



# Sinai Temple Bulletin

*Take Back Your Time:  
Rediscover Shabbat*

November / December 2013  
Cheshvan – Kislev 5774



**Michelle Citrin**  
**Composer, Singer, Songwriter**  
*“Count your joys instead  
of your woes!”*

## **A fabulous musical evening** **Friday, December 6**

At 6 p.m., a special music service with Michelle Citrin

At 7 p.m., Shabbat Dinner

At 7:45 p.m, a Concert featuring Michelle Citrin

Michelle Citrin's appearance at Sinai Temple is made possible through a generous gift from the family of Ed and Ruth Wallace.

### **November Friday Evenings**

**November 1 at 6:00 p.m.**

Kidz Kabbalat – For families with children in Kg, Grades 1 and 2. See page 9

**November 1 at 6:00 p.m.**

Kabbalat Shabbat. A beautiful brief service. Come at 5:30 for veggies and snacks.

**November 8 at 6:00 p.m.**

Tot Shabbat for STUFF – Sinai Temple under five families.

**November 8 at 7:30 p.m.**

It's Shabbat – Every seven days. We're back!

**November 15 at 7:30 p.m.**

Rabbi Shapiro will review Dara Horn's novel, A Guide for the Perplexed.

**November 22 at 7:30 p.m.**

Shabbat Service

**November 29 at 7:30 p.m.**

Happy Chanukah with a new contest! Bring your chanukiah (menorah).

### **December Friday Evenings**

**December 6 at 6:00 p.m.**

Kabbalat Shabbat sixty minute service. Veggies and snacks at 5:30 p.m.

**December 13 at 7:30 p.m.**

Shabbat Service

**December 20 at 6:00 p.m.**

Tot Shabbat for STUFF – Sinai Temple under five families.

**December 20 at 7:30 p.m.**

Congregational Shabbat Service

**December 27 at 6:00 p.m.**

Shabbat Service starting early at 6 p.m.

### **Saturday Mornings – An Experiment**

Service starts at 10:15 a.m (15 minutes earlier)

**EXCEPT** for our Bat Mitzvah starting at 10:30 a.m.

December 7 – Rachel Freedman

Daughter of Tricia and Michael Freedman

**Please note – This bulletin is an eight week bulletin – covering November AND December 2013.**

## Message from Jeff Cossin Temple President

As part of my Rosh Hashanah presidential remarks in 2011, I wrote, "Let's come together as a group for the environment. Who wants to make a difference? I have driven by this Temple hundreds of times and have seen the sun shine down on the roof. How about using that roof- flat and sunny- for solar panels? Go ahead and say I am crazy but prove that I am not."

This past Rosh Hashanah 2013, I returned to the environment and said, "We need to look outside of Sinai to save our environment and to do Social Justice. We need to save our environment by decreasing our carbon footprint. We will be looking to you to help in this vital area of Social Justice. "

Now, as a followup to my High Holiday remarks, I will be asking Temple members to look into the real possibility of installing solar panels on the roof of Sinai Temple. The cost of doing this has dramatically decreased and the financial benefits to the Temple have potentially increased. At least one of our Temple households has already installed solar panels on their house, and I have heard from other members who are interested in pursuing this project for us. If ANY other Temple members are interested in researching this exciting Tikkun Olam project, please let me know. It would be totally appropriate to power our Ner Tamid, our Eternal Light, with solar energy. Please help us to make this a reality!

It has also come to our attention that there are green electricity generating suppliers in the Western Massachusetts and Connecticut markets which could potentially present Sinai with a WIN-WIN-WIN situation. We might be within reach of cheaper electricity rates for Temple households, a fund raising opportunity for our Temple, and a markedly reduced carbon footprint for our environment. Our Executive Committee has endorsed that our Temple seriously look into these opportunities for our congregants and Temple. If you are stimulated to help us look into this, please let me know. Look for more information in the near future.

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The Sinai Temple Bulletin is published every other month by Sinai Temple, Springfield, Massachusetts. This is Issue Number 3 for the year 2013-2014.

Mark Dov Shapiro .....Rabbi  
Martin Levson .....Cantor  
Heather Sullivan .....Director of Education  
Jeff Cossin .....President  
Bruce Leshine.....First Vice President  
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Phil Lesser.....President, Men of Sinai  
Ron Weiss.....Cemetery Chair  
Karen Mendelsohn.....Membership Committee Chair  
Matt Bertuzzi.....Youth Director  
Visit our website: [www.sinai-temple.org](http://www.sinai-temple.org)

Lastly, I have introduced to you via email and my High Holiday remarks the idea of exploring collaboration with Temple Beth El in the areas of Visionary Jewish Education and most recently with what we call "Global Collaboration." **To be clear, the merger of Sinai and Beth El is not being considered at all.** Nevertheless, committees are being formed to explore collaboration as described above and work will soon begin! In addition, our Sinai 2015 Planning Group in collaboration with some of our congregants has developed an exciting plan to greatly expand the Sustaining Membership Program over the next five to seven years. We believe that this expansion will stabilize our Temple finances and maintain our vital presence into the future. Our Executive Committee has enthusiastically endorsed this idea and has created the motto - **"Celebrate Today, Create Tomorrow."**

I believe that this motto clearly expresses everything that I have outlined in this report. I am very excited about Sinai's future.

Jeff Cossin, President

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## For Your Consideration from Rabbi Shapiro

I am truly moved and humbled by the wonderful anniversary weekend. My thanks to Liz Leshine and Marlene Gordon who labored long and hard to make the weekend so beautiful. My thanks as well to the many members of their committee. And thanks also to the many other people who contributed to the weekend's success.

And, most of all, thank you to the members of Sinai Temple. Although much of the weekend's focus was on me, the truth is that we were all together celebrating our shared experiences over the last 25 years. Doing it together, being together, living through the years together has been a great blessing. Thank you to everyone who makes up this community we proudly call Sinai Temple.

And now...well, now...we begin to move forward.

As many of you know, the Pew Research Center recently published a very somber assessment of American Jewry. American Jewry is in great flux. The elusive "next" generation seems to define its Jewish identity in ways that are often so universal, so secular, and so fleeting that it is hard to imagine what the years ahead will bring.

