Connection is the force that binds members and clergy to Judaism and to The Village Temple.

IN THIS ISSUE
A Letter from the Rabbi ........................................ 2
A Letter from the Co-Presidents ............................ 3
Teens at The Village Temple .................................. 4
Education News ..................................................... 5
Save the Date ........................................................ 6
Hanukkah and Vodka & Latkes at the VT ............. 6
January Calendar ..................................................... 7
February Calendar .................................................. 8

Welcome to Kesher

Come as you are. Discover who you are.

“HONORING THE PAST, CELEBRATING THE FUTURE”

The Village Temple’s 70th anniversary celebration kicked off with an inspiring weekend in November featuring visiting scholar Rabbi David Stern. Now it’s time to party!

Appropriate for an occasion dedicated to looking backward with gratitude and forward with hope, the gala will take place at the Manhattan Penthouse, with its spectacular views of our downtown neighborhood and beyond. Get ready for an evening of food, drinks, music, dance, and community!

Save the Date

Village Temple 70th Anniversary Gala
Wednesday, March 6, 2019 at 6:00 PM
Manhattan Penthouse
80 Fifth Avenue, 17th Floor, New York, NY

We turn to our community for spiritual sustenance, time and again. This is a chance to socialize with fellow congregants while supporting your synagogue financially. More details to come.
Dear Friends,

The most famous schools of opposing Jewish opinion arose in the first century, B.C.E.—the schools of Bet Hillel and Bet Shammai. Bet Hillel always tried to render a lenient, more inclusive decision, while Bet Shammai adhered to the more stringent interpretation of Jewish law. The Talmud includes 300 disagreements between these two rabbinic authorities. Some of these arguments went on for years. Bet Hillel and Bet Shammai engaged in disputes that would have enduring and not trivial consequences. Rabbinic tradition did not condemn this public form of disagreement. In fact, the Talmud made no attempt to curtail a Jewish law dispute (machloket), between these two opposing scholars. In fact, the rabbis saw engaging in machloket as a critical part of uncovering truth. However, the key is to “engage in machloket in a constructive way—one that preserves the relationship.” (Adar® Curriculum) The rabbis identified these types of disputes as machloket l’shem shamayim—disputes for the sake of heaven.

In Pirke Avot 5:17 we read: “Every machloket, every argument that is for l’hem shamayim, it is destined to endure. But if it is not for [the sake of] heaven’s name—it is not destined to endure.” An example of an argument for the sake of heaven’s name is that of ongoing disagreements between Hillel and Shammai, which were handled in a constructive way. An example of an argument not for the sake of heaven’s name is the argument of Korach and his congregation. The latter machloket between Korach and Moses resulted in revolt, death and fractured relationships.

Tips for constructive arguments according to commentary in the Mishnah are:

- Debate the issues without attacking people
- Check your motivations: are you trying to win or solve problems?
- Listen to the other side and be open to admitting you may be wrong
- Consider you both may be right even though you hold opposite positions

(Source: https://www.bimbam.com/machloket-lshem-shemayim/)

It is through this Jewish lens that I suggest we understand TIME magazine’s “Person of the Year” award just announced. This was the first TIME magazine Person of the Year award was bestowed upon people who have died, but whom TIME recognizes as having a more profound impact after their death. TIME named Jamal Khashooggi, Maria Ressa, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, and the Capital Gazette as “The...
When I joined the board eight years ago, I was put in charge of the Building Committee. Over the years, with the help of the Building Committee members Andrew Wilkinson and Sheldon Stein, we investigated large scale building-wide renovations, alternative sanctuary seating plans, and bathroom renovations. However, budget, time and a host of other priorities prevented implementing those comprehensive improvements. Until last year, it looked like we might have to wait to make any meaningful progress on accessibility; then we started working with the UJA (United Jewish Appeal) Synagogue Inclusion Project and The URJ (Union for Reform Judaism) Audacious Hospitality Project.

One of the more valuable benefits of our partnership with the UJA was thinking about inclusion in much broader terms than just lowering barriers for those with physical disabilities. With the help of our facilitator from the UJA, we conducted a review of our facility and our practices and came up with several changes that increased accessibility and eliminated or reduced barriers. We eliminated the men’s restroom and converted that to a gender-neutral accessible restroom. We lowered mezuzahs and moved meetings to the first floor. We converted our prayer book for use on tablets so that those with low vision can participate in the service, and we relaunched our assistive listening devices. Next year, with help from a grant from the Inclusion Project, we will replace some pews with chairs that will help provide sanctuary wheelchair access. The seats themselves will have book holders and armrests that will assist those with trouble standing up and down during services.

