

MAYIM SHALOM

5780

Chanukah Edition

Winter 2019

Coming Events

To confirm dates, please check our website from time to time: www.mayimshalom.us. or contact grant-cousens@hotmail.com.

Dec. 22-29: Chanukah
Dec. 28: Chanukah party (see flyer, p.2)
Feb. 14-15: Tu B'Shevat/Shabbat weekend with Rabbi Jackie; Interfaith Bible study; Movie
March 7-8: Purim/Shabbat weekend with Rabbi Jackie
April 8-16: Passover
May 29-30: Shavuot/Shabbat weekend with Rabbi Jackie
June 19-20: Shabbat weekend with Rabbi Jackie
July 17-18: Shabbat weekend with Rabbi Jackie
August: Annual Picnic

Carl Siminow Honored

Congratulations to Mayim Shalom member Carl Siminow, who received the Human Rights Advocates of Coos County Lilah Bidwell Human Dignity Award for his 42 years of outstanding public service.

Carl has championed numerous civil rights causes throughout his life, and has been an operator for the Sheriff's Communications Disaster Team, a board member of the Egyptian Theatre, and the Coos Historical Museum, and an active member of the Human Rights Advocates of Coos County.

Carl was selected as an associate member of the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment Organization, and has been an active volunteer with Oregon Coast Community Action, among other things.

President's Message

After our last meeting, one member remarked that she felt like we were a family. Several of us echoed her sentiments. Since serving on the board for the past several years, I've developed a real kinship with the other members. It's a lot of fun working with this group and getting to know everyone.

I'd like to invite you to attend one of our meetings and see if you'd like to be on the board and help organize our events. All members are welcome. Our next meeting is Jan. 15 at 3 pm at Cedar Electric in North Bend.

Congratulations to our new board of directors, who were elected at our November 6 annual meeting:

Dahlia Grossman, president
Linda Binder, vice president
Martin Sher, treasurer
Kathy DeNatale, secretary
Grant Cousens
RaeLea Cousens
Jim DeNatale
Joan Morrison
Carl Siminow
Diana Harvey
Paul (Herschel) Ley

Bible Study

We were recently contacted by Father Tim of St. James Episcopal Church in Coquille who invited us to an interfaith Bible study with a few members of his congregation. Rabbi Jackie is interested in participating, as are some members of our board.

We have tentatively scheduled the meeting for Sat., Feb. 15 from 10 am to noon in our room. I think this is a unique opportunity to share interpretations of the Torah while making new friends.

Members of St. James will join us for an inspirational movie at the library after lunch.

If you would like to participate, please email me at dahliagrossman@yahoo.com and let me know.



CHANUKAH POTLUCK CELEBRATION

For Members of Mayim Shalom and their guests

Date: Saturday, December 28

Time: 1:30 to 4 pm

Place: North Bend Public Library
1800 Sherman Avenue
North Bend

Suggestion donation to cover room rental: \$5.00 for adults; children under 18 are free.



Music and folk dancing lead by
Stacy Rose and Gail Elber

Mayim Shalom will provide water, soda, coffee, condiments & apple sauce. Members are asked to bring vegetarian and/or dairy food: latkes, casseroles, vegetables, bread, salads, side dishes, and desserts. Everything must be pre-cooked.

And don't forget to bring non-perishable items for the food bank!

See you there!

Rabbi's Message

THE CHANUKAH DILEMMAS



By Rabbi Jackie Brodsky

THE FIRST DILEMMA: CHRISTMAS

Christmas, at its heart, its core, is a magnificent holiday about love and holiness and light and giving (and of course, the birth of Jesus). Perhaps one could say that Christmas, by many standards (widespread appeal and observance, etc.), is the most successful holiday in our world!

However, if one is Jewish or of another non-Christian religion, it seems as if our society is invaded by it. This manifests in the form of the emphasis on Christmas in school programs (plays, parties, choirs, etc.); carolers; parades; movies; decorations of entire blocks and towns; television specials; and of course -- since the fourth quarter of the American economy now depends on it -- the pressure to give more and bigger presents. I really don't need to describe this to you as everyone reading this is no doubt fully aware of the situation. So, what is a family (and for us, a **Jewish** family) who does not celebrate this holiday to do?

THE SECOND DILEMMA: IS CHANUKAH A RELIGIOUS OR NATIONAL HOLIDAY?

This dilemma began more than 2000 years ago in 167 BCE, when the Greeks were spreading their influence over the world. All was well, as long as everyone agreed with them. But eventually, the occupation could not be tolerated as they banned Jewish religious practices, and desecrated the temple of the Jews.

