

# The Kibbitzer

**Congregation Beth Shalom of Brandon**  
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[www.BethShalomBrandon.org](http://www.BethShalomBrandon.org)

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Hasidic Jewish Town Synagogue, Russia Shtetl Painting, Judaica

By Ari Roussimoff

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# Babylon's Fallen Tyrant

By Rabbi Shraga Simmons



Saddam Hussein saw himself as the reincarnation of Nebuchadnezzar. And he suffered the same ignoble fate.

Evil tyrants are nothing new to the region of Babylon, present-day Iraq. One of the most vicious in history was Nebuchadnezzar (sixth century BCE), the Babylonian king who built the most powerful nation in the world by ruthlessly attacking and annexing neighboring countries.

The Tenth of Tevet commemorates the day when Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem. The Babylonians eventually destroyed the First Temple, slaughtered 100,000 Jews, rounded up the rest and sent them into exile.

Whenever Nebuchadnezzar made a conquest, he used the stolen wealth to build monuments to his own glory. It was in his capital city that Nebuchadnezzar built the legendary Hanging Gardens of Babylon. In testimony to his grandeur, each brick was inscribed with Nebuchadnezzar's name.

And so it is in our time. Saddam Hussein pronounced himself as the reincarnation of Nebuchadnezzar, and dreamed of restoring the Babylonian empire to its former size and glory.

North of the ancient city of Ur, on the Euphrates River, lies the biblical city of Babylon. Years ago, Saddam commissioned archaeologists to restore the city and its Hanging Gardens. Like Nebuchadnezzar 2,500 years earlier, each new brick was inscribed -- this time with Saddam's name.

During the course of the dig, archaeologists uncovered a plaque on the ancient city gate proclaiming Nebuchadnezzar's greatness. Saddam ordered stonemasons to place another plaque on the opposite side of the gate - glorifying the greatness of Saddam Hussein.

With his megalomaniacal vision in place, Saddam embarked on a campaign of terror and conquest, first in Iran, then in Kuwait. Ultimately, he dreamed of recapturing Jerusalem.

In 1981, threatened by Saddam's burgeoning nuclear capability, the State of Israel sent a squadron of seven jets to destroy the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak. Saddam had named the reactor "Tammuz." As is well known, Tammuz was the calamitous Jewish month when the daily offerings in the Holy Temple were suspended during Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem, 2,500 years earlier.

## **DUST BINS AND SPIDER HOLES**

Alas, we know the end of the story. The biblical book of Daniel (4:30) describes the downfall of Nebuchadnezzar:

He was driven from mankind; he ate grass like oxen, and his body was washed by the dew of heaven, until his hair grew like eagles' feathers and his nails were like birds' claws.

And so it was with Saddam. Driven into a hole, grimy and disheveled. Reduced, like his ancient hero, to the dustbin of history. From the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, Saddam was left hanging with a noose around his neck..

On the Tenth of Tevet, we resolve to fight evil... in whatever millennium it may appear.

In the Bible (Genesis ch. 14), we read of a war between Middle East kingdoms. Abraham's nephew Lot was taken captive in this war, and Abraham -- although hopelessly outnumbered -- fought all these kings and won. It was an unlikely victory, but one that would portend well for Abraham's descendants.

One of the kingdoms mentioned in this Torah section is Shinar, identified as modern-day Baghdad. Incredibly, a skip-sequence code in this same section details Saddam's 1991 scud missile attack against Israel.

On the Tenth of Tevet, the Jewish people -- alive and well in their biblical homeland -- mark the deeds of Nebuchadnezzar and other tyrants, with determination and resolve to fight the evil oppressors... in whatever millennium they may appear.

# The President's Corner



Shalom Everybody

For this month's article, I would like to go in a different direction than I normally do and talk about our Congregational Family. I have listened to some members talking about the importance of acquiring a permanent Rabbi and that we are losing members because we don't have a Rabbi currently. When Robert Lefkowitz left us without notice, we were all in shock and wondered what would become of CBS.