During the coming months (and years), we therefore need to pay special attention to these trends among Jews. We need to figure out what the "next" generation wants and needs. But, perhaps equally important, we need to make some commitments of our own. Starting with our love for Sinai, we need to explore our love for the great triad of Jewish life: Torah, worship, and good deeds. As our mission statement says, we are on a Jewish journey. The first 25 years are done. Please join me as we make the coming years meaningful, worthy, and...fully Jewish too.

## Adult Opportunities

### **Soundtrack for a Revolution: The Music of the Civil Rights Movement**

**"Every Generation Finds its Voice."**

**Saturday, November 9 at 4 p.m.**

#### **A Special Afternoon for Boomers Who Love Music**

"Soundtrack" tells the story of the American civil rights movement through its powerful music. Come back to the 60's. Recall the movement and the songs that went along with it. "It was the music that gave us the drive, the will, to go on, in spite of it all," explained Congressman John Lewis. "Soundtrack" has been shown to great acclaim at the Cannes Film Festival and around the world. Our date for the music and the story is November 9.

### **A Guide for the Perplexed: A Novel Traveling Across Continents and Through Time**

**Friday, November 15 at the 7:30 p.m. Service Conversation and Review by Rabbi Shapiro**

Dara Horn is a young novelist who has already written three extraordinary novels. Horn is thoughtful, creative, and learned, and she doesn't stop experimenting. Rabbi Shapiro will comment on her latest novel that combines family dysfunction, a kidnapping, history, and even a dash of philosophy!

### **Chai Mitzvah Continues: A learning/doing opportunity for adults**

Over 30 people attended the October orientation for Chai Mitzvah. Now the program really gets underway. Our next meetings are Sunday mornings from 9 to 10:30 a.m. on November 3 and December 15 OR Thursday evenings from 7 to 8:30 p.m. on November 14 and December 12. For more information, speak to either the Rabbi or Cantor. You must pre-register.

### **Saturday Morning Services - AN EXPERIMENT**

**Every Saturday morning at 10:15 a.m.**

Although we will continue our Bar/Bat Mitzvah services starting at 10:30 a.m., on those weeks when there is no Bar/Bat Mitzvah we are going to start FIFTEEN MINUTES EARLIER. We pray in the Oneg Shabbat Room. The service lasts approximately one hour. Try it. Experiment. 10:15 a.m.!!!

### **Sinai Temple's Book Club**

**Wednesday, November 6 at 7 p.m.**

**Golda**, a biography by political reporter Elinor Burkett, will be discussed on Wednesday November 6 at 7 p.m. The December 11 book will be **A Guide for the Perplexed** by Dara Horn – a novel in which the author weaves together Maimonides in 12th century Egypt, Solomon Schechter exploring the Cairo Geniza in late 19th century Egypt, and a contemporary Joseph in Egypt today. **Rav Hisda's Daughter**, our original December choice, will be for another time. The group is open, come regularly or whenever a book calls to you. Come if you haven't read the book, the discussion is always lively. E-mail Laurie Weinberg at [sagecitrus@aol.com](mailto:sagecitrus@aol.com) to suggest a book you would like the group to consider.

### **TGIT...Thank God, It's Torah!**

**Come Learn Every Saturday at 9 a.m.**

Exercise your brain. Enjoy the bagels. If you want to touch base with Judaism's basics, Torah Study is for you. Come once or come occasionally. Newcomers welcome. No prior knowledge necessary.

### **Monthly Morning Service**

**Wednesday, November 6 and December 4 at 7:30 a.m.**

A chance to start your day with a different focus. We meet on the bimah for a service of 20 minutes. Breakfast follows. The feeling of togetherness is wonderful. The spirit is unique. Those who need to leave for the rest of the day are free no later than 8:15 a.m.

Future "morning minyan" services will take place on Wednesdays, January 8, February 5, March 5, April 2, May 7.

### **Creating a Peace-full City: Our Community Responds to Violence**

**An Interfaith Art Project and Interfaith Thanksgiving Service for Peace**

**Sunday, November 17 at South Congregational Church 45 Maple Street, Springfield**

Can Springfield survive the violence of 2013? Are there ways to respond with compassion and creativity to those who are left behind after violence?

Rabbi Shapiro has been involved in creating such a response through the Interfaith Council of Western Massachusetts. The resulting art display and service will take place Sunday, November 17. Art reception at 3 p.m.; service at 4 p.m.

The guest speaker will be Rev. Dr. James E. Atwood, Pastor of The Wallace Presbyterian Church in Wallace, NC. Reverend Atwood will be speaking on the topic... called *America and Its Guns: A Theological Expose*.

## FOREIGN FOOD AND FILM FESTIVAL RETURNS

Friday, January 10, 2014

**CHICKEN SOUP, PICKLES, KUGEL, AND MORE!!!**



6 p.m. – Kabbalat Shabbat Service  
7 p.m. – Dinner the way it used to be

FOLLOWED BY **HAVA NAGILA – THE MOVIE**

It's an award-winning film about the song everyone knows. How did one song come to be so famous? How does Hava Nagila capture the American Jewish story...or does it?

Advance reservations are required. Your check is your reservation via snail mail to Sinai or through the website. [www.sinai-temple.org](http://www.sinai-temple.org)  
\$10 per person

## I ♥ Jewish Food!

*Sinai Temple First Ever Kugel Contest  
Sunday, January 26 at 11:30 a.m.  
Do you make the best kugel?*

We need your Kugel for our first-ever Kugel contest.  
Entry open to all - members of Sinai & non-members.

E-mail Ilene Conklin ([ilene\\_conklin@yahoo.com](mailto:ilene_conklin@yahoo.com)) by December 1 to enter. Entrants must provide two (9x13) pans of kugel for tasting. Kugels can be noodle, potato, veggie or any prize-winning recipe you have. The heated kugel needs to be in a disposable pan at Sinai by 11:15 a.m. on Sunday, January 26.

**\*\*\*Prizes awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place\*\*\***

## Interfaith Matters Committee

Sinai Temple's *Interfaith Matters Committee* wants to make sure that you are aware that there are many books in the Sinai Library on the topic of interfaith marriage and families! One book that can be helpful to anyone dealing with the challenge of raising children in an interfaith family is **The Guide to Jewish Interfaith Family Life**, edited by Ronnie Friedland and Edmund Case. This guide is a compilation of first-hand stories and personal experiences of Jewish and non-Jewish members of interfaith families. They offer real-life perspectives on issues such as children's identity within an interfaith family, how to handle the holidays (the "December dilemma"), and dealing with extended family members of a different religion. This guide provides advice, helps to answer questions, and lets us know that we are not alone as we face the challenges of living as an interfaith family.