Enter a powerful fighting guerilla force, led by Mattathias and his sons (the Maccabees of ancient Israel (called Palestine then), who rose up in a civil war, driving out the Syrian Greeks. Right from the start as this military victory was commemorated, our sages, uncomfortable with the idea of military victory and Jewish nationalism, wanted the holiday to be seen as a miracle of God. So, they connected it instead to the festivals of light (vs darkness) of the ancient world, and created a story about a miracle of the oil in the Temple lasting eight days. (I'm not saying it was true or not! This is also in dispute). Here was a big dilemma: Was Chanukah a religious holiday or a national holiday?

Fast forward to America in the mid 1850s when the Jewish

Reform movement was flourishing here and perhaps the foremost rabbi of the country was Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati. Rabbi Wise detested the holiday of Chanukah. He felt it was merely a Jewish response to Christmas, an insignificant non-religious holiday.

In addition, along with the whole early Reform movement, he did not feel we needed Israel, our own nation. So, he campaigned heartily against Chanukah and American Jews almost abandoned it!... until...what do you think happened? Jewish children were being drawn into Christmas in huge numbers(!). As a result, Rabbi Wise reversed his decision! And Chanukah became (as it is today) the most widely celebrated Jewish holiday in America!... yes, even more than Passover!

And as for Israel, the world itself began to demonstrate how difficult it was to survive without the protection of a state. The Holocaust is not the reason for Israel but it certainly woke up millions of people, including those in the Reform movement, to the Jewish people's need for sovereignty. Even today in our world we can see the suffering of stateless people: the Kurds in Turkey, Syria or Iraq; the Coptic Christians in Egypt; and the Yazidis in Iraq.

And so, Chanukah is a product of the ages, something that clearly evolved through our history, a very important and meaningful holiday then and now. It is actually many things: a celebration of religious freedom, of the miracles of God, of the importance of our traditions and values, of the importance of our homeland of Israel, and, yes, it helps stem the tide of assimilation in America! The answer to both dilemmas is: make a big deal of Chanukah and celebrate with joy and pride, music, get-togethers and, yes, presents, too!

PS My friend, Dana, tells the story that as a child she cried to her mother, feeling left out because Jews didn't have a Santa Claus. Her mother wisely said, "But we have the prophet Elijah!"

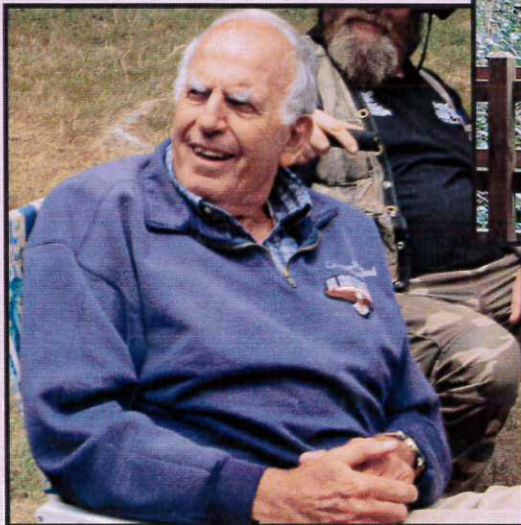
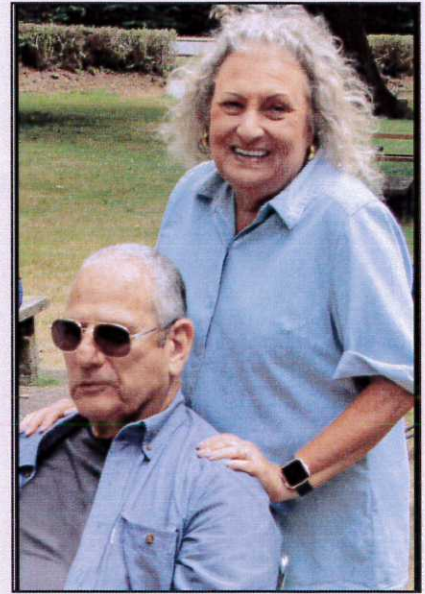
Dana said, "But he doesn't have a beard!"

Mother said, "Oh yes he does, a nice long gray one! And he is disguised as a homeless person! So be kind and generous to the homeless people you meet!"

Dana's mother was very wise and reminds us to be especially generous and kind to all peoples and all traditions during this season (and always) so everyone feels included and loved and cared for. We wish our Christian brothers and sisters a Merry Christmas as we hope they will wish us a Happy Chanukah, too!!!

Our Annual Picnic

Photos by Susan Schwartz



ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP PLEDGE FORM

FOR THE YEAR 5780-5781 (2019 - 2020)

YOUR SUPPORT IS CRUCIAL TO OUR CONTINUING SUCCESS.

