

CONGREGATION AGUDATH JACOB

January Tevet/Shevat 5780

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Founded in 1888 * Celebrating 132 years * Member of United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

From the Desk of **Your Board of Directors**

On December 17th our congregation held its annual congregational meeting. We elected officers and board members and discussed a number of issues. I'd like to share a few thoughts with you that I shared that evening to help put our small little shul into perspective.

First and foremost, I want to thank Rabbi Lanxner for leading this congregation. He is, above all, one of the kindest and most caring human beings I have ever met. I think that we all take for granted having a full time Rabbi but considering the size of our shul we are beyond fortunate to be able to provide this to our members. Most shuls our size either no longer exist or have lay leaders with an occasional visit from a Rabbi. We are extremely lucky and can thank members that are no longer with us for helping to make this happen. We simply could not provide this without their financial assistance.

We often talk about how small we are but I would like to share what small really means. We currently have 45 paying units; 23 single memberships and 22 family memberships. Some of our full dues paying members don't live in Waco so it is safe to say that 30 of these units participate during the year in some capacity. Half of these units are new members over the last few years. So, we are small, we are changing and we are trying to navigate new territory while still trying to respect the history, traditions, and legacies of the people who came before us.

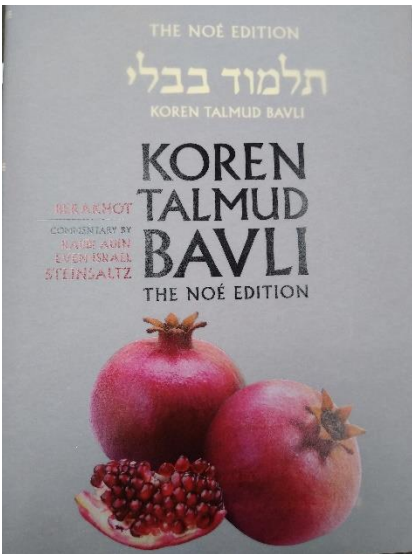
The board of directors voted unanimously in November to add a security fee to the yearly membership dues in order to be able to hire an armed police officer for Shabbat services. This fee, along with a recent generous donation, will help cover the cost for this for the year. Sadly, this is a necessity not a luxury and I appreciate everyone's willingness to support our safety. Beginning this Shabbat, you will see a police officer. In the coming weeks you will also be receiving security information and ways to make us safer. We are asking everyone to abide by some basic instructions. Change is never easy and old habits die hard but it's the responsibility of the board and every member to ensure the safety and security of our shul and community. Cooperating with our guidelines will make this easier for us to maintain a place where we can securely worship.

There are so many ways everyone can help CAJ. Personally, you can help by taking a class, helping with a program, coming to services on Shabbat, and helping to make a minyan. You can also help financially. Give a donation when you're called to the Torah for an Aliyah which not only includes the seven Aliyot but also includes lifting and wrapping the Torah. These are important honors. You can also give a donation in honor of someone, in memory of someone, for someone's birthday, anniversary, or even a get well wish. There are lots of ways to help and every little bit counts, but having people at services and programs is what helps the most. We are small and we welcome everyone's participation.

On behalf of the board of directors we look forward to seeing you soon.

Susan Silver
President

RABBI'S CORNER



As we are about to start our exciting Talmud class this coming Sunday January 5, 2019 from 11:00am to 12:00noon, right after our Beginner's Minyan, I thought to lay out to our prospective members an overview of the Talmud.

Why do we need to study Talmud in our day and age, what's the benefit?

But before I explain, let's understand: **What is the Talmud?**

The first thing to know is that the Torah consists of two parts: The **Written Torah**, and the **Oral Torah**.

The Written Torah (**Tanach, an acronym for Torah, Nevi'im Ketuvim** in Hebrew) totals 24 books, including the Five Books of Moses and the Prophetic writings – e.g. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Psalms, Proverbs, etc.

The Five Books of Moses (the Torah- Hebrew for "instructions" because its purpose is to instruct - Jews consider it insulting to call it the Old Testament, as this implies a New Testament, which Jews reject)– comprised of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. But whatever the name, (Torah, Chumash) it refers to the best-selling, longest-running book in the history of mankind.

The Torah was given to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai, written down letter for letter by Moses in 1273 BCE, and includes all 613 commandments (Mitzvot). Yet this written law is embedded with riddles in every word. "Slaughter animals as I have commanded you," G-d declares, but the text does not spell out "how", or

"Observe and Remember the Shabbat and make it Holy", again the The Torah does not spell out "how to Observe it".