*Please feel free to check out any of the interfaith books for yourself from the Sinai library! Contact Erica Brunette at [ericalbrunette@gmail.com](mailto:ericalbrunette@gmail.com) with any questions.*

## Cantor Levson Sings with the Springfield Symphony Orchestra

**Home For The Follidays**

**Saturday, December 7, 2013 at 7:30 p.m.**

Kevin Rhodes, Conductor

Children's Chorus of Springfield & Springfield Symphony Chorus

**PLUS our own Cantor....**

The symphony's annual "holiday" season begins with the SSO and over 150 amazing voices of the SSO Chorus and Children's Chorus of Springfield. This year Cantor Martin Levson will also be present. Cantor has already met with Kevin Rhodes to choose the melodies he will be performing. These will be Jewish melodies we love at Sinai that Cantor will now share with the whole community. Buy your SSO tickets today.

## Information Technology at Sinai

Interested in computers? Maybe figure out how to live stream Temple services? Other technology enhancements for the Temple. Share your ideas. Join the conversation on IT. For information, call Jody Maple at 413-218-4554

## Women's Seder

Looking ahead, our fourth annual Women's Seder will be Wednesday, April 2, 2014, with Passover beginning Monday April 14. The Women's Seder has been a joyful evening of connection, commemoration, music, food, and the planning and preparation has been almost as good as the evening itself. If you would like to be a part of the planning, please e-mail Laurie Weinberg at [sagecitrus@aol.com](mailto:sagecitrus@aol.com)

## Notes from the Cantor

On Friday evening, December 6, Sinai Temple will proudly welcome Michelle Citrin to Springfield, MA! Michelle Citrin is a Brooklyn based singer/songwriter who has been named one of Jewish Week's "36 under 36" Most Innovative Jews, and is one of Time Magazine's "Ten Stars of the New Jewish Music." Her many YouTube videos include "20 Things to do with Matzah," and "Rosh Hashana Girl." Michelle will participate in our Kabbalat Shabbat service at 6:00, and, following a congregational dinner, will present a mini-

concert of her wonderfully engaging music! "Shir Fun!" will be on hand this evening for the festivities as well. Please check out Michelle's music on her website at [michellicitrin.com](http://michellicitrin.com), and please join us on Friday, December 6, for a fantastic evening of contemporary Jewish music!

Michelle Citrin's appearance at Sinai Temple is made possible through a generous gift of the family of Ed and Ruth Wallace.

## Message from Heather Sullivan

*Director of Education*

What a fantastic start to our New Year and new school year! We welcomed our newest students in kindergarten and grade 1 at a Consecration celebration on Simchat Torah- such fun and so much ruach! We also welcomed Daniel and Sapir, the two Israeli Emissaries who are coming to Hebrew school each Tuesday to help out and teach our students.


Thank you to all of the families who attended our special PACT (Parents and Children Together) where parents were able to experience what goes on in our Hebrew classes, through a morning of simulated Mitkadem activities. Having parents understand our Hebrew program is an integral part of working as a community to educate our students. This is especially true as our students begin to use laptop computers for Mitkadem both in Hebrew school and remotely from their home computers.

Our split Tuesday Hebrew classes (grades 3-6 meets either 3:15-4:45 OR 5:30-7:00) is proving to be quite successful. Class size is smaller, making for an atmosphere more that is more conducive to learning.

Grades 4/5 raised money as a "team" to donate to the Rays of Hope Walk, the annual fundraiser for breast cancer research. Our students participated in this event, once again, as part of their Tikkun Olam curriculum.

Thank you to all of our students and families who helped to make October 20, 2013 such a memorable event in recognition of Rabbi Shapiro's 25th Anniversary. We honored Rabbi with special songs, touching words, thoughtful artwork and a fantastic new bike rack at the back of our synagogue. Of course, we had to have some cupcakes to celebrate this special time with our beloved teacher and storyteller, Rabbi Shapiro.




L'Shalom,  
Heather



### Youth Rock Climbing Days


Learn how to rock climb indoors on Sunday December 15, 2013

**Where:** Meet at 11:30am in the Oneg Shabbat Room for Pizza and snacks we will then carpool to the Northampton Athletic Club to climb the rock wall in the gym.



**Cost:** \$12 for children 12 and under. \$15 for children 13 and older.  
Adults are welcome to join us as well!

RSVP to Buff Maniscalco by 12/11/2013  
[jodiman@comcast.net](mailto:jodiman@comcast.net)



## Are you receiving our weekly e-mail updates?

Lots is happening in our community. Especially because we've reduced the frequency of our snail mail Temple bulletin, our E-vents is the best way to know what Sinai is about from week to week. If we don't have your e-mail, you're missing out. It would be even better in households with two adults for the office to have both adults' e-mails. Thank you.

Send your information to Robin, the Rabbi's Assistant.  
[rblanchettegaga@sinai-temple.org](mailto:rblanchettegaga@sinai-temple.org)

## Upcoming Events from the Youth Engagement Committee

- **October 27th - Youth Rock Climbing** - \$12 for children 12 and under, \$15 for everyone older. We will be meeting at the OS room at 11:30 for pizza and then going to the Northampton Athletic Club. RVSP's by Wednesday Oct 22nd
- **November 3rd - Kids Care Day** - Children in K-3 are welcome to join us in the Art Room at 11:30 to help make Thanksgiving Cards for the families at Meals on Wheels.
- **November 29th - Thanksgivukkah Turkey-Latke Walk-Off Hike** - This years theme is "Hike Like a Maccabee." We will be hiking up Mount Norwottuck in Granby to the Horse Caves where according to legend John Shay's men hid after their unsuccessful Rebellion.
- **December 15th - Youth Rock Climbing** - \$12 for children 12 and under, \$15 for everyone older. We will be meeting at the OS room at 11:30 for pizza and then going to the Northampton Athletic Club. RVSP's by Wednesday December 11th. (*see previous page*)

### For a Great Summer....Eisner, Crane Lake, Six Points, & Israel!

Young people entering grades 2-12, from Reform synagogues throughout the Northeast, are now being enrolled for the coming summer programs at our regional URJ camps (Eisner Camp, Crane Lake Camp, and 6 Points Sports Academy) as well as the "NFTY in Israel" summer travel experience. Eisner and Crane Lake are located in the Berkshire mountains (Eisner in Great Barrington, MA and Crane Lake in West Stockbridge, MA), and 6 Points is in Greensboro, NC Include your child (or grandchild!) in the excitement and friendship of a Reform Jewish summer camp. Give your teen the Israel experience of a lifetime! Contact the Eisner/Crane Lake office (212-650-4130, [necamps.urjcamp.org](http://necamps.urjcamp.org)), or 6 Points Sports Academy (561-208-1650, [6points.urjcamp.org](http://6points.urjcamp.org)) to find out more about this wonderfully enjoyable summer opportunity for your child or grandchild. Contact Rabbi Shapiro, Cantor Levson or Heather Sullivan for additional information.

