

Portion of the Week & Holidays

December 1 - Vayeshev
December 4 - Erev Hanukkah 1st candle
December 8 - Mikketz
December 11 - 8th candle of Hanukkah
December 15 - Vayigash
December 22 - Vayechi
December 29 - Shemoth
January 5 - Vaera

More Haikus from David Vilner

winter visitor
kettle is whistling steam
a cup of hot tea

a pain in my chest
angiogram negative
medication helps

death knocks at my door
hey, come back another day
unrestrained laughter

Shalom Rav, David Vilner

MAZEL TOV!

To all the Gitlins on the birth of a new daughter,
born on Thanksgiving Day.

Donation:

We are delighted to announce that we have received a generous donation of \$25,000 from a member's father toward future construction of an extension to the Shul for a formal sanctuary.
Many, Many Thanks.

Just think ! If three or four other members' families matched this wonderful gift, we could begin construction!

Are there other members who would like to seek donation toward our meditation garden or another KHE project . . . We won't know unless we ask . . .



Donations to Kol HaEmek

Make a Difference

Kol HaEmek is grateful for all contributions to our various funds. The following is a list of some of them:

- 1) Building Fund
- 2) Religious School Fund (Kalifornia Memorial)
- 3) Scholarship Fund
- 4) General Fund
- 5) Memorial Board Fund
- 6) Tzedakah Fund
- 7) Rabbi's Discretionary Fund
- 8) The Marion and Sanford Frank Fund
for Feeding the Hungry in Ukiah & Willits
- 9) Caring for needy Jewish and Arab people in Acre, Israel*
- 10) MEMBERSHIP

Questions? Call David Koppel 485-8910

Please mail your contributions to:

Kol HaEmek, P.O. Box 416, Redwood Valley, CA 95470

*Make your check payable to PEF:

Israel-Endowment Fund and earmark it to the Association for Community Development - Acre; HaAsif program. (There is a \$25 minimum requirement for checks to Israel).

PASSINGS

Our congregation will say Kaddish on the anniversary of your loved one's death. Call Rabbi Shoshanah at 467-0456 with your concerns about the loss of a loved one and/or the name and either the Hebrew or English calendar date of death.

We Remember

Leon Horowitz - Tevet 3
Marion Margolis Frank - Tevet 20
Mark Kinze Molgaard - December 7
Chaim Rayberg - December 10
Ephraim Coren - December 14
Max Schecter - December 15
Elizabeth Elberg - December 23



Garden Report

The Meditation Garden is about to begin!

We'll be chopping down blackberries, moving earth, and planting throughout the rainy season - probably 2 Sunday afternoons a month. Help is welcome any time! If you would like to do lightweight work like pruning roses, or if you want a real workout, **please email me at midnite@pacific.net, or call me at 485-1290.**

Donations of rocks, specific plants, or money are also welcome. We now have a large collection of bricks, fake paving stones, and red rocks. We got this almost free - in exchange for cleaning out someone's backyard. *A big THANKS goes to Sandy Turner, who moved over a ton of landscaping materials!!!*

If you love the planet and you love gardening, I highly recommend the book **HARVESTING RAINWATER FOR DRY LANDS** by Brad Lancaster. I heard him speak at the Greens Festival this weekend, and he inspired me on the many ways we can make our landscaping survive almost entirely on rainwater.

Shalom
Louisa

The Jewish Agency is launching a NEW online Hebrew school

With 60 years of experience in teaching Hebrew, The Jewish Agency in conjunction with leading global e-learning companies is now opening a new exciting virtual Hebrew School.

Very experienced and highly appreciated ulpan teachers from Israel will be teaching Hebrew in private or in small groups online.

You will get special books, resources and participate once a week in an exciting live video session.

email to:
info@hebrewulpan.com

GREEN MENORAH COVENANT

by Rabbi Arthur Waskow of the Shalom Center

The nations of the world are meeting in Bali from December 4 to 13 to go beyond the Kyoto Treaty, which almost every nation on earth except the United States has accepted as crucial to deal with this danger climate crisis, but is also not sufficient.

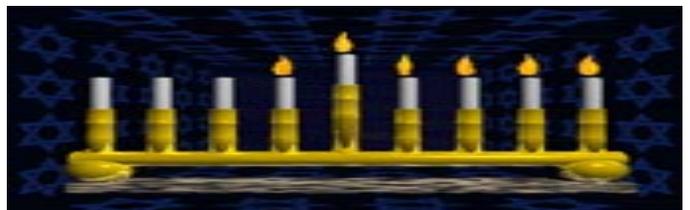
December 8 has been named International Climate Action day by activists around the wounded world.