Hence the Oral Law. Its name derives from the fact that it was not allowed to be formally written down but had to be taught orally. It contains the explanations of the Written Torah. This was given as well to Moses by G-d, and transmitted without being written from one generation to the next. One cannot be understood without the other.

After the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE, Rabbi Yehudah the Prince put the Oral Law into writing, to preserve it from being lost. Called the Mishnah, this served as the basis for an expanded text known as the Talmud – an epic project completed in 500 CE in Babylonia, modern day Iraq.

(In 190 CE, persecution and exile of the Jewish people threatened the proper transmission of the Oral Torah. Therefore, Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi compiled written notes on the Oral Torah called the "Mishnah" (Hebrew for "teaching"). Rabbi Yehudah arranged the Mishnah into six sections: Laws of Agriculture, Festivals, Damages, Marriage, Purity, and Offerings. Rabbi Yehudah wrote the Mishnah in code form, so that students would still require the explanation of a rabbi – since this information was meant to remain oral).

In 500 CE, the Jewish people again suffered an uprooting of their communities, and two Babylonian rabbis – Rav Ashi and Ravina – compiled 63 Tractates- record of rabbinic discussions on the Mishnah, called the "Gemara." Together, the Mishnah and Gemara comprise what is commonly called the "Talmud." From there, Jewish scholars in every generation have illuminated the Talmudic text, and today studying Talmud is like having a conversation with the greatest Jewish minds of all-time: Rabbi Akiva, Reish Lakish, Rashi, Maimonides, the Vilna Gaon, the Chafetz Chaim and literally thousands of other brilliant commentators.

The Oral Torah also includes the Midrash, an explanation of the Written Torah, comprising both ethical and legal components. Much of this material is also contained in the Talmud.

The Oral Torah also includes the works of Kabbalah, a tradition of mystical secrets of the metaphysical universe received by Moses at Mount Sinai. It was first published as "The Zohar" by R' Shimon bar Yochai (170 CE), and elucidated by the Arizal (1572 CE).

(Torah is not to be regarded, however, as an academic field of study. It is meant to be applied to all aspects of our everyday life – speech, food, prayer, etc. Over the centuries great rabbis have compiled summaries of practical law from the Talmud. Landmark works include: "Mishneh Torah" by Maimonides -12th century Egypt; "Shulchan Aruch" by Rabbi Yosef Karo -16th century Israel; "Mishnah Berurah" by the Chafetz Chaim -20th century Poland).

So, Why Study Talmud in the Twenty-first Century?

While Talmud study held pride of place in most Jewish communities in previous centuries by sheer force of tradition, it is incumbent upon us to seek out the reasons for this privileged position. After all, Talmud study requires a tremendous investment of time and effort, and the payoff from struggling through its meandering dialectics is not always obvious as each and every one of the members who signed up for this Talmud class will most probably find out soon enough. But let us not get discouraged, as I am certain that all who signed up for the class have had the opportunity in our previous Sunday morning classes to have a taste of it as we delve a little on the introduction of what the Talmud was about. Also, we need to remember what we previously learned in the Ethics of our Fathers, put in modern day vernacular..." No pain, No gain".

One theme repeated by various students of Talmud which stands out as the most honest, seems to be that studying Talmud is enjoyable, a fun Talmudic brainteaser, not only a puzzle, but also like a treasure map that leads every generation to new *chiddushim*. Some others find pleasure in investing the time necessary to decipher this difficult text, especially when doing so with a good study partner, a Chavrutah. One will go so far as elaborating on the deep satisfaction and even spiritual joy in the "Eureka" moment when one discovers an insight to explain a difficult passage, which I can attest personally to this type of reaction after delving long and deep in a complicated rabbinic argument.

This enjoyment of learning itself points to a deeper aspect of the Talmud that is vitally relevant to the twenty-first century. Many people are frustrated by the Talmud's playful or even sometimes at first view, illogical arguments, curious and fantastic stories, and also at times, far-fetched interpretations. However, I honestly believe what makes Talmud study so engaging is, paradoxically, its very strangeness. In the very attempt to make sense of the foreignness of the Talmud, one can also see an opportunity to develop the virtue of wrestling with its counterintuitive logic to finally put aside one's own cultural biases and read the Talmud "sympathetically in light of its own internal consistency."