Our collaboration with the URJ’s Audacious Hospitality Project has been equally rewarding. We are a sacred community open to all and we are dropping barriers to entry that are not physical. Quoting from our stated core purpose “we invite all who wish to join us to enter our doors: Jews by birth, Jews by choice, interfaith and non-traditional families, believers and skeptics.” We have made changes to our website to promote that core purpose and we have changed the way you are greeted when you enter the temple. In the new year we look to making our street presence more welcoming.

Please feel free to let us know how we can remove other stumbling blocks that get in the way of your participation or that of your friends and family.

Fred Basch
Co-President
fredbasch@nyc.rr.com

A LETTER FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS

With the help of our facilitator from the UJA, we conducted a review of our facility and our practices and came up with several changes that increased accessibility and eliminated or reduced barriers.

Guardians,” who during their lives pursued truth through journalism. In announcing the Person of the Year, TIME Editor-in-Chief Edward Felsenthal stated:

“Today, democracy around the world faces its biggest crisis in decades, its foundations undermined by invective from on high and toxins from below, by new technologies that power ancient impulses, by a poisonous cocktail of strongmen and weakening institutions,”

Indeed, values inherent in democracy are values embraced by Jewish tradition: compassion, graciousness, loving-kindness and truth. These are the Divine attributes we are gifted with by God and through them we are to act in the world. By applying these Divine attributes in our daily lives we have the capacity to welcome the stranger, uplift the poor, and pursue justice.

In recognizing “The Guardians”, Edward Felsenthal and TIME remind Americans and the free world of an intrinsic cornerstone of American democracy embodied in The First Amendment—Freedom of the Press. Not all news agencies need to present identical points of view and they must avoid and condemn propaganda that erodes core principles of democracy. And when there is disagreement, may they be guided by the principles of machloket l’shem shamayim—disputes for the sake of heaven—disputes that have enduring and Divine value.

L’shalom,
Rabbi Deborah A. Hirsch
Rabbidhirsch@villagetemple.org

A Letter From Rabbi Hirsch, continued from page 2

L’shalom,
Rabbi Deborah A. Hirsch
Rabbidhirsch@villagetemple.org

January-February 2019 / 5779 • Kesher
Our Village Temple Youth Groupers have had a busy end of 2018. The teens collected and donated dozens of Halloween costumes to children in need. We made over 500 cookies from scratch for our soup kitchen guests, as part of our program learning about SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and food insecurity in NYC. We made *kesher* cards (on sale at the VT!) to help raise funds for the youth group. For our end-of-the-semester lounge night, we celebrated Hanukkah with a gift exchange, latkes, and the game of gaga.

**Coming up in January and February:** The Youth Group will be ice skating at Bryant Park, participating in Disability Awareness Shabbat, and planning our late winter events, including a Knicks game, Pi-Day Hamantashen baking with pie filling, a Broadway show, a visit to the NYC Tenement Museum, and a weekend trip to Philadelphia with other Jewish teens from the city.

If you have a teen who is interested in participating in our awesome VTYG, please email lgreenbaum@villagetemple.org or call 212-674-2340 x5.

*Liotte Greenbaum*
Director of Community Engagement
lgreenbaum@villagetemple.org
It is hard to believe Thanksgiving, Hanukkah and winter break are behind us and we are starting the second semester at the Village Temple Religious School. Here are some of the highlights of our programming in January and February.

On Monday, January 21, we will be celebrating the holiday of Tu B'Shevat. Its name is derived from the date on which the holiday occurs, the 15th of the month of Shevat. Tu B'Shevat is a minor Jewish holiday and it is often referred to as the new year (or “birthday”) of the trees. The date was calculated according to the agricultural cycle of taking tithes based on the quantity of produce from the trees. These were brought as first-fruit offerings to the Temple in Jerusalem.

The holiday of Tu B’Shevat lost its significance after the destruction of the Second Temple, but was revitalized by followers of Kabbalah in the Middle Ages. They established the practice of the Tu B’Shevat seder, a festive meal that partially mirrors the Passover seder and involves eating biblical foods native to the Land of Israel and drinking four cups of wine progressing in color from white to light pink to red to symbolize the change of seasons from winter to summer.

In modern Israel Tu B’Shevat has evolved into an ecological holiday that is celebrated by major tree-planting by school children and the public as a reminder of our connection to the earth and our role as caretakers of the environment. Some modern practices include donating money to plant trees in Israel or planting trees locally. The Kabbalistic Tu B’Shevat seder has also been reclaimed.

In January and February we will be starting Israel Education units in grades 4 and 5. These units are introduced as part of our partnership with two secular schools in Jerusalem and Rishon L’Tzion.

In January and February we will be starting Israel Education units in grades 4 and 5. These units are introduced as part of our partnership with two secular schools in Jerusalem and Rishon L’Tzion. As part of this program students at the Village Temple and their peers in Israel will create meaningful connections between each other, explore the significance of belonging to the Jewish Peoplehood, and will learn about each other’s local communities, schools, and cities.