### Scholarships for Free

If your son or daughter is planning to attend any kind of Jewish program this summer, please take advantage of the Temple scholarship program. Thanks to the Joseph Emanuel, Rabbi Herman Eliot and Adele Biederman Snyder Memorial Fund, scholarships are available in small and larger amounts. We are also thankful to the family of Edna Simon and Judy and Michael Cohen who support summer scholarships as well.

Your confidential request should go to Rabbi Shapiro no later than March 1.

### Science and Technology Jewish Summer Camp

#### Starting THIS Summer 2014

Registration is now open for the Reform Movement's 14th summer camp. It's called URJ 6 Points Sci-Tech Academy. It will take place this July on the campus of The Governor's Academy near Boston.

URJ 6 Points Sci-Tech Academy is for campers seeking high-level science and technology experiential and fun learning in the summer. Campers will work alongside experienced instructors to design projects in activities such as robotics, video game design, environmental science, and digital media production.

"What will make our camp unique," says Greg Kellner, camp director, "is the combination of outstanding science and tech programming with Jewish learning and living in an intentional, fun and dynamic Jewish community. In addition to hands-on, immersive learning in science and technology, campers will also explore their Jewish identities and their connections to the Jewish community."

There will be two-week sessions. The Governor's Academy is 30 minutes north of Boston.

For more information about URJ 6 Points Sci-Tech Academy, please visit <http://www.urj6points.org/scitech>. Call Annette Powers, 212-650-4154.



**Tot Shabbat and Dinner, Fridays 6pm**

Tot Shabbat is an interactive service that includes a “Kid’s Kiddush” and plenty of songs. The 30 minute service is followed by a child-friendly dinner. Older siblings are welcome. Suggested donation is \$6 per person.

**Mark your calendars for Tot Shabbat on:**

November 8, December 20, & January 24

**Shalom Sunday, Sundays 10:00-11:30**

Shalom Sunday (formerly called Bagels and Blocks) is a holiday-themed program for children and their parents/ grandparents. Stories, music, activities, and craft projects help to teach about upcoming Jewish holidays.

We also provide a healthy snack. Suggested donation is \$6 per child. Please join us for Shalom Sunday on:

November 17, December 8, & January 12

**If You Know a Family with Children Five or Under, This Story is for YOU**

Our STUFF (Sinai Temple Under Five Families) families have been busy this year! Rabbi Shapiro and Cantor Bim Bam led us in lively and educational services for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We sang and danced, learned about making mistakes and saying “I’m sorry”, and enjoyed apples and honey together. STUFF families also participated in Tashlich at Laurel Pond. At our October Tot Shabbat, Cantor Bim Bam read from the Torah and told an engaging story about Noah and the ark. STUFF (Sinai Temple Under Five Families) events are designed especially for children 0-5 years old and their families. We learn about Jewish rituals and holidays through songs, food, and crafts. We welcome you to join us.

STUFF events are designed by young families, for young families. Many of us were searching for a way to incorporate Jewish ritual into our already busy schedules. STUFF events are completely child-friendly, warm and welcoming. STUFF events are the perfect way to start making your own Jewish traditions. Open to members and non-members... please spread the word!

For more information regarding STUFF events, please contact: Melanie Courtemanche: [mnkle17@gmail.com](mailto:mnkle17@gmail.com) OR Leslie Kittredge: [ljkrell@gmail.com](mailto:ljkrell@gmail.com)

# Kidz Kabbalat

For families with children in Kindergarten, First, and Second Grades

Three fabulous Friday evenings  
November 1, January 3, March 14


**5:45 p.m. Snacks**

**6:00 p.m. A happy, energetic Shabbat Service**

**6:40 p.m. Time for the Kiddush**

Kidz Kabbalat features music, stories, and a brand new “kidz” prayerbook for beginning readers brought to you with love and enthusiasm by Rabbi Shapiro and Cantor Levson.

Kidz Kabbalat is another family-friendly, kid-friendly Sinai entry point into the world of Temple and Shabbat. When your little one(s) outgrow Tot Shabbat, Kidz Kabbalat is the next step to take for Sinai’s praying, celebrating families.


## Message from Philip Lesser

*President, Men of Sinai*

The Men Of Sinai have been very busy already this year. Starting with the barbeque to open religious school, the sukkah sale, and an outstanding program on Arab Muslim and Israeli relations, we are not going to rest now. We have again planned for another busy couple of months with several wonderful speakers such as Andrea Kandel and Cynthia Martin who will be speaking on LGBT issues at Sinai Temple. We are also pleased to have Jeff Rembrandt the assistant director of the JCC to speak about the future of the Jewish community in Western Mass! Please look for these programs in the E-Vents, and join us. They are open to all, Men, Women, and families. You don't have to be a member to join in with our activities, just come and enjoy being part of the community and have some fun! More food to come during the upcoming year! BBQ's, golf, bowling, movie night, and hockey all coming up! If you have not joined Men Of Sinai yet there is still time. With more global and interesting topics, with more family events, don't miss out!

Philip Lesser, President  
Men of Sinai

Temple Sinai of Springfield  
joins with  
Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation  
for  
**HOCKEY and HAVDALAH**



As the Falcons and the Wolfpack compete for the Stanley Kiddush Cup!