**Steve**

We came together as any good family would do during a perceived crisis and made it work. We took on the responsibility of leading our own services and in my opinion, came up with much more inciteful D'var Torah messages. Everyone who has led our services put together a D'var Torah that meant something to that person and all of us alike. It was because we wanted to do it and share our spirituality with the rest of our Congregational Family. Throughout Jewish history, there have been many occasions when Jewish people led their own prayers and created their own relationship with G-d. Again, in my opinion, a Rabbi is wonderful to have, but we can still function as a Jewish Portal/Synagogue for other Jews to meet with us and pray together.

We are doing such wonderful things at our Synagogue with the creation of our amazing Jewish education program, that we did not have for several years, which has led us to being closer as a family that makes things work.

I want to be honest in my thoughts, and I must question why someone would leave our congregation because we are temporarily without a full time Rabbi. Prayer does not always require a Rabbi to be on the Bema. I have led services in the Air Force in Italy because we were too small of a group of Jews to have a Rabbi. It did not stop us from being practicing Jews and we prayed to G-d because it fulfilled us as Jews. As mentioned in previous D'var Torah portions, how we deal with strife and hardship is how we are judged and how we define ourselves as representatives of the Jewish faith. I am personally heartbroken to see members of our congregational family abandon CBS because of this temporary situation.

I am a flawed person, living the best way I know how and I make mistakes. I hope this article can allow some people to re-think their standing about our wonderful congregation and come back and stay with us, as it is said in a marriage; for better or for worse. I pray everyone can help us fill our building with people and rejoice in prayer together.

On another note, Rabbi Katz will be joining us again, for our quarterly Saturday Shabbat Service on February 15th, 2025. Several of us will be reading Torah and passing out Aliyah's for our portion. Please come and join us when we bring out the Torah, enjoy Rabbi Katz's wonderful stories and lessons, and then a wonderful Kiddush to follow.

As always, Todah Rabah (Thank you very much) for being a part of the Beth Shalom Family and for your time in reading this article.

Steve Billor

# Building and Grounds



Gabe Lifschitz

Our congregation lacks significant representation from those aged 18 to 50. What remains unclear is why these individuals are not more actively involved in our congregation's religious services and activities. This demographic is crucial, as they form a significant part of the workforce that will carry our traditions into the next generation (L'Dor Vador). Achieving job status in the community provides financial and social stability for daily life. However, participating in religious services and activities demands time, effort, and, for some, a considerable financial commitment to maintaining congregation membership. Perhaps the missing piece is

understanding how staying connected to the congregation and Judaism can help balance these aspects of life.

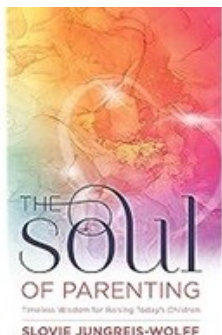
My focus is on parents within the age group I mentioned above since parents have the responsibility of raising children well to continue the next generation. The support they need requires skilled educators, a congregation with empathy, and a community that recognizes the parents as integral members. To support this point, I recommend the book, *The Soul of Parenting* by Rabbi Slovie Jungreis-Wolff. Based on years of parenting classes, personal experiences, and the insights of her parents and those who came before her, Slovie Jungreis-Wolff empowers us to ignite the flame for the next generation.

A Congregation that supports parents provides them with a strong Jewish identity, a sense of belonging, and a connection to others who share their values. It offers warmth and care, incorporates the purpose of L'dor Vador (from generation to generation), and thereby contributes to the well-being of their growing children.

While our Synagogue cannot be everything to everybody, there are basic religious, learning, and social activities it must provide to support parents and their child or children.

- Are we prepared to engage and retain parents and children who will sustain Judaism for generations to come?
- Will we equip parents with the tools and support they need to guide their children and ensure they stay on the right path?

Our mission moving forward is to ensure Congregation Beth Shalom's doors remain open to welcome parents and their children. We aim to provide the support needed to maintain their connection to Judaism, offering warmth, Torah learning, and a cultural and social framework that enhances everyday life. Creating lasting memories is invaluable. If you have educational skills relevant to our congregation or know someone who does, please reach out. Similarly, if you can support young parents and help keep them engaged in our congregation, let us know. Together, how can we continue to achieve L'dor Vador