And the Senate Committee on the Environment now has before it the first serious bill in Congress to address the climate crisis -- though it is flawed and needs important strengthening. It was introduced by Senators Joseph Lieberman and John Warner.

These dates coincide with Hanukkah. So Rabbi Jeff Sultar (the director of our Green Menorah Covenant campaign) and I have developed material for rabbis and Jewish communities generally to use at this moment. We are addressing BOTH personal/ congregational change and the need for action to change public policy. (I am both proud and sad to say we are the only national Jewish body that is doing both.)

Hanukkah -- the festival of celebrating the miracle that one day's worth of oil met eight days' needs. Hanukkah -- when we celebrate conserving energy. The Temple Menorah that was patterned on a tree and (according to the Prophet Ezekiel in the passage we read on Shabbat Hanukkah)) was fed its olive oil directly from two olive trees -- uniting the work of adam and adamah, earth and human earthling. Hanukkah -- when we remind ourselves that small groups of seemingly powerless human beings can face huge and powerful institutions -- and change the world.

With blessings of shalom -- Arthur



A Congregation, With Help from a Scribe, Writes a Torah

By *GLENN COLLINS*

Thousands of years old though it may be, the Torah began anew on a recent Sunday with Helen Margalith, 92 years old. She faced the congregation, then stared at the seeming immensity of a blank white sheet of unblemished parchment. A sofer, or scribe, sat by her side, holding a feather quill. She tentatively grasped it an inch above his hand.

"Hold it gently," said the scribe, Neil H. Yerman, coaching her to write the first letter as they both held the quill. "Now down, toward me." The ritually blessed black gall ink marked the page as she exerted pressure. It was done, then: the first letter of the Bible, bet, in Hebrew. "Beautiful!" Mr. Yerman exclaimed. She beamed. Wild applause erupted from the 300 congregants who had gathered in witness.

Soon after five other members of the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue had also written letters, there appeared the six-letter Hebrew word often translated as "In the beginning"- the first word of the Torah.

Ammiel Hirsch, the senior rabbi of the synagogue, on West 68th Street in Manhattan, told the congregation that "our expectation is that every single one of us will participate in some way in drafting this Torah, honoring the 613th and final commandment, in Deuteronomy, interpreted to mean that Jews must write a Torah."

The effort is rare in that Rabbi Hirsch hopes that as many as possible of the Reform temple's 700 families -- some 2,000 people, from children to the venerable Mrs. Margalith -- will participate in the writing over the next year.

In a single stroke, those who join in the ambitious project are both honoring tradition and testing its bounds. Typically, the writing of a Torah has been left to a highly trained sofer, collaborating perhaps with a chosen few in the temple. For many centuries, the process has been a journey into an arcane and proscribed world of recondite rules and spiritual imperatives that are a mystery even to many devout Jews.

"We could just have hired a scribe to work on it in a studio, and present it to us, but that wouldn't allow the community to participate in the values of Torah," Rabbi Hirsch said.

William B. Helmreich, professor of sociology and Judaic studies at the City University Graduate Center in Manhattan, said, "It is unusual for an entire congregation to do that, though often people pay to have a letter or word inscribed." Generally letters are left blank, or outlined, at the end of a new Torah. Honored persons, including donors, are helped by the scribe to fill them in.

The Torah scroll--which must be handwritten, and contains the books of Moses, the first five books of the Old Testament, from Genesis to Deuteronomy--is regarded by many not only as the word of God given to the Jewish people from Moses, but also as a living being, which is buried when it can no longer be used.

A new Torah must be copied letter by letter from a Torah template, called the Tikkun. There must be 304,805 letters, Mr. Yerman said, "not 304,806, or 304,804, and there can be no mistakes."

For Orthodox Jews, "allowing the congregation to participate in this way would not be kosher, and would not have the sanctity of a Torah," said Rabbi David L. Greenfield, founder of a rabbinical council in Brooklyn that has certified 7,000 scribes, including some 200 in New York City.

It is preferable that Torah writers not be children, women, or those who do not cover their heads or don't honor the Sabbath, he said, adding, "A layman is not advised to touch it."

But Prof. Lawrence H. Schiffman, chairman of the Hebrew and Judaic studies department at New York University, said that "from the point of view of the Free Synagogue, it would be a legitimate Torah." He added, "They regard it as kosher, so to them it is."