Saturday evening, December 21, 2013  
XL Center, Hartford

Pizza and Havdalah at the XL Center's Coliseum Club: 6:00 PM  
Game Time: 7:00 PM

All members and guests are welcome! For more information  
contact the Temple office or e-mail Buff Maniscalco at  
[jodiman@comcast.com](mailto:jodiman@comcast.com)

Sponsored by the Men of Sinai  
and the FVJC Men's Club

## Men of Sinai

### Breakfast Speaker Series Continues: Sunday, November 3



#### Connecting to the LGBT experience: Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, & Transsexual at Sinai Temple

Do you have friends or co-workers who are gay? Are members of your family gay? Are you gay? How do we as a community embrace and celebrate our differences?

**Men of Sinai and the Social Action Committee invite you to breakfast and conversation on Sunday, November 3 at 9:30 a.m.**

**Our presenters will be Andrea C. Kandel and Cynthia Martin.**

**Andrea Kandel** is Executive Director of the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ). She has a Masters in Education from Northeastern University and received her Doctorate in Education from the University of Massachusetts for her dissertation on the Development of Ethnic Identity. She lives with her spouse of thirty years and their daughter, a senior in high school, in Pelham, MA.

**Cynthia Martin** is Director of Programming for the NCCJ. She has worked with leading social justice organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN). Cynthia received her BS and graduated Summa Cum Laude from Hunter College of the City University of New York. She lives with her wife in Madison, CT.

## JUDAICA SHOP CORNER

Chanukah is just a few short weeks away!  
The first candle is NOV 27TH!!!!!!

We are ready to delight you with beautiful menorahs, candles, toys, games, giftware and so very much more.

Please see page 14 for ideas, suggestions and longer hours.

**Thais Fischel 786-9577**



# CHANUKAH, CHANUKAH 2013

## The Earliest Chanukah in our Lifetimes!

### **Chanukah Tzedakah: Ner Shel Tzedakah Thanksgiving Night - Thursday, November 28**

Don't buy presents on November 28.

Give THANKS with a Tzedakah Gift around the Thanksgiving Table. Did you know that the BEST way to fight hunger locally is to make a donation to The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. The Food Bank purchases \$9 of food for every dollar raised. Enjoy the turkey. Love the latkes. Make a gift to the Food Bank. [www.food-bankwma.org](http://www.food-bankwma.org)

*It really counts; it really feeds hungry people.*

### **Light Three Candles And Have a Great Evening**

**Friday, November 29 at 7:30 p.m.**

The best Chanukah service of the 21st Century  
For all ages....for everyone.

Bring your chanukiyah (menorah) to Temple  
(3 candles + shamash)

Details will follow...including an "electronic surprise."

Watch the November E-vents for details.

AND LATKES FOR THE ONEG SHABBAT

### **If the Kids are Grown Up, Do We Light the Candles Anyway? A Chanukah Candle Lighting and "Gathering" for Baby Boomers with Empty Nests**

**Wednesday, December 4**

The 8th Night – The Last Night

For details, watch your snail mail and E-vents

### **Pajamas for Chanukah Keep the Homeless Warm**

**A Collection from November 1 to December 18**

PJ Library is organizing the collection of as many sets of pajamas as possible throughout our community. The pajamas collected will go to the children of homeless families who often don't have the delight of going to bed comfortably and warmly. Watch the E-vents for more details.

### **The Green Menorah: A Commitment to "green" Chanukah**

When the Maccabees rededicated the Jerusalem Temple in 165 B.C.E., legend tells us that one day's worth of oil kept the Temple menorah going for eight days! What if the "miracle" of Chanukah led us to use less oil in our day? Can we help today's world conserve energy? Perhaps we can rethink all those bags for Chanukah gifts and food?

### **Paper and Plastic Bags Contribute to Global Warming**

70% more global warming gasses are emitted making a paper bag than a plastic bag, and 50 times more water pollution.

Plastic bags are made from petroleum that could be used in other ways. The 300 billion plastic bags that American throw away each year are made from millions of barrels of petroleum. Reusable bags reduce all these costs. Before you "bag" it, THINK GREEN.

## **Chanukah Questions and Answers**

### **When is Chanukah?**

Chanukah begins Wednesday night, November 27.  
The last candle is lit Wednesday night, December 4.

### **How do we observe Chanukah today?**

Chanukah is almost entirely a time for celebration, although it can be more than that. This year, for example, how about implementing the "tradition" of Ner Shel Tzedakah, which means dedicating one "ner/candle/night" to tzedakah. Make Thursday, November 28 – Thanksgiving Night - different by giving gifts of tzedakah.

### **How do we prepare the candles when Chanukah arrives?**

Place the candles in the chanukiah (Chanukah menorah) from right to left.

### **How many candles are used?**

On the first night of Chanukah one light is kindled. On the following night, two lights and so on until on the eighth night, eight lights are kindled. This does not, of course, include the shammas which is the candle used every night to light the other candles of the day.

### **Where does the chanukiah go?**

If possible the chanukiah should go near or at a window. In this way passersby can see the burning candles, which means according to Jewish tradition, that we have helped in the process of Pirsum Ha-nais—the Publicizing of the Chanukah Miracle and Story.

### **How do we light the candles?**

Just after nightfall, say the blessings. The first two are said every night. The third is only said on the first night. After the blessings light the candles by going from left to right so that the additional light of each night is kindled first.

### **Do we do anything different on Shabbat - Friday evening, November 29?**

On that night light the chanukiah first. After that Shabbat candles are lit. For a good time, don't light candles at home. Bring your candles to Temple for the 7:30 p.m. service.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק נֵר שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה.

*Blessed are You, Adonai our God, who has sanctified us with commandments and commanded us to light the Chanukah candles.*

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik neir shel Chanukah.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַיָּד.

*Blessed are You, Adonai our God, who performed great wonders for our ancestors in those days at this season.*

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, sheh-ah-sah nee-seem la-vo-tay-nu ba-ya-meem ha-haim baz-man ha-zeh.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁחַיָּנוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנֵי הַיָּד.

*Blessed are You, Adonai our God, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this time.*

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam shehecheyanu ve-kee-ma-nu ve-hee-gee-ah-nu laz-man ha-zeh.

## Traveling to Israel with Birthright Israel - Lucas Pers

It's not that I hadn't thought about my Judaism before Israel. I went to Sunday school when I was younger, had a Bar Mitzvah, and even went to a few Hillel events when I got to college. Yet even when I was younger, studying at Hebrew school and surrounded by members of the Tribe, I never truly felt connected to Judaism or Jewish people. I didn't even have too many Jewish friends, which is almost impressive in Longmeadow. I was told that I should be proud of my Judaism, that it made me special and, more importantly, that it made me part of something special. Yet I never truly felt this pride.