## **The Soul of Parenting: Timeless wisdom for raising today's children**

*How can we touch the soul of our children? In a world of stress and pressure, how do we create a home of connection and peace? How do we build inner strength when so many children lack self-confidence? How can we make Judaism come alive? This is a book for every family. A world that brings new challenges requires age-old wisdom to guide us as we navigate raising children in these confusing times. Based on years of parenting classes, personal experiences, and the insights of her parents and those who came before her, Slovie Jungreis-Wolff empowers us to ignite the flame for the next generation. · Learn how to handle the challenges of bullying, anxiety, and technology. · Discover the secret to instilling grit and resilience in children. · Find new meaning in the Yamim Tovim and Shabbos. Journey through the seasons of life with inspiration.*

Despite the building and property suffering from Hurricane Milton, our congregation has come together over the past several months to help. By the time you read this article, the building will have new gutters on the south wall and the admin addition wall, replacing the portion crushed by a fallen tree. For years, we searched for contractors who could replace the south wall gutter at an affordable cost while maintaining the roof warranty. We considered repairing it ourselves, but corrosion had damaged almost half its length, causing leaks into the exterior wall. Thus, replacement was necessary.

Taking care of CBS is a mitzvah, and every little bit you can do is greatly appreciated. We need help with tasks such as interior electrical work, replacing light bulbs, fixing floor tiles, and plumbing. Additionally, there is a lot of tree debris to clear, and we need to remove the damaged wooden fencing. We also have doors that need repair or replacement, and the blue canvas on the entrance awning needs to be replaced. If you know someone who regularly does work for you, please send their name and contact information to: [cbs-building@outlook.com](mailto:cbs-building@outlook.com).

Thank you,

Gabe Lifschitz



# Dinner With the Tribe

## El Puerto Restaurant

**El Puerto Restaurant**

**1623 East 5th Ave**

**Tampa, FL 33605**

**Sunday**

**January 26, 2025**

**6:00 PM**

Based upon the enthusiastic recommendation given by our President, Steve Billor, in January we will go to El Puerto Restaurant in Ybor City! El Puerto Restaurant and Grill is located just off the beaten tourist trail in Ybor City, Tampa's historic district. El Puerto is one of Tampa's hidden gems and well worth a visit. Just make sure you're very, very hungry as the portions are huge. They've been named one of the best restaurants in Ybor City multiple times.

Please RSVP so I can get an accurate head count.

**Anita Clifford [niewdnarb@yahoo.com](mailto:niewdnarb@yahoo.com)**



**Check this out!**

**[El Puerto Restaurant and Grill Video Menu](#)**





# Yahrzeits

<b>Full name:</b>	<b>Next Yahrzeit:</b>	<b>Relationships:</b>
<b>Doreen Becker</b>	<b>01/28/2025</b>	<b>Mother of Lynn Kaler</b>
<b>Sally Bloom</b>	<b>01/25/2025</b>	<b>Mother of Gail Verlin</b>
<b>Pat Bricklin</b>	<b>01/14/2025</b>	<b>Cousin - female of Steven Feldman</b>
<b>Virginia Finke</b>	<b>01/23/2025</b>	<b>Mother of Mark Finke</b>
<b>Bob Finkel</b>	<b>01/28/2025</b>	<b>Cousin of Steven Feldman</b>
<b>Arlene Melcer</b>	<b>01/06/2025</b>	<b>Mother of Marshall Melcer</b>
<b>Florence Plesur</b>	<b>01/11/2025</b>	<b>Mother-in-law of Joe Plesur</b>
<b>Theodore Sernovitz</b>	<b>01/05/2025</b>	<b>Father of Neal Sernovitz</b>
<b>Louis Verlin</b>	<b>01/27/2025</b>	<b>Father-In-Law of Gail Verlin</b>



# Creativity and Confrontation: The History of Medieval Jewry



Dear Friends,

For a long time, there were many individuals who believed that the Middle Ages did not warrant extensive study. Ancient times were meaningful. Modern times were relevant. Everything in between? Well, it was just "the middle."

More recently, many have begun to reject this characterization and to appreciate the great achievements of the medieval period. And as this is true for general history, it is even more true for Jewish history.

Indeed, to my mind, knowing the Jewish history of medieval times is critical. One cannot possibly begin to understand what is happening in Jewish life today without understanding what came before.

One cannot understand Zionism without understanding the yearning of the Jewish people for the Land of Israel. That was a major focus of the medieval Jewish experience.