Continued:

And Arthur Green, rector of the Hebrew College Rabbinical School in Newton, Mass., said that "the perfection of having everyone participate is a kind of perfection that shouldn't be ignored."

Controversy is nothing new for a synagogue legendary for the independence of its founder, Rabbi Stephen Wise, who created a new congregation free of what he considered the censorship of synagogue boards, set up a congress to compete with the dominant American Jewish Committee, and created a competitor to the premier Reform seminary, the Hebrew Union College. (Hebrew Union merged with Rabbi Wise's seminary after he died in 1949.)

"As the Talmud said, you have to be like a reed in the water," said the 48-year-old Rabbi Hirsch, "flexible enough to move with the times, but not so flexible that you wind up floating down the river."

The new Torah is being written in celebration of the congregation's centennial this year. "We totally reject the idea that this is not valid and wonderful," said Roberta Karp, co-chairwoman of the synagogue's Torah committee. "People are entitled to their opinions, but I would invite critics to come to a session, to see how carefully we are doing this."

The writing is being supervised in the Stephen Wise sanctuary by Mr. Yerman, who has written Torahs for Reform congregations, some of which have encouraged lay participation.

Singing the letters to himself ("the commandment says write the song, not the Torah," Mr. Yerman said), he inscribes letters using a pen made from a turkey feather that he has cut to a calligraphic point with a surgical scalpel. The blessed oak-gall ink flows brilliantly onto the prepared white calfskin (ritually clean goats, sheep or deer are also used).

"You write it with every aspect of your being," Mr. Yerman said. "There must be a spiritual intention. It is an act of love, the love of God."

Mr. Yerman, 59, describes himself as a liberal sofer, adding, "I am here to be a guide and educator." A scribe for two decades after a career on Wall Street, he said he observed tradition in writing the Torah, and wears a skullcap and a tallit, or prayer shawl.

Before he helps congregants write the letters, "I like to have a conversation with them about Torah," he said. When they hold the quill, "I am not writing it, I am only holding it steady," he added. "If you move it in the wrong direction, I am holding it, so you are not moving it that way."

There are hundreds of written and oral traditions that govern the writing of a Torah. It takes painstaking, maniacally precise labor to produce perfectly shaped letters and their minuscule embellishments of ascending and descending lines; the aim is to separate the letters by no more than a hair's breadth.

Scrolls are reviewed for correctness by rabbis and students, and, increasingly, vetted with computer programs that use optical character recognition for spell-checking. Minor mistakes can be scraped and patched; major mistakes can require the rewriting of whole pages.

Mr. Yerman was also enlisted to inscribe a new Torah for Temple Emanu-El on Fifth Avenue in 1995, in which a few hundred of the synagogue's several thousand congregants participated, according to Mark H. Heutlinger, the temple's administrator. "We were criticized for having written an unkosher Torah, since women and children participated," he said. "That is their feeling, and we are entitled to our feeling."

Even if all 2,000 members of the Stephen Wise synagogue participate, Mr. Yerman will still write most of the letters himself. As he proceeds in the work, Mr. Yerman leaves the sacred names of God blank in the manuscript until he has a chance to visit a mikvah, or ritual bath, to cleanse himself before filling them in.

New Torahs can cost \$18,000 to \$70,000 and more. To pay for the project -- which is expected to cost more than \$100,000, including the scroll and the cost of a yearlong schedule of educational Torah programs -- participants are asked to pay for the letter they write: \$18 for children, and a minimum of \$36 for adults.

Given the synagogue's honored tradition of argumentativeness, Rabbi Hirsch said, "I am almost embarrassed to say that no one in the congregation is against it, that I've heard."

Dear KHE Chaverim,

With Jewish Book month upon us as I'm writing, I'd like to share with you a few of the books that have impressed me in my recent reading.

