

The Kibbitzer

Congregation Beth Shalom of Brandon
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www.BethShalomBrandon.org

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Stained Glass Purim Basket by Michelle Gaynor

Inspired by the joyous festivities connected with the Holiday of Purim, the variety of fragmented shapes, images, and colors in the painting represent each of us as individuals, coming together and uniting in celebration! Each piece is an important contribution to the whole.

Rabbinically Speaking



Purim and the Longest Hatred

By Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

22 February 2002

In a few days' time we'll be celebrating the Jewish festival of [Purim](#). It's a joyous day. We have a festive meal; we send presents to our friends; and gifts to the poor, so that no one should feel excluded. Anyone joining us on Purim would think it commemorates one of the great moments in Jewish history, like the Exodus from slavery or the Revelation at Mount Sinai.

Actually though, the truth is quite different. Purim is the day we remember the story told in the book of Esther, set in Persia in pre-Christian times. It tells of how a senior member of the Persian court, Haman, got angry that one man, Mordechai, refused to bow down to him. Discovering that Mordechai was a Jew, he decided to take revenge on all Jews and persuaded the King to issue a decree that they should all – young and old, men women and children – should be annihilated on a single day. Only the fact that Esther, Mordechai's cousin, was the King's favorite allowed her to intercede on behalf of her people and defeat the plan.

Purim is, in other words, the festival of survival in the face of attempted genocide. It wasn't until way into adult life that I realized that what we celebrate on Purim is simply the fact that we're alive; that our ancestors weren't murdered after all.

Like many of my generation born after the Holocaust, I thought antisemitism was dead; that a hate so irrational, so murderous, had finally been laid to rest. So it has come as a shock to realize in recent months that it's still strong in many parts of the world, and that even in Britain yesterday a cleric appeared in court charged with distributing a tape calling on his followers to kill Jews.

What is it about Jews – or black people, or Roma, or foreigners – that causes them to be hated? The oldest explanation is probably the simplest: because we don't like the unlike. As Haman put it, "Their customs are different from those of other people." And that's why racial or religious hate isn't just dangerous. It's a betrayal of the human condition. We *are* different. Every individual, every culture, every ethnicity, every faith, gives something unique to humanity. Religious and racial diversity are as essential to our world as biodiversity. And therefore, I pray that we have the courage to fight prejudice, of which antisemitism is simply the oldest of them all. Because a world that can't live with difference is a world that lacks room for humanity itself.



The President's Corner



Steve

Shalom Everybody,

Things are really ramping up for us during this time of year. By February 15, 2025, we will have already held our Saturday Shabbat service, led by Rabbi Katz and organized by Neil Spindel. Here's to hoping for a good turnout for the Shabbat Service!

We are preparing for our Purim Spiel Play and Service on Friday, March 14th, 2025. Our Bat Mitzvah Student, Abby Rosenthal, is taking charge of our Purim Spiel play by writing, directing, and producing it. Way to go, Abby!

We will be baking our Hamantaschen cookies the Sunday before in our kitchen (March 9th), which is always a lot of fun. I also hope we get a good turnout to celebrate the 2nd Night Passover Seder together on Sunday, April 13th, 2025. We will be selling seats to cover our expenses and help support Congregation Beth Shalom.

I have been consistently posting about our Friday night Shabbat services, as well as all other Beth Shalom events, on the Fishhawk Jewish Families Facebook Page. My hope is to draw a family to attend, who will then invite another Jewish family they know, fostering a growing community. Many of our weekly Parsha's during this time highlight how the Jewish people overcome adversity by not giving up and trusting in G-d's intervention and providence. I truly believe if we remain steadfast, we will have a healthy and thriving Beth Shalom once again.

We just had our Beth Shalom Tailgate party on Superbowl Sunday. Jackie and Myron Feldman did such an AMAZING JOB with the event! We all had such a GREAT time playing the games Jackie had organized. Winning one of the games doesn't hurt either..... 😊

I am reiterating what I mentioned in last month's article as I believe it remains crucial. I am doing my best to help CBS continue to be a beacon of Jewish Faith in eastern Hillsborough County, and I sincerely thank the rest of our congregation for their unwavering dedication. I encourage everyone to share any suggestions they have to make us become a more successful synagogue.

As always, Todah Rabah (Thank you very much) for your time in reading my article.

Steve Billor



Congregation Beth Shalom

Shabbat Services

Can't make it to services? Join us online with a live feed from Zoom or Facebook!