When I went to Boston College, a Jesuit school, I became part of their bustling Jewish population of about 130 students out of a school of 10,000. At college I found myself hiding behind my Judaism, flaunting my religion because I was now the face of Judaism for many of my friends who had never known a Jewish person. I showed a hollow sense of pride, trying to champion a heritage that I didn't truly understand. I was, however, fortunate enough to become close friends with 2 of the other 32 Jews in my year. They were the ones to suggest that we go on Birthright before our internships started after junior year; I simply agreed to come along. I didn't know what to expect and, not being religious, I figured that it would be a nice adventurous vacation and probably nothing more.

I was wrong. About as wrong as I've been about any experience in my life. I don't think I could possibly have

known how much I would get out of Birthright because it's an experience that was so unlike anything else I've ever done. Seeing all of the places that I'd known from my days in Sunday school and some that I didn't know (probably because I wasn't paying attention) was such a surreal experience, more so because I didn't expect to feel anything. That I actually felt something, whatever you would call it, at the Western Wall, or walking up Masada, took me completely off guard.

The most impressive part of the trip for me, however, was the people. Everyone we met in Israel was overjoyed to see Jewish Americans taking an interest in their country and, if we talked with them for more than about 5 minutes, would inevitably offer their home to us next time we came. The other members of my trip were even more impressive than those we met along the way. Everyone in our group felt a connection to each other, not simply because we were spending hours trying to keep up with the nonstop Birthright schedule, but because we were all going through these incredibly experiences together. We would stay up until 3 am talking, only to wake up every day at 7 am and nap through our bus rides. By the end of the trip we were all better friends than any group should realistically be after meeting only ten days before. As amazing as Israel's history and sights are, the people were what made my trip truly special.

# **Celebrating 25 Years Together**

**October 25-26, 2013**

**Thank you to everyone who helped create a wonderful, warm, memorable weekend.**

## **The 25th Anniversary Committee**

Marlene Gordon, Liz Leshine, *Co-chairs*

Tina deMeza, Bonnie Engleman, Candy Glazer; Michael Gordon, Janice Greenberg, Peggy Grodd, Pamela Kalman, Howard Kalodner, Jennifer Metsch, Barbara Sadowsky, Bonnie Thomas, Barbara Winer

## **Contributors of Goods, Services and Advice**

Robin Blanchette-Gage, Donna Comstock and Angel Graulau; John Gerry-Karajanes, Candy and Stanley Glazer; Pat Gootzit, Jeff Green-Gray, Peggy and Arthur Grodd; Cantor Martin Levson, Buff Maniscalco, Jackie Nareau-Toti, Fran and Jeff Ochs, Ed Radding, Ann Rosenfield, Barbara and Jim Sadowsky; Joel and Lynn Solomon; Wendy Webber

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Judy Aronson, Nancy Aronson, Salena Blake, Ilene Conklin, Bonnie Engelman, Ellen Follett, Nancy Friedman, Bonnie Gibson, Leslie Hager, Pamela Kalman, Linda Kay, Steve Kessler, Zel Lavin, Jody Maple, Jackie Neiman, Robyn Newhouse, Belle Rita Novak, Fran Ochs, Kathy Roberts, Jane Rothschild, Carol Skiest, Carol Tivoli, Laurie Weinberg, Barbara Winer

## **Businesses:**

Chez Josef

Flowers! Flowers!

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## **Special Donations for the 25th Anniversary**

Charlie and Lorie Epstein

Robyn Newhouse

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Jim and Nancy Aronson; Mike and Karen Bader; Martin Baicker and Kelly Larkin; Mel and Beth Chafetz; Susan Cash-Cannizzo; Stanford Cohen; Jeff Cossin; Scott Cowan and Janine Idelson; Robin Dunn-McDonagh; Richard and Jane Engelman; Margaret Epstein; William Firestone and Susan Weiss Firestone; Malcolm and Betsey Freedman; David Gang and Roberta Hillenberg-Gang; Robert and Susan Gerstle; Stanley and Candy Glazer; Marc and Susan Goldman; Alan and Nancy Goldsmith; Jim and Marlene Gordon; Ron and Marcia Gordenstein; Elliot and Janice Greenberg; Peggy and Arthur Grodd; Rabbi Jerome Gurland; Bea and Frank Hano; Harvey and Barbara Irlen; David and Ruth Katz; Richard and Sherry Leaderman; Bruce and Liz Leshine; David Morse and Susan Shepherd; Ron and Ronnie Nadel; Jeff and Fran Ochs; James and Roberta Orenstein; Judith Plotkin; Glen and Chris Quatrone; Ed and Linda Radding; Dave and Carol Roberts; Daniel and Jane Rothschild; Jim and Barbara Sadowsky; Michael and Pat Scheer; Rabbi Hesch Sommer and Linda Waldman; Mark and Melanie Stone; Steve and Patty Sussman; Steve Weiss and Carol Daigle plus our Religious School Students.

## A Journey of Conversion

*On August 2, 2013, Johnny Redmond became Jewish. He shared the following remarks at the mikveh.*

There is something greater than ourselves, but what is it? How do we fit into the ever changing world that surrounds us? How can one find a peace of mind, a center, a foundation to operate from, when they have no such place? These questions ran through my mind as I desired the answers, or at least the proper path to the knowledge to begin to fathom the answers. It is a journey that embodies ones personal beliefs, as well as causes one to question what they feel they already know. It is a journey that brought me to a place of comfort and understanding within the walls of the synagogue.

Coming from a family where one's beliefs are personal, and where no system is thrust upon you, I was given the opportunity to explore and discover. I had a desire to become a part of something greater than myself that would allow me to have a better understanding of the world and who I am. It was not an exploration that started and ended in one step.

When I was studying in Beijing and enveloped in the Chinese culture and customs, I attempted to imagine myself operating by the Buddhist doctrine. Although, it embodies great morals and lessons it was not a lifestyle that fit who I was and what I was looking for. I decided to examine the world of Christianity, a religion that was somewhat familiar thanks to the Sunday school classes, and morning chapels of years past. But as I sat there and attempted to absorb the words in which they preached, I came to the realization that this would not be the place that I would find my inner peace.