Many months ago, Judy Corwin loaned me a book that she thought I would like to read. It sat on my dryer (my home location for books and mail that need future sorting) for about half a year, till I decided to make it my airplane reading on my recent trip to Israel. The World to Come by Dara Horn, captured me from the first page. Why hadn't I been ready to open it earlier? Soon after I arrived in Tel Aviv, I received an email notification of the unexpected death of Judy's husband, Stan. How shocked I was to hear the news, and how apt that I was in the midst of this book about life and death that Judy had wanted me to read. Horn's writing is infused with intimate descriptive detail, and at the same time tackles the biggest questions that any of us ask about what we are doing alive on this planet. The World to Come is a beautifully written novel; the author's perceptions and weaving of language are as original and intriguing as her story. The plot wanders back and forth between the old world of eastern Europe and the new world of greater New York, between historical personages such as Chagall and lesser known Yiddish writers, and fabricated characters living in our contemporary world. Weaving seems an apt metaphor for the writing style, which not only connects the past with the present, but connects this world with "the world to come." Horn's imagination glides back and forth between worlds, including before birth and after death. She does not shy from dealing with horrific history as it touches her characters, or the whimsy of specific moments. It's the rare book that can swim in spiritual waters without being preachy or banal, but rather delightful and enriching.

Another book which I found engrossing this year was "Lost" by Daniel Mendelsohn. This book, like Dara Horn's, bridges the worlds, but it is delightful and enriching, a completely historical venture by the author to uncover the lives of his relatives who died at the hands of the Nazis. Amazing how someone else's search, someone else's family, can so completely absorb our interest that we (me and the many other readers who have made this a bestseller) willingly and even eagerly read through hundreds of pages to pick up more clues about the lives and deaths of these lost individuals. Somehow I'd never pictured Jewish teenagers in a small Polish town going skiing or going to the movies--stereotypes of shtetl living had blocked such possibilities in my mind. In his search for his family, Mendelsohn crosses continents (he interviews folks in Israel, Australia, and Scandinavia) and generations, and comes up with complex portraits as well of the survivors who knew his family members, however tangentially. Mendelsohn, unlike Horn, does not venture into the realm of spirituality, and sticks to the literal in his descriptions, even when certain coincidences beg for more than a "chance" interpretation. Yet a rich and rewarding tapestry, though inevitably patchy due to irretrievable unknowns, emerges from his sleuthing.

Each of the above books was given to me by other people. The Journeys of David Toback as retold by his granddaughter Carole Malkin, caught my attention on the shelf of our KHE library. This is the gripping memoir of a New York immigrant butcher whose Yiddish manuscript from the 1930s was discovered and redacted by his granddaughter some forty years later. Growing up in eastern Europe toward the end of the 1800s, David Toback vividly describes his action-packed childhood and youth as he moved from impoverished village life to in-town yeshiva to a wealthy Jewish-owned tobacco ranch and back again. This coming-of-age story reveals the contrasts of town and country, Jews and non-Jews, ultra-orthodoxy and the forces of secularization, with color and detail that vastly enrich the reader's knowledge and understanding of Jewish life in that period. His descriptions of his Bar Mitzvah and his wedding are gems. David Toback is a stand-in for our own ancestors who emigrated to America, but whose growing-up stories we most likely know little about.



Continued:

So each of these three books bridges the worlds and takes us from pre-World War II Jewish life in eastern Europe to life in the "goldene medina." Each story, each life is so unique. Yet, whether documentary or fiction, they are testimonies which help us to know where we came from and who we are. Our KHE library is not yet fully catalogued and set up for book lending. Perhaps you would like to devote some time to bringing some order to our treasury of titles. Perhaps you're the type of person who loves to browse and handle books, and serving as KHE librarian would be its own reward as well as a mitzvah for the rest of us. And for the rest of us, please take a look at our wonderful collection. And since books are meant to be read, I invite you to borrow a book that calls to you, but sign it out, and remember to bring it back for the next reader!
B'shalom oovrachah, *Shoshanah*

In My Opinion:

Last Saturday morning we had the first of what I hope will be a scheduled Torah study. We gathered at 9:00 am in the Shul, shared some breakfast, and twelve of us studied the portion of the week for an hour before the service.

I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. We read the text in English and we compared translations. Rabbi Shoshanah clarified the meaning of the Hebrew for us. We compared the footnotes in the different texts we used. Some brought commentary from outside sources. Best of all, we shared our thoughts on the levels of meaning in the text. We not only learned Torah, we had the opportunity to hear and understand the thought process of our fellow congregants and friends.

Our next Torah study will be December 15th. I'm already looking forward to this sharing. I started reading the portion called Va-yiggash (Genesis 44:18). It concerns the last trials of Joseph and his brothers. This should be an opportunity for excellent discussion.

Before we had a Shul or a Rabbi, some of us gathered in Willits on a weekly basis and studied together. We read the prayer book, sang the melodies, and read Torah together. For me it was a true Shabbat experience. On my way to Shul last Saturday I realized how much I missed my Saturday morning drive to Willits. I loved watching how the hills changed through the months, and the comfort of the routine, and especially the Torah study.