I am looking forward to updating you on these and many other exciting educational initiatives at the Village Temple Religious School.

Shalom,
Alex Tansky
Director of Education
atansky@villagetemple.org
save the date

JANUARY

THURSDAY, JANUARY 10: Brooklyn Museum Docent-led tour
FRIDAY, JANUARY 11: Shabbat service speaker Ravi Ragbir, New Sanctuary Coalition
THURSDAY, JANUARY 17: The Other Josh Cohen, off-Broadway theater event [http://otherjoshcohen.com/#home](http://otherjoshcohen.com/#home)
FRIDAY, JANUARY 18: Martin Luther King Jr. Family Shabbat with Children's Choir, 6:45 pm

FEBRUARY

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1: Jazz Shabbat, 6:45 pm
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15: Disability Awareness Shabbat, 6:45 pm

Celebrating Hanukkah at the VT
Followed by Vodka & Latkes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
<th>SATURDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Office Closed</td>
<td>No Religious School</td>
<td></td>
<td>6:45 pm</td>
<td>6:00-7:00 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No Religious School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kabbalat Shabbat Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00–7:00 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6:00-7:00 pm</td>
<td>Madrich</td>
<td>9:00-11:00 am</td>
<td>Soup Kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9:00 am:1:00 pm</td>
<td>Religious School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kabbalat Shabbat Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9:30-10:45 am</td>
<td>Parparim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Soup Kitchen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3:45:5:45 pm</td>
<td>Religious School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6:00-7:00 pm</td>
<td>Children’s Choir</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3:45:6:00 pm</td>
<td>Religious School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6:00-7:00 pm</td>
<td>Madrich</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9:00-11:00 am</td>
<td>Pre-K/Kindergarten</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9:00 am:1:00 pm</td>
<td>Religious School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Religious School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3:45:5:45 pm</td>
<td>Religious School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6:00-7:00 pm</td>
<td>Children’s Choir</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3:45:6:00 pm</td>
<td>Religious School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6:00-7:00 pm</td>
<td>Madrich</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9:00-11:00 am</td>
<td>Pre-K/Kindergarten</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9:00 am:1:00 pm</td>
<td>Religious School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meet our B’nai Mitzvah:

Bar Mitzvah of Milo Benedek, January 26, Parashat Yitro

Bat Mitzvah of Naomi Lipman, February 2, Parashat Mishpatim

Bar Mitzvah of Ben Buman, February 9, Parashat Terumah
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
<th>SATURDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6:45 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td>9:00-11:00 am Soup Kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kabbalat Shabbat Services—Jazz Shabbat</td>
<td>1:00 am Bar Mitzvah Naomi Lipman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS 9:00 am-1:00 pm Religious School</td>
<td>RS 3:45-5:45 pm Religious School</td>
<td>RS 3:45-6:00 pm Religious School</td>
<td>RS 6:00-7:00 pm Children’s Choir</td>
<td>RS 6:45 pm Kabbalat Shabbat Services</td>
<td>RS 9:00-11:00 am Soup Kitchen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS 9:30-10:45 am Parparim</td>
<td>RS 9:00 am-10:00 am Pre-K/Kindergarten</td>
<td>RS 9:00-11:00 am Pre-K/Kindergarten</td>
<td>RS 9:00 am-1:00 pm Religious School</td>
<td>RS 9:00-11:00 am Pre-K/Kindergarten</td>
<td>RS 9:00-11:00 am Soup Kitchen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5:30-6:15 pm Bim Bam Shabbat</td>
<td>6:45 pm Kabbalat Shabbat Services—Disability Awareness Shabbat</td>
<td>RS 9:00-11:00 am Soup Kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6:00-7:00 pm Madrich</td>
<td>RS 3:45-5:45 pm Religious School</td>
<td>RS 3:45-5:45 pm Religious School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6:00-7:00 pm Children’s Choir</td>
<td>RS 6:00-7:00 pm Children’s Choir</td>
<td>RS 6:00-7:00 pm Children’s Choir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Religious School</td>
<td>No Religious School</td>
<td>No Religious School</td>
<td>No Religious School</td>
<td>No Religious School</td>
<td>6:45 pm Kabbalat Shabbat Service</td>
<td>RS 9:00-11:00 am Soup Kitchen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Religious School</td>
<td>No Religious School</td>
<td>No Religious School</td>
<td>No Religious School</td>
<td>No Religious School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THE VILLAGE TEMPLE**

**FEBRUARY 2019/5779**

---

**CONGREGATION B’NAI ISRAEL OF NEW YORK**

33 East 12th Street
New York, NY 10003