Zoom Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83776565288?pwd=V3RIZzRXWkdaTjhsekBpNWJFTjIBUTo9>

Meeting ID:

837 7656 5288

Passcode:

101324

Facebook Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/BethShalomBrandon/>

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.

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Husband of Caren Magdovitz

Ely Sandberg

Father of Sandy Santucci

Rose Sandberg

Mother of Sandy Santucci

Lillian Bellavance Santucci

Mother-in-law of Sandy Santucci

Nathan Spindel

Grandfather of Neil Spindel

Candle Lighting Times

Date	Time	Parsha
Friday, March 7	6:16 PM	Tetzaveh
Friday, March 14	7:20 PM	Ki Tisa
Friday, March 21	7:24 PM	Vayak'hel
Friday, March 28	7:28 PM	Pekudei



Join Us for Shabbat!

Every Friday night at 7:00 PM, our congregation comes together to welcome Shabbat with beautiful tunes and inspiring prayers. After the service, we continue the celebration with an oneg.

Would you like to sponsor an oneg to celebrate a mitzvah?

Please reach out to Toby Koch at (813) 654-0877.



Shabbat
Shalom



KUDOS!

Toby Koch

Taking charge of redoing our website

Neil Spindel

Teaching a seminar of how to use ShalomCloud
Organizing our Shabbat Yitro

Gabe Lifschitz
Sandy Schwartz

Working diligently on our grant

Jackie & Myron Feldman

Organizing our Super Bowl Tailgating Party

Steve Billor

Working on the freezer replacement

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Purim

Purim (Heb. פּוּרִים) is one of the most joyous and fun holidays on the Jewish calendar. It commemorates a time when the Jewish people living in Persia were saved from extermination.

The story of Purim is told in the Biblical book of Esther. The heroes of the story are Esther, a beautiful young Jewish woman living in Persia, and her cousin Mordecai, who raised her as if she were his daughter. Esther was taken to the house of Ahasuerus, King of Persia, to become part of his harem, and he loved her more than his other women and made her queen. But the king did not know that Esther was a Jew because Mordecai told her not to reveal her nationality.

The villain of the story is Haman, an arrogant, egotistical advisor to the king. Haman hated Mordecai because Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman, so Haman plotted to destroy the Jewish people. In a speech that is all too familiar to Jews, Haman told the king, “There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from those of every people; neither keep they the king’s laws; therefore it does not profit the king to suffer them” (Esther 3:8). The king gave the fate of the Jewish people to Haman, to do as he pleased to them. Haman planned to exterminate all of the Jews.

Purim (aka. pūrū, “lots”) is so-called (Esther 9:26) after the lots cast by Haman to determine the month in which the slaughter was to take place (Esther 3:7). In Hasmonean times it was known as the “Day of Mordecai” (II Macc. 15:36)

Mordecai persuaded Esther to speak to the king on behalf of the Jewish people. This was a dangerous thing for Esther to do, because anyone who came into the king’s presence without being summoned could be put to death, and she had not been summoned. Esther fasted for three days to prepare herself, then went to the king. He welcomed her. Later, she told him of Haman’s plot against her people. The Jewish people were saved, and Haman was hanged on the gallows that had been prepared for Mordecai.

The book of Esther is unusual in that it is the only book of the bible that does not contain the name of G-d. In fact, it includes virtually no reference to G-d. Mordecai makes a vague reference to the fact that the Jews will be saved by someone else, if not by Esther, but that is the closest the book comes to mentioning G-d. Thus, one important message that can be gained from the story is that G-d often works in ways that are not apparent, in ways that appear to be chance, coincidence or ordinary good luck.

The chronological difficulties such as the identity of King Ahasuerus, and the absence of any reference in the Persian sources to a king having a Jewish consort; the striking resemblance between the names Mordecai and Esther to the Babylonian gods Marduk and Ishtar; the lack of any reference to Purim in Jewish literature before the first century B.C.E.; the language of the Book of Esther, which suggests a later date – all these have moved the critics to look elsewhere than the account in Esther for the true origin of the festival. Various conjectures have been made but the problem still awaits its solution.

The festival had long been established by the second century C.E. when a whole tractate of the Mishnah (Megillah) was devoted to the details of its observance, especially to the rules governing the reading of the Scroll of Esther, called in the rabbinic literature the megillah (“scroll”).