I do understand that the cost of gasoline, the pull of family weekend activities and the fatigue of a week of work, make weekly gatherings difficult. What I'm hoping is that we can schedule a monthly study group. If Saturday mornings are a problem, we could pick another time.

What I hope is that in growing as a congregation and in improving our resources, we don't lose some of those experiences that brought us together. For me, the search for Jewish knowledge and the deepening of our shared experiences as lifelong learners of our past were really important. I miss this sharing with many of you.

With love, *Carol*

Jewish Men's Weekend Retreat 5768

**Coming soon to a neighborhood near you early in 2008 - A Weekend Retreat
Under wise and joyous leadership - Great moments will eventually occur**

Imagine your participation, your break from routines - with a wonderful time at Shambhala Ranch
Look for further announcements - Talking amongst is OK - Contacting Harvey 707.459.9235 / hfrankle@pacific.net
or Tal 707.462.1595 / tsizemore@att.net is also OK

Shambhala Ranch is conveniently located mid City of Ukiah/Town of Mendocino

www.shambhalaranch.com/

(are you still there Humboldt Bay and SF Bay areas??)



Kol HaEmek/MCJC-Inland
P.O. Box 416
Redwood Valley, CA 95470



Our purpose is to create an environment in which Jewish culture, religion and spiritual life can flourish; to perpetuate and renew our Jewish connections with ourselves and our homes, within our community and the world.

Our Mission is to express and support Judaism in the following ways:

- To provide a space for religious study and prayer
- To share life cycle events through meaningful Jewish traditions
- To offer and sponsor Jewish education for all ages
- To be inclusive of all partnership and family configurations
- To include interfaith families and Jews-by-choice
- To network with other Jewish communities
- To educate and share our culture with other Mendocino County residents
- To be a foundation for *tikkun olam* (healing of the world) as a community through socially just actions and education, and by mitzvot (good deeds)
- To offer membership in exchange for financial and other contributions, and allow all to participate regardless of ability to pay

Kol HaEmek Information & Resources

Kol HaEmek	468-4536
Board Members:	
Carol Rosenberg, President	463-8526
Dan Hibshman, Vice President	462-7471
David Koppel, Treasurer (Financial Committee)	485-8910
(open seat)	
Nancy Merling (Rabbi's Council)	456-0639
Divora Stern	459-9052
Alan Acorn Sunbeam	463-8364
Steven Levin	462-3131
Robert Klayman	462-5067

Address changes (e-mail, etc): contact David Koppel davekoppel@yahoo.com or call (485-8910)

Brit Milah: Doctors willing to do circumcisions in their office or in your home: Robert Gitlin, D.O. (485-7406);

Sam Goldberg, M.D. (463-8000); Jeremy Mann, M.D. (463-8000); Sid Mauer, M.D. (463-8000),

Chanan Feld, Certified Mohel (510-524-0722). **Assistance with the ceremony, contact the Rabbi** (see below)

Chevra Kadisha (Jewish Burial): Eva Strauss-Rosen (459-4005); Helen Sizemore (462-1595)

Community Support: *If you need help (illness, family crisis) or you can be called on when others need help;*

in Willits, call Divora Stern (459-9052); In Ukiah, Tal Sizemore (462-1595); Lake County (*Volunteer needed, call a board member*)

Editor of the Shema: Carol Rosenberg, Dan Hibshman & Tal Sizemore (carolrosenberg@sbcglobal.net)

Interfaith Council: Cassie Gibson (468-5351) (Food preparation for homeless in Ukiah)

Jewish Community Information and Referral: Bay Area activities and services (415) 777-4545 or toll free at (877)777- 5247.

Library: At the Kol HaEmek shul, 8591 West Road, Redwood Valley; open at shul events and by appointment

Movies-at-the-Shul: Bill Ray (459-5850)

New Members: Carol Rosenberg (463-8526)

Rabbi's Council: assists with community and calendar planning; **liaison** - contact Nancy Merling, grandnan@saber.net (456-0639)

Rabbinical Services/Special Ceremonies: Rabbi Shoshanah Devorah, 467-0456, sdevorah@gmail.com

Use of Torah/Siddurs: Schedule ahead of time with a board member.

Tzedakah Fund (Financial Assistance): David Koppel (485-8910)