PLEASE USE THIS FORM FOR YOUR ANNUAL PLEDGE TO CONGREGATION MAYIM SHALOM

NAME: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE & ZIP: _____

PREFERRED PHONE: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

The congregation suggests a minimum pledge of \$100 for an individual or \$150 for a family. Please give as much as you are able to. The board has stipulated that no one will be denied membership due to financial considerations.

My pledge for the year 5780 - 5781 (2019 - 2020) is \$_____.

Please make your checks payable to Congregation Mayim Shalom and mail promptly to the address below. Thank you !!!

If you have any questions, please call board member Grant Cousens at either: (541) 759-3522 [Home] or (541) 756-3402 [work].

Congregation Mayim Shalom
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A.K.A. South Coast Jewish Community
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See us at: www.mayimshalom.us

Herman and the apple girl

Reprinted from *When God Winks on Love* by Squire Rushnell

"How long can I go on in this cold--without food--without hope?"

Herman, a thin, teenage boy, shivering as he shuffled behind the barbed wire fence, was motivated by the thought that any movement of his frail body could keep him from freezing to death. He had been dumped into a concentration camp along with millions of other poor souls, just because he came from a Jewish family.

It was winter, 1942.

"I'm so hungry," he whispered, knowing that his words would only evaporate hopelessly into the cold morning air, just as his breath was doing.

Perhaps it was the slight movement that caught his eye. He turned. Staring back at him through the barbed wire fence was a young girl. She was expressionless. He wondered how long she'd been looking at him.

He stepped closer to the fence. She was younger than he. Perhaps she came from a middle-class family. But there was something about her ... a mysteriousness.

Then she moved slightly, slowly placing her hand into her pocket. It emerged, holding a red apple.

In one rapid swoop, the girl threw the apple into the air ...up...up...over the wave of wire at the top of the fence, landing with a thud near Herman's feet. Promptly he picked it up, cradling it like a treasure in his cold, cupped hands.

For a moment he gaped at the prize, then lifted his eyes to his benefactor, astonished.

She smiled. And ran away.

An apple was such a small meal, but in Herman's predicament, it was a holiday feast. Slowly he nibbled at the apple, savoring every juicy bite, even crunching the seeds and the core.

Was she Heaven sent, wondered Herman? Was she real? She must have been, for his satisfied stomach was proof.

The next day Herman awoke, questioning if he could even dare to hope that the girl would reappear. He returned to the same spot near the fence. He waited, hoping that if she did come back, that he wouldn't be seen by the Nazi guards. And he surely wouldn't want her to get into any trouble, either.

She was pretty. As far as he could tell from his memory of her staring at him, she looked kind--yes, her smile, just before she ran away--that meant she was kind.

Glancing to see that no one was watching him, he edged near to the barbed wire fence. There was no one. He was about to feel dejected. But then, there was movement. His eyes widened as he peered through the barbed wire and saw the young girl step from the shadows, moving like an angel floating from a cloud.

Again she dipped into her coat, produced an apple, and with the deftness of the day before, swung her arm upward, tossing the apple up, up and over the wire, descending this time with a smack, directly into Herman's frail palms.

Herman had asked for nourishment and hope. God replied through the young girl who continued to visit him, nearly every day, for seven months.

Then one day he was told that the Germans were shipping him and the others to a different camp. Were they lying and really sending him to the ovens or gas chambers? Was this his death sentence?

That day as he waited for the young girl at the fence, his heart was heavy. He would miss her terribly.

"Do not bring me an apple tomorrow," he said, when she arrived. "I am being sent to another camp. We won't see each other again."

Certain he was about to cry, he ran from the fence. He didn't look back.

But during the many months that followed, his indelible memory of her sweet smile and the kindness of her heart sustained him as he endured yet another concentration camp. When they heard armored vehicles approaching one day, sounding different than the German army trucks, Herman's hopes began to rise. It was the Allied forces. Herman was freed from captivity.

Everything was lost--his family, all possessions--everything. But he had the good memory of the apple girl, and now, his freedom.

In a few months Herman was able to join others who were boarding a ship bound for America. There he could start a new life. And that's what he did. He found work in New York City. And though he never found anyone he wished to marry, he was able to make a comfortable living. He had friends, and a nice couple would occasionally invite him to their home for dinner.

One night, his friends invited someone else. A woman named Roma. She was a pleasant conversationalist, and seemed quite interested in what Herman had to say.

"Where were you during the war?" she asked gingerly.

"In several concentration camps," he replied, naming them.

A faraway look seemed to develop on Roma's countenance. She spoke as if she were picturing something in her mind: "I once lived near a concentration camp. There was a boy there--I visited him every day--I would bring him an apple."