One cannot appreciate the contemporary emphasis on personal autonomy and the notion of choice without understanding what it meant to live in a medieval Jewish community. The options people choose today would be hard to imagine in the medieval period.

One cannot understand the importance of Jewish law without realizing that halakha is built on a whole range of traditional sources and thinking—a great deal of which developed during medieval times.

With that in mind, I invite you to join my new online course, "Creativity and Confrontation: The History of Medieval Jewry." Together, we'll explore 1,000 years of Jewish history in ten introductory lectures.

It is my hope that by the end of our study together, you will come away with a deeper appreciation of the medieval Jewish experience, and an urge to learn even more about this essential epoch of Jewish history.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter

University Professor of Jewish History and Jewish Thought

Yeshiva University



*Sandwiched between the rabbinic period and the Enlightenment, medieval Jewish history is often an afterthought. It shouldn't be.*

*In this online course, the distinguished historian Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter will bring you on a journey through the events, debates, and formative figures of the Jewish Middle Ages.*

*In ten fascinating lectures, he'll show you the drama and vibrancy of medieval Jewish history, and its significance to the story of the Jewish people.*

[Click here](#) to enroll for free: **Medieval Jewish History**

# Candle Lighting Times

Date	Time	Parsha
Friday, January 3	5:25 PM	Vayigash
Friday, January 10	5:30 PM	Vayechi
Friday, January 17	5:35 PM	Shemot
Friday, January 24	5:41 PM	Va'eira
Friday, January 31	5:46 PM	Bo



## January Sponsors

*There can be no joy without food and drink.*

Talmud, Mo'eJ Katan

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**Toby Koch at 813/654-0877**



# Congregation Beth Shalom

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### CBS Office Hours

The administrative office is currently open by appointment only. We can be reached by calling the office, (813)681-6547, email, cbsbrandon@outlook.com.

Although our hours are limited, we are always here for you. Do not hesitate to reach out with any needs, concerns, or questions.



### Congregation Beth Shalom

provides a meaningful spiritual home for people of all ages and levels of knowledge, a place to learn and to question, a place to worship and to celebrate, and a place to find a community that cares.

#### We offer:

- ✧ Friday worship services at 7:00 PM
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# Inside Israel's Unprecedented Battle to Drive Hamas Out of Its Tunnels

When the IDF finally caught up with the late Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, he wasn't deep inside a subterranean lair, as many had expected, but moving around the streets the Rafah. Israeli forces had driven him out of whatever tunnel he had been hiding in and he could only get to another tunnel via the surface. Likewise, Israel hasn't returned to fight in northern Gaza because its previous operations failed, but because of its success in forcing Hamas out of the tunnels and onto the surface, where the IDF can attack it more easily. Thus maps of the progress of the fighting show only half the story, not accounting for the simultaneous battle belowground.

At the beginning of the war, various options were floated in the press and by military and political leaders about how to deal with the problem posed by the tunnels: destroying them from the air, cutting off electricity and supplies so that they became uninhabitable, flooding them, and even creating offensive tunnels from which to burrow into them. These tactics proved impracticable or insufficient, but the IDF eventually developed methods that worked.

John Spencer, America's leading expert on urban warfare, explains how. First, he notes the unprecedented size and complexity of the underground network, which served both a strategic and tactical purpose:

The Hamas underground network, often called the "Gaza metro," includes between 350 and 450 miles of tunnels and bunkers at depths ranging from just beneath apartment complexes, mosques, schools, hospitals, and other civilian structures to over 200 feet underground. . . . The tunnels gave Hamas the ability to control the initiative of most battles in Gaza.

One elite unit, commanded by Brigadier-General Dan Goldfus, led the way in devising countermeasures:

General Goldfus developed a plan to enter Hamas's tunnels without Hamas knowing his soldiers were there. . . . General Goldfus's division headquarters refined the ability to control forces moving underground with the tempo of the surface forces. Incrementally, the division refined its tactics to the point its soldiers were conducting raids with separate brigades attacking on the surface while more than one subterranean force maneuvered on the same enemy underground. . . . They had turned tunnels from obstacles controlled by the defending enemy into maneuver corridors for the attacker.