Purim is celebrated on the 14th day of Adar, which is usually in March. The 14th of Adar is the day that Haman chose for the extermination of the Jews. In leap years, when there are two months of Adar, Purim is celebrated in the second month of Adar, so it is always one month before Passover. In cities that were walled in the time of Joshua, Purim is celebrated on the 15th of the month, because the book of Esther says that in Shushan (a walled city), deliverance from the massacre was not complete until the next day (Esther 9:18). This day became known as Shushan Purim.

Out of respect for Jerusalem, it is said, the day is still kept by Jews living in cities that had a wall around them “from the days of Joshua” (Meg. 1:1). Thus, in present-day Israel, Purim is celebrated in Jerusalem on the 15th, but in Tel Aviv on the 14th.

The Purim holiday is preceded by a minor fast, the Fast of Esther, which commemorates Esther’s three days of fasting in preparation for her meeting with the king.

The primary commandment related to Purim is to hear the reading of the book of Esther –the Megillah. Although there are five books of Jewish scripture that are properly referred to as megillahs (Esther, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations), this is the one people usually mean when they speak of The Megillah.

Esther Scroll

Megillot are frequently decorated, sometimes with scenes from the narrative. Since according to the midrashic interpretation the word ha-melekh (“the king”), when it is not qualified by Ahasuerus, refers to the King of the universe, some Megillot are so written that each column begins with this word. It would seem that originally the megillah was read during the day, but eventually, the rule was adopted to read it both at night and during the day (Meg. 4a). It is customary to fold the megillah over and spread it out before the reading since it is called a “letter” (Esther 9:26, 29).

The megillah is read with a special cantillation. The four verses of “redemption” (2:5; 8:15–16; and 10:3) are read in a louder voice than the other verses. It is customary to boo, hiss, stamp feet, and rattle gragers (noisemakers) whenever the name of Haman is mentioned in the service. The purpose of this custom is to “blot out the name of Amalek.” (see Deut. 25:19, and Esther 3:1 and I Sam. 15:8–9 for Haman was a descendant of Amalek). It is the practice for the reader to recite the names of the 10 sons of Haman (Esther 9:7–9) in one breath (Meg. 16b) to show that they were executed simultaneously. The custom has also been seen, however, as a refusal by Jews to gloat over the downfall of their enemies (C.G. Montefiore and H. Loewe (ed.), *A Rabbinic Anthology* (1938), 53).

We are also commanded to eat, drink and be merry. There has been much discussion around the saying of the Babylonian teacher Rava (Meg. 7b) that a man is obliged to drink so much wine on Purim that he becomes incapable of knowing whether he is cursing Haman or blessing Mordecai. The more puritanical teachers tried to explain this away, but the imbibing of alcohol was generally encouraged on Purim, and not a few otherwise sober teachers still take Rava’s saying literally (see, e.g., H. Weiner: *9½ Mystics* (1969), 207). The laws of Purim and the reading of the megillah are codified in Shulchan Arukh, Orah Chaim 686–97.

Various parodies of sacred literature were produced for Purim, the best known of which, *Massekhet Purim*, is a skillful parody of the Talmud with its main theme the obligation to drink wine merrily and to abstain strictly from water. The institution of the Purim rabbi, a kind of lord of misrule, who recites Purim Torah, the frivolous manipulation of sacred texts, was the norm in many communities. Some have seen in all this an annual attempt to find psychological relief from what otherwise might have become an intolerable burden of loyalty to the Torah (Druyanow, *Reshumot*, 1 and 2). Under the influence of the Italian carnival it became customary for people to dress up on Purim in fancy dress, men even being permitted to dress as women and women as men. The Adloyada carnival in Tel Aviv has been a prominent feature of Purim observance in modern Israel.

In the Kabbalistic and Hasidic literature much is made of Purim as a day of friendship and joy and as the celebration of God at work, as it were, behind the scenes, unlike Passover which celebrates God’s more direct intervention. The “lots” of Purim are compared with the “lots” cast on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:8), what human beings call “fate” or “luck” being, in reality, only another manifestation of God’s providential care. So highly did the kabbalists esteem Purim that they reported in the name of Isaac Luria that the Day of Atonement is “like Purim” (Yore ke-Furim).

While some Reform congregations abolished Purim, others continued to celebrate it as a day of encouragement and hope, some even arguing that it helped Jews to express their aggressive emotions and to sublimate their feelings of wrath and hatred (W.G. Plaut, *The Growth of Reform Judaism* (1965), 224).