The next step of my journey, initially unbeknownst to myself, would be one of true discovery. As I attended college I was surrounded by friends who identified with the Jewish faith and lifestyle. With each Jewish holiday that came I found myself being invited and celebrating at the houses of my friends and their family. We would sit around, as they shared memories and stories from bygone years, and would produce plates of one great dish after another. I would go to Temple and listen to the Rabbi and Cantor, and with each word that was uttered and each song that was sung I was consumed by the positive and life affirming atmosphere of the synagogue.

Up until that point I had never considered converting to Judaism. But as I started to research and discover more in-depth information I came to the realization that this might be what I was looking for. Unfortunately, I was not able to convince the Rabbi at school. He did not feel the same way that I did and informed me that it was not the correct decision for the time. Not knowing where to go from there, I decided to stop pursuing the idea of conversion.

Then at nineteen years old I made a decision that would change my view of the world, as well as how the world viewed me. I was forced to come to terms with the fact that I was gay.

This was not a fact that I warmly embraced. I saw it as a flaw, and something to be ashamed of. I had no foundation to find solace in. I found myself alone and unable to answer

the question of why this had happened to me. Instead of finding an inner peace and acceptance, I found myself filled with self loathing and depression and lived an unhappy life for four years. Fortunately I found the courage to make changes to become a person I could be proud of. I packed my belongings, my memories, wished that life goodbye and moved home for a new start.

The next year was spent rediscovering who I was and with each day I learned something new about myself. I reconnected with those who had cared about me but I had kept at a distance. I learned what it was to laugh, to love, and to enjoy what surrounded me without being judged by myself and others. Each day I was taking new steps towards becoming the person that I wanted to be. But in some way I knew there was a key element still missing. It turned out what was missing was a foundation.

Converting to Judaism was at the forefront of my mind once again and I dove in full force. Knowing that I had to try to comprehend and absorb thousands of years of history and traditions was overwhelming. I was frozen, unsure where to begin. It then occurred to me, that every person learns about who they are and where they come from the books and stories that are shared with them when they are young. With this realization I turned to the library for guidance and perused and devoured over a hundred children's books concerning God, Shabbat, history, customs and the everyday life of Jewish people in our past and our present. It helped me establish a better grasp of the world in which I was entering.

Additionally books that I ordered online were arriving at my house on what seemed like a daily basis and article after article, website after website were read feverishly for I wanted to gain as much knowledge as I could. Discussions and questioning by the Rabbi, and friends and family reinforced these new ideas but it was not just the history and traditions that I wanted to implement into my life. I desired a way to understand the world around me and develop a specific mindset.

Judaism allows me to wonder, to question what I see, to appreciate the small moments by finding the extraordinary in the ordinary. It gives me a place to learn and accept that there is something out there that is greater than myself. It can be found in Torah, in prayer, or a moment of sitting quietly and listening to the breeze as it rushes by. Judaism is ever evolving, allowing it to live with the times, and therefore allowing me to be me, and accepting me for who I am.

The Jewish story will become my story and my personal Jewish history and legacy will begin with me. But it does not begin as I leave the mikveh, for it is a story that began long before that. It began the moment I first questioned where I fit in, the moment I desired to find a place of peace, and the moment I wanted to understand the world that surrounded me. It is a journey that started with me on my own, but ended with discovery, fulfillment and a foundation.

## Ten Minutes of Torah From our Reform Movement The Union for Reform Judaism

**Study that Matches Your Lifestyle** – Sign up at <http://www.reformjudaism.org/sign-receive-ten-minutes-torah> for a brief daily teaching or reflection. Each day has a different theme:

**Monday** – Reform Ideas about the Weekly Torah Portion

**Tuesday** – Women and Torah

**Wednesday** – Israel Connections

**Thursday** – Delving into the Prayer Book

*(How our prayers came to be!!!)*

**Friday** – The Rhythm of Jewish Time

*(Insights on the holidays and the Jewish calendar.)*

## You are cordially invited to A Social Hour

**with hors d'oeuvres, wine, and  
Havdalah**

**Celebrating our New Members 2011  
thru 2013**

**Saturday, November 2, 2013**

**4:00 - 5:30 pm**

In the Temple's Oneg Shabbat Room  
An activity for preschoolers will be available  
Please RSVP through the Temple Office  
Robin: 413-736-3619, extension 100

## Thanks for the Tzedakah...To Syria And Colorado

Thank you to everyone who contributed a total of just over \$5400 to help refugees from Syria. Our check was recently sent to the Jewish Coalition for Disaster Relief under the auspices of the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

In addition, we have learned that the Reform synagogue in Boulder, Colorado suffered severe damage in the recent flooding. A larger balance than expected in our World Crisis Fund has allowed us to send our fellow Reform Jews a contribution of \$1200 towards the rebuilding of their Temple. <http://ravblog.ccarnet.org/2013/09/a-reform-congregation-emerges-from-the-flood/>

## Links to Libraries: High Holiday Campaign

Dear Sinai Temple Members:

On behalf of the children of western Massachusetts and northern Connecticut, please accept our deepest thanks for your donation. As we begin our sixth year of operation, over **180,000 books** have made their way into school libraries, nonprofit organizations, homeless shelters and directly into the hands of hundreds and hundreds of children enabling them to start their own personal libraries.

Thank you once again for sharing the mission of Link to Libraries over the recent High Holidays. Your book donations were fabulous.

Susan Jaye-Kaplan, Co-founder, *Link to Libraries, Inc.*  
[www.linktolibraries.org](http://www.linktolibraries.org)



## Opening Day at Religious School 2013

## Mazal Tov to:

- **Matthew Watz married Kelly Mercer** on August 10. Matthew is the son of Lisa and Marc and the grandson of Joan Katz.
- **Myron and Ellen Follett** on becoming grandparents. Julien Morgen Olanoff was born on July 31. His parents are Lauren and Jared Olanoff.
- **Jay and Kitty Berger** announce the engagement of their Granddaughter, Anna Berger Carlsen to Peter Roth.
- **Belle Rita Novak** on the engagement of her son Rabbi David Novak to Yuval Sela.
- **Rachel and Alan Sampson** on the birth of their granddaughter, Lily Chopin Sampson. Lily's parents are James and Laura Sampson. Lily's brother is Asher Sampson.
- **Gayle and Rich Rediker** welcome a new grandson, Tyler Emanuel Anderlonis. The proud parents are Amy and Andrew Anderlonis.
- **Margie Klein and Sandy Saffer** have a new grandchild, Benjamin Winer Przyborski. His greatgrandparents are Phyllis and Earl Winer. Benjamin's Parents are Rebecca and Mike Przyborski.