Herman could not believe what he was hearing. Was it possible that he, again, was about to witness a miracle?

"Did ... the boy ever say to you ... 'don't bring me an apple tomorrow'?"

"Yes," said Roma, brightening.

The two adults looked into each other's eyes, seeking an image of the young person they once saw.

Roma smiled. That special, sweet smile. And Herman knew it was her. His voice quivered as he cupped his hands around hers, just as he once held the treasured apple that she'd given him.

"Roma, I have thought of you daily, and held you in my heart for years. This moment is more than I could have ever dreamed. I cannot let you go again. I want to be with you forever. Will you be my wife?"

"Yes...yes I will, Herman."

They held each other tightly for a long time, choking back joyful tears, as a Godlike spirit seemed to move between them.

How can we ever doubt that we are on a giant GPS in the Heavens that can save us from hopelessness and nurture us with happiness?

Happy Birthday, Anne!



Happy birthday to Mayim Shalom member Anne Soll, who turned 100 on Oct. 30. Her family and friends joined her for a party at The Mill, followed by a tour of the Coos Bay Fire Station, which houses some beautiful antique fire trucks.

The World Newspaper did a full-page spread on the party.



Anne at the fire station.

Photo at top left: Anne with daughter Linda Binder (right) and daughter Carole Chaimowitz from New York.

Photo at right: Anne's sister Lily Schwartzberg, 95, visited from California.



Here's wishing you many happy returns, Anne!

A little Yiddishkeit

Important Yiddish Vocabulary Words

Feh! : Fooey!

Groisser gornisht: Big good for nothing

Zitsen ahf shpilkes: Sitting on pins and needles

Got tsu danken: Thank God

S'iz mir gut! It's great!

And my all-time favorite

Ongepatshket: Cluttered, disordered, sloppy, scribbled, littered, confusing, muddled, overly done picture or work.

A Definition of Kvell

Mrs. Schwartz was taking her two babies for a stroll when she ran into Mrs. Leibowitz, whom she hadn't seen in a long time.

Mrs. Leibowitz oohed and aahed over the babies, then asked: "How old are they?"

Mrs. Schwartz replied, "The doctor is one and the lawyer is two."

Our Friends in Israel

On August 31, we received an email from Dovid Cohen, and with his permission, I share it with you.

Dovid's son went to Israel two years ago with the Birthright program and was so moved by the experience that the entire family recently made aliyah.

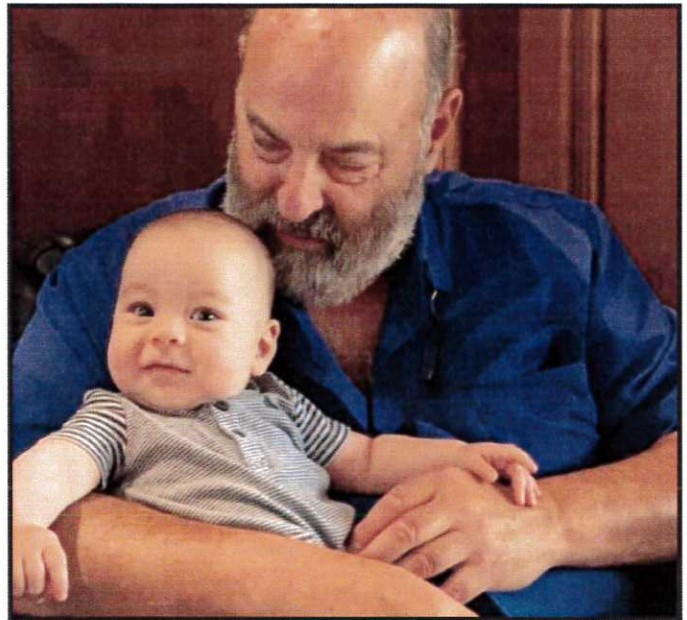
"Shavua tov from our new home in the holy town of Safed, Israel!

"We are all feeling the effects of the long trip and jet lag but are doing well and so grateful to be here. We just finished our first Shabbas and are looking forward to learning Hebrew so we can understand what's going on in shul.

"It's an incredible experience to be surrounded by Jews and knowing that we are in the land of our birthright. Such an inspiring land and people. B"H we feel like we are home.

"Hope all is well with you and your family. We will keep in touch and send photos and updates on how things are going if you would like.

"Stay well,
Dovid"



Grant Cousens holds his new grandson Jude. Proud parents are Jessica and Cassidy Cousens of West L.A.

Do you have a photo you'd like to share with the congregation? Email it to dahliagrossman@yahoo.com

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