Jews are commanded (Esther 9:18) to send out gifts of food or drink and to make gifts to charity. The sending of gifts of food and



A special festive meal is eaten on Purim afternoon toward eventide. Among the special Purim foods are boiled beans and peas, said to be a reminder of the cereals Daniel ate in the king's palace to avoid any infringement of the dietary laws. Among Ashkenazic Jews, a common treat at this time of year is hamentaschen (lit. Haman's pockets). There are many explanations as to why Jews eat these tri-cornered pastries on Purim, including that they are meant to represent Haman's hat, or ears. Nobody knows for sure how these sweets became so heavily associated with Purim, but we do know that similar cookies known as Mohntaschen were popular in 18th-century Europe, and they were adopted around this time as a Purim treat by European Jewish families. It is speculated that these cookies became a traditional Purim food because the word "Mohn," of Mohntaschen, sounds similar to the name Haman. This association caught on, and soon the cookies were simply known as hamentaschen. During the 19th century the cookies spread to America and the rest of the world, and have remained a Purim staple ever since.

It is customary to hold carnival-like celebrations on Purim, to perform plays and parodies, and to hold beauty contests.

The Torah reading for Purim morning is Exodus 17:8–16. Work is permitted as usual on Purim unless it falls on a Saturday. Purim is considered a minor holiday reflected in the Yiddish saying that as a high temperature does not denote serious illness neither is Purim a festival.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Sources: Judaism 101. Haaretz, (March 2, 2015). Encyclopedia Judaica. © 2007 The Gale Group. All Rights Reserved. Photos: Purim painting by Arthur Szyk, Public domain via Wikimedia Commons. Esther scroll - Israel Museum, Public domain via Wikimedia Commons. Pieter Lastman, Public domain via Wikimedia Commons.



How a Religious Pop Song Bridged Israel's Cultural Divide

While Israeli society remains divided over critical issues like the conduct of the war, Benjamin Netanyahu's leadership, and haredi military service, there are occasional culture touchstones that seem to bridge these divides—even the all-important divergence between the religious and the secular. One example is the remarkable popularity of Yosef Elitzur's overtly religious song *Tamid Ohev Oti* ("He always loves me"). **Gila Isaacson** tries to explain this runaway success:

The song's appeal lies somewhere between paradox and prophecy. Its lyrics could have been lifted straight from a *siddur* (prayer book)—speaking of divine providence, prayer, and spiritual renewal. The kind of content that typically stays within the boundaries of religious radio stations and yeshiva hallways. . . . This song reminds me that in times of national crisis, the markers we use to separate ourselves can become the very threads that bind us together. Whether wearing a kippah or a black hat or no head covering at all, sometimes we all need to believe that everything will be "better and better and better."

To listen to the song, click on the play button.

To read the lyrics, click on the purple link.



Yosef Elitzur's song Tamid Ohev Oti

<https://lyricstranslate.com/en/sasson-ifram-shaulov-tamid-ohav-oti-english-1#songtranslation>



Itzik Dadya

Herzog at UN slams its ‘moral bankruptcy,’ says terrorists have weaponized it

Speaking at ceremony on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, president accuses ICC and ICJ of ‘manipulating the definition of genocide for the sole purpose of attacking Israel’

By AMY SPIRO 27 January 2025, 9:32 pm

President Isaac Herzog used a speech at the United Nations marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day to slam the UN and international courts for their “hypocrisy” and attacks on the State of Israel.

Addressing a ceremony at the UN in New York on the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Herzog said that the global bodies formed in the wake of the Holocaust and aimed at preventing crimes against humanity, including the UN, the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, have “blurred the distinction between good and evil” and allowed “antisemitic genocidal doctrines to flourish uninterrupted.”

Herzog noted in his address that his maternal great-uncle, Holocaust survivor Hersch Lauterpacht, served as a prosecutor in the Nuremberg trials and went on to help establish the ICJ, later serving on the court as a judge.

“He did so out of deep faith, and hope, that the international institutions would forever be committed to preventing these heinous crimes from ever happening again — to the Jewish people or any other people,” he said.

Decades later, Herzog said, the UN has found itself at a “dangerous crossroads.”

“Rather than fulfilling its purpose, and fighting courageously against a global epidemic of jihadist, murderous and abhorrent terror, time and again this assembly has exhibited moral bankruptcy,” the president said.

He accused the ICC of “outrageous hypocrisy and protection of the perpetrators of the atrocities.”