This operational approach, Spencer explains, is "unlike that of any other military in modern history." Later, Goldfus's division was moved north to take on hundreds of miles of tunnels built by Hizballah. The U.S. will have much to learn from these exploits, as China, Iran, and North Korea have all developed underground defenses of their own.

From: Mosaic Online Magazine





# *Donations*

## **In Loving Memory:**

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# Fast of Tevet

The Tenth of Tevet (Heb, Asara b'Tevet) marks the day on which the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem began in the year 588 BCE, an event which eventually led to the destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE and the first exile from Israel. Though the day usually falls out near the time of Hanukkah, the two holidays have no significant relationship with each other. The Tenth of Tevet is considered a "minor fast" and orthodox Jews refrain from eating or drinking from sunrise to sunset on the day of fasting.

In Israel, the Tenth of Tevet has also come to be marked as a memorial day for the 6 million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The kaddish (Prayer for the deceased) is recited on this day for people whose date or place of death during the Holocaust is unknown and that is how the date has gotten the unofficial Hebrew moniker, Yom Ha-kaddish ha-kleli, literally translated as The General Kaddish Day.

“And it was in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth (day) of the month, that Nebuchadnetzar, King of Babylon came, he and all his hosts, upon Yerushalayim, and he encamped upon it and built forts around it. And the city came under siege till the eleventh year of King Tzidkiyahu. On the ninth of the month famine was intense in the city, the people had no bread, and the city was breached” (Second Melachim 25).

We see then, that the tenth of Tevet — on which the siege of Yerushalayim began, was the beginning of the whole chain of calamities which finally ended with the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash.

The essential significance of the fast of the Tenth of Tevet, as well as that of the other fast days, is not primarily the grief and mourning which they evoke. Their aim is rather to awaken the hearts towards repentance; to recall to us, both the evil deeds of our fathers, and our own evil deeds, which caused anguish to befall both them and us and thereby to cause us to return towards the good. As it is said: “And they shall confess their transgressions and the transgressions of their fathers.” (Vayikra 26. Rambam Hilchot Ta'anit Chapter 5). The aim of fasting, therefore, is to subjugate our evil inclination by restriction of pleasure; to open our hearts and stir us to repentance and good deeds through which the gates of Divine mercy might be opened for us.

Therefore, each person is obligated to examine his deeds and to repent during these days. As it is written of the people of Ninveh: “And the Lord saw their actions ” (Yonah 3) . . upon which the Rabbis say: “It is not said, He saw their sackcloth and fasting, but rather their actions ” (Ta'anit 22). We see hence that the purpose of fasting is repentance.

Therefore, the people, who fast but engage in pointless activities, grasp what is of secondary importance and miss what is essential. Nevertheless, repentance alone without fasting is also insufficient. There is a positive commandment of Rabbinic origin to fast on his day.

If a public fast falls on Shabbat, it is delayed until after Shabbat since fasting is not permitted on Shabbat. The one exception is Yom Kippur, which based on a verse in the Torah is observed even if it falls on Shabbat. The Geonim also write that the same was once true of the tenth of Tevet, since it is written of the tenth of Tevet: “On this very day” (YehezkeI 2). In our calendar calculation, however, the tenth of Tevet can never fall on Shabbat.

If a public fast occurs on Erev Shabbat we fast the entire day till the conclusion of the fast, even though it means entering Shabbat while fasting. Nowadays our calendar calculation is such that the only public fast, which can fall on Erev Shabbat, is the tenth of Tevet.

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-tenth-of-tevet-asara-b-tevet>



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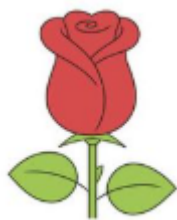


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# January 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 	2 Hebrew Lessons 6:30 PM	3 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 PM 	4
5	6	7 Ex Com Mtg 6:30 PM Board Mtg 7:00 PM	8	9 Hebrew Lessons 6:30 PM	10 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 PM Fast of Tevet 	11
12	13	14	15	16 Hebrew Lessons 6:30 PM	17 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 PM 	18
19	20	21	22	23 Hebrew Lessons 6:30 PM	24 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 PM 	25
26	27	28	29	30 Hebrew Lessons 6:30 PM	31 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 PM 