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## The Memory of the Righteous is a Blessing

All of us at Sinai Temple extend condolences as we remember the following. Their memories are precious to their relatives, their friends and to each of us who form the community of Sinai Temple.

We remember those who have passed away from August 28 to present:

- *Dr. William M. Awad*, father of Bill Awad.
- *Bernice Meyerson*, Aunt of Janet Weiss.
- *Bettirose Eisner*, Aunt of Judi August.
- *Jacki Bailey*, our congregant.
- *Sylvia Gordon*, mother of Michael Gordon.
- *Adolph Diskin*, uncle of Esta Sobey.

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## Thank you to:

**Thais and Gunther Fischel** for underwriting the cost to refurbish the two sets of doors leading into the Temple near the office.

The wonderful artists who beautified our Temple sukkah this year:

Jenna Friedberg,  
Taylor Gordenstein,  
Maddie Neiman  
Logan Skole  
April Solon

**Marcia Gordenstein** who organized some of Sinai's finest artists to provide us with paintings for the outside of the sukkah.

## Welcome to our New Members:

Andrew and Susan Mirkin and their daughter Makayla

Andrew Rome

## Thank You for World Crisis Donations for Syrian Refugees

Richard Alpert; Martin Baicker and Kelly Larkin; Betsy and Joel Bertuzzi; Richard and Kim Black; Selena Blake; Ruth Brenner; Adele Citron; Bernie Cohen and Jane Lindfors-Cohen;

Claire Cohen-Stelzer; Richard and Shmuel Condon; Larry Cooley and Family; Jane and Richard Engelman; Sarah Everett; Gary and Beth Farber; Ellen and Myron Follett; Malcolm and Betsey Freedman; Candy and Stanley Glazer; Rachel and Andrew Goldberg; Gerald Goldman;

Susan and Marc Goldman; Larry and Diane Goodman; Neil and Lindsey Grossman; Devorah Jacobson; Howard Kalodner and Leora Harpaz; Susan and Stephen Kaplan; Steve and Phyllis Katz; Linda and Bob Kay; Steven and Lisa Kessler; Zel Lavin; Ronnie Leavitt; Martin and Joan Lesser; Lisa and Deborah Levheim; Hermine Levy-Weston; Glenn and Maria Markenson;

Karen Mendelsohn; Richard Merrill; Adam and Christine Mirot; Lynn Morton; Susan Shepherd and David Morse; Nancy and Stephen Mueller; Robyn Newhouse; Carol and Dave Roberts; Joan Rosenbaum; Fredi Rosenthal; Ellen Rowles; Richard and Helene Segool; Ruth Seldin; Mark and Marsha Shapiro; Esta and Tony Sobey; Tina deMeza and Mike Solon; Sandy Suib-Dutcher; Stephen and Patty Sussman; Gloria and Michael Wald; Laurie Weinberg; Ruth Weiss; Steven Weiss and Carol Daigle; Trina Moskal and Dan Weisswasser; Paula and Peter Zimmer; Joanne Zolotor.

Now you can make donations to Sinai ONLINE!!!

**[www.sinai-temple.org](http://www.sinai-temple.org)**

You learn about someone's success or someone's sadness. You want to make a contribution but it's so much trouble to write a check.

Now you can skip the check and the snail mail.

Go to Sinai's website [www.sinai-temple.org](http://www.sinai-temple.org) and make the donation to any one of our funds ONLINE.

## NOTE...SINAI IS PRINTING ONLY SIX BULLETINS THIS YEAR.

COMING BULLETINS WILL BE NOVEMBER/ DECEMBER, JANUARY/ FEBRUARY, MARCH/ APRIL, MAY/JUNE.

THIS IS A VERY STRONG REASON FOR OUR WANTING TO STAY IN TOUCH VIA E-MAIL. PLEASE SEND US YOUR E-MAIL.



# Sinai Temple Bulletin

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**CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED**

## **A High School Summer in Israel**

*Elizabeth Metsch*

Walking into this experience I knew it would be one that would teach me a lot about my religion, culture, and the country of Israel; I never expected to learn so much about myself. I connected with Israel in ways I never have with the country I've been raised in my entire life. Sitting in Independence Hall, our tour guide explained to us that Jews have always been an underdog because we've never really had a place to escape to, a safe haven. Israel became a country on a day that five surrounding territories were attacking it – but on this day there was a sense of peace in the land because Jews finally had a home. Our tour guide told us, "You live in America. You live in your city, in your state. You live at your street address. And you live in your house. But you have never been home until you came to Israel. Israel will always say 'Welcome home' to you when you arrive because this is where you belong". For me, this was my feeling toward the land expressed perfectly. Being in Israel there is such a sense of comfort and of belonging, one that isn't comparable to anywhere else I've been. When I first came back to America, and slept in my bed for the first time in a month I realized that I felt like a stranger in my house. I missed having roommates, I missed my little twin bed, I missed knowing I had to wake up at 7 am for a 7:30 am breakfast, I missed my new found family, and I missed home.

I am truly not the same person I was before I left for this trip. I slept on the desert floor and in Bedouin tents. I cried as I wearily made my way up a 2,700 foot mountain in the Negev with my best friends before 9 am. I rolled down sand dunes. I took 20 minute naps in absurd positions with five of my best friends, the six of us crammed into five bus seats, and was more content and rested than ever. I watched the sunrise on top of Masada. I led a Shabbat service with two of my best friends for 150 people. I ate way too much Israeli couscous, ice cream and green Doritos. I met some of the most intelligent and genuinely happy people I have ever encountered. I visited the western wall and the Dead Sea, two things I've dreamed of since I was in 3rd grade at Religious School. After all was said and done, everything I experienced made my trip what it was, and for better or for worse I regret absolutely nothing. No cliché statement could even begin to describe my love for Israel or the people I met on my trip. This was a more than amazing journey that I will carry in my heart forever.