Herzog said the ICC and other global institutions, which have accused Israel of war crimes over its conduct in the fight against Hamas in Gaza, “blur the distinction between good and evil, creating a distorted symmetry between the victim and the murderous monster.”

The president asked: “How is it possible that international institutions, which began as an anti-Nazi alliance, are allowing antisemitic genocidal doctrines to flourish uninterrupted in the wake of the largest massacre of Jews since World War II?”

Just as terrorists use human shields, Herzog continued, “they also weaponize the international institutions, undermining the most basic, fundamental reason for their establishment. How is it possible that the same institutions established in the wake of the greatest genocide in history – the Holocaust – are manipulating the definition of genocide for the sole purpose of attacking Israel and the Jewish people?”

At the start of his address, Herzog said that while Israel stands strong as a “symbol of survival,” its people are anguished while dozens of hostages captured by Hamas on October 7 remain captive in Gaza.

“I stand before you as president of a nation that is determined and proud, and yet – anguished and incomplete,” he said.

Herzog at UN slams its ‘moral bankruptcy,’ says terrorists have weaponized it

page 2



“Although the Israeli people have been overcome with emotion seeing seven of our daughters at last emerge heroically from hell – still, 90 Israelis and foreign nationals remain in Hamas captivity,” Herzog added, referring to the release since the start of the current ceasefire of Doron Steinbrecher, Emily Damari, Romi Gonen, Naama Levy, Daniella Gilboa, Liri Albag, and Karina Arielev.

“We are anxiously awaiting six more to be freed this week, and awaiting all the others,” Herzog continued. “I call on all representatives in this General Assembly, all who consider themselves part of the civilized world, to throw your weight to ensure our hostages return to their homes – every single one of

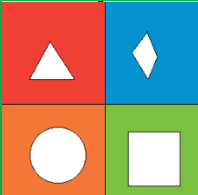
them. Bring them back home now!”

Herzog recited a special prayer in both Hebrew and English, calling for the safe return of the hostages, who “are enduring subhuman conditions, without essential primary health care, without Red Cross visitations, and without any compliance with international law, treaties, or agreements.”

The president was accompanied to the UN by the parents of Omer Neutra, a US-Israeli lone soldier who was killed in battle on October 7, and whose body is being held by Hamas. His death was not confirmed until last month.



Super Bowl Tailgating Party



VIOLINS OF HOPE

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March 20 | 6:30 p.m. | The Palladium Theater

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Violins of Hope: A Concert

March 20 | 8:00 p.m. | The Palladium Theater

Experience an evening where music and history intertwine, sharing the stories of Holocaust-era violins, violas, and cellos that survived concentration camps. Restored by Israeli violinmakers Amnon and Avshalom Weinstein, these instruments once offered solace in unimaginable darkness, sometimes saving lives. Led by The Florida Orchestra's principal cellist Yoni Draiblate, the concert features a double string quartet playing these historical instruments.

Questions? Contact Miranda Brenner at mbrenner@thefhm.org



About Violins of Hope

Violins of Hope is an international project that honors the lives lost and affected by the Holocaust through the powerful medium of music. This extraordinary initiative centers on a collection of 70 Holocaust-era string instruments—violins, violas, and cellos—that once belonged to Jewish musicians before and during World War II.

For some, their music became a lifeline; for others, the violins were the sole survivors of their stories. Decades later, these instruments found their way to Israeli violinmaker Amnon Weinstein's workshop. With meticulous care, Amnon and his son, Avshalom, have spent over 20 years restoring them, ensuring the violins could sing once more as symbols of resilience, hope, and humanity.

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March 2025



March Rabbis

- March 7 Gabe Lifschitz
- March 14 Myron Feldman
- March 21 Steve Billor
- March 28 Neil Spindel



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4 Ex Com Mtg 6:30 PM Board Mtg 7:00 PM	5 Hebrew Lessons 6:00 PM	6	7 Children's Intro to Judaism 6:00 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 	8
9 Bake-In 1-4 PM 	10	11	12 Hebrew Lessons 6:00 PM	13  PURIM	14 Children's Intro to Judaism 6:00 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 	15
16 Food Bank 1 PM to 3 PM	17 	18	19 Hebrew Lessons 6:00 PM	20	21 Children's Intro to Judaism 6:00 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 	22
23	24	25	26 Hebrew Lessons 6:00 PM	27	28 Children's Intro to Judaism 6:00 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 	29
30	31					