM, a dessert reception, comedy show and raffle. Dietary laws observed for all food served.

Proceeds from the Benefit go toward providing essential services to more than 16,000 people of all ages and backgrounds each year to sustain healthy relationships, ease suffering and offer support in times of need.



## **Thursday, December 10, 7:00 – 8:00 PM**

**What:** Contemplative Chanting

**When:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month, 7:00 – 8:00 PM, throughout the year

**Where:** Beth Jacob Congregation, Mendota Heights

Led by Sara Lynn Newberger in partnership with Beth Jacob

**Suggested donation:** \$10

## **Saturday, December 12, 2015 | 6 PM**

### **Light Up In the Night - Twin Cities' Largest Hanukah party!**

**What:** A two-part Twin Cities Hanukah celebration

**Where:** St. Paul JCC, 1375 St. Paul Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55116

Join us at the St. Paul JCC for the Twin Cities' largest Hanukah party! From a glow-in-the-dark dance to an exclusive concert featuring Hebrew covers of The Grateful Dead, there's something for everyone at this family-friendly community event.

**PART ONE:** Family Celebration, 6:00 – 8:00 PM

We're lighting up the night with a glow-in-the-dark dance, light-up activities, including Ga-Ga and Laser Tag, delicious Hanukah treats, and a community candle-lighting. Everyone is invited – this is an all-ages celebration.

**PART TWO:** 21+ Celebration | Doors open at 7:45 PM | \$5 at the door  
Entertainment by Ami Yares and Sagol 59 who collaborated on the 2015 album *The Promised Land: The Grateful Dead / Jerry Garcia Hebrew Project*, featuring Hebrew covers of songs by The Grateful Dead and Jerry Garcia. It is the first ever album of Hebrew versions of Grateful Dead songs. Ami Yares is a New Jersey-born, Jaffa-living, world traveling folk musician with a knack for making physically, spiritually, and politically moving music. Sagol 59, aka Khen Rotem, is an Israeli artist and rapper.

Vodka & latkes after the concert

## **Sunday December 13, 4:00 – 5:30 PM**

**What:** Yoga and Torah for Your Body and Soul. Bring body and soul together in this unique experience of yoga and Torah.

**When:** ongoing Second Sunday of the month, 4:00-5:30 PM

**Where:** St. Paul JCC

Led by Dianne Sztainer and Cantor Rachel Stock-Spilker in collaboration with the St. Paul JCC

**Cost:** \$15 per session Reservations preferred, walk-ins welcome.

# Pill Container Success



In some of those boxes are the pill containers you donated, on their way to 700 hospitals in Malawi.

Started less than a year ago the pill container program for the Malawi Project has broken every expectation imaginable. It is expected to surpass one million pill containers by the end of this year. Reaching this goal signals the **conclusion of collections**. Mayim Rabim has done its bit and will now look for tikkun olam opportunities elsewhere.



**MAYIM RABIM CONGREGATION** is affiliated with the Jewish Reconstructionist movement ([www.jewishrecon.org](http://www.jewishrecon.org)). We are an urban Jewish community that comprises people of diverse ages, abilities, sexual orientations, cultural backgrounds, and financial resources. It is our mission to create and sustain spaces that enhance the practice of Judaism in the contemporary world; to that end, we are a house of prayer, of study, and tikkun olam (the repair of the world). As Reconstructionists, we view Judaism as an evolving religious civilization and claim a shared heritage with all Jews. Our synagogue is governed by an elected board of directors:

Marc Lamm, President  
Sandra Levine, Treasurer and Finance Co-Chair  
Helen Romanishan, Secretary  
Celia Gershenson, Member At-Large  
Larry Gravitz, Member At-Large  
Jeremy Fisher, President Emeritus  
Sharon Stiefel, Rabbi  
Dana Fox, Congregational Administrator  
Committee Chairs: Ken Granle, Tikkun Olam  
Isaac Kaufman, Membership;  
Barbara Nordstrom-Loeb, Ritual  
Dana Fox, Finance Co-Chair  
Patty Diamond, Youth Programs

Need information about Mayim Rabim?  
Want to know times and places of events?

Website: [www.mayimrabim.org](http://www.mayimrabim.org)

Email: [office@mayimrabim.org](mailto:office@mayimrabim.org)

Phone: 612-247-5490

Unless otherwise noted, events are held at the  
Friends Meeting House,  
4401 York Ave. S, Minneapolis

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2751 Hennepin Ave. S, #236, Mpls, MN 55408



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