Sometimes, especially when rabbinic stories seem disturbing and perplexing, further analysis reveals in them sophisticated narrative art and deceptive profundity in their ability to convey in a short space the deepest struggles of the rabbis with critical theological issues. Similarly, students who find infuriating the Talmud's compulsion to argue both sides of every issue, may be underestimating the value of this multivocality. Other will feel for example, that the Talmud's open endedness and pluralism, makes its study exhilarating and rewarding. While some others may be drawn to the dialectical nature of the Talmud

and argue that it trains them to appreciate the ambiguity inherent in Jewish Rabbinic law (Halachah) and reality.

Most fundamentally, we should recognize the centrality of the Talmud as the foundation for rabbinic Judaism. It is an essential resource for anyone interested in deepening one's foundation of Jewish knowledge of Halachah, (Jewish Law) after having mastered its source, the Torah.

As we are embarking in the study of Tractate **Berachot**, from the Babylonian Talmud, I wanted to mention that with all of the different nuances and abundance of detail in the tractate, there is one central, unifying theme that recurs throughout all of the many *Halachot* and aspects touched upon within it, which transforms it into a cohesive unit: The principle that the ***abstract should be concretized and the sublime realized in a practical***, detailed manner.

Although this theme is not unique to tractate **Berachot**, to a certain degree, it appears in every tractate of the Talmud. In fact, it is one of the primary elements of the multifaceted world of *Halacha*. Consequently, it is present in every Jewish literary work throughout history as an internal, essential characteristic. In tractate **Berachot**, this approach is more intensive and more conspicuous. This is because the **theme** of the tractate is **faith**: The total awareness in heart and mind that there is an **everlasting connection between the Creator and man** and that perpetual inspiration descends from the Creator to the world – inspiration which creates, generates, and sustains. **Man reacts, thanking, requesting, praying, anticipating a response**; waiting to be blessed, to be cured, for a miracle. This connection of faith, which in and of itself is exalted and sublime, achieves form and clarity when it is transformed into practical *Halacha* through the *Halachot* of tractate **Berachot**.

Here, faith is manifest in the details of the *Halachot*, in the myriad blessings and in the formulation of prayer. However, alongside the de-emphasis of the abstract, faith as an integral part of real life, is enhanced and established. This general consciousness evolves into *Halacha*, guidance how to live one's life.

Having said that, I only hope and pray that with G-d's help, we will all commit to learn and study Talmud and enjoy everyone's input during our exciting Havrutah.

Behatzlachah – Good Luck and looking forward to seeing you all in class.

Rabbi Ben-Zion Laxner

January Service Schedule

Friday, January 3

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 p.m.
Candle Lighting 5:20 p.m.

Saturday, January 4

Shacharit 9:30 a.m.
Shabbat Ends 6:18 p.m.

Friday, January 10

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 p.m.
Candle Lighting 5:27 p.m.

Saturday, January 11

Shacharit 9:30 a.m.
Shabbat Ends 6:23 p.m.

Friday, January 17

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 p.m.
Candle Lighting 5:31 p.m.

Saturday, January 18

Shacharit 9:30 a.m.
Shabbat Ends 6:29 p.m.

Friday, January 24

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 p.m.
Candle Lighting 5:38 p.m.

Saturday, January 25

Shacharit 9:30 a.m.
Shabbat Ends 6:35 p.m.

Friday, January 31

Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 p.m.
Candle Lighting 5:44 p.m.

Saturday, February 1

Shacharit 9:30 a.m.
Shabbat Ends 6:41 p.m.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

January 1

Shanna Rogers

January 3

Hope Hacker

January 5

Craig Hoffman

January 9

Bernard Jortner

January 10

Javis Howeth

January 12

Mike Stupak

January 16

Felicity Jortner

January 27

Mona Farley



January 19
David & Lesley Rosen



December

Food Sponsors:

*George & Kathleen Keller
Rabbi Lanxner*

Special Donations:

Jeff Levin

Shabbat Donations:

November 30

*Javis Howeth
Joseph Settle
Jim & Morasha
Stuckey*

December 7

*David Fay
Javis Howeth
Jim & Gabrielle
Howle
Mike & Cindy Perry
Joseph Settle
Jim & Morasha
Stuckey*

December 14

*Chava Kamenetsky
George & Kathleen
Keller
Joseph Settle
Abbye & Susan
Silver*

December 21

*Javis Howeth
Jim & Gabrielle
Howle
Joseph Settle*

December 28

*Inez Bonneville
David Fay
George & Kathleen
Keller
Abbye & Susan
Silver
Jim & Morasha
Stuckey*

In Loving Memory



Geraldine Harelik

Dorothy Harelik

Margaret Harelik

Harry Harelik

Emma Wizig

David Novy

Jack Silver

Larry & Elizabeth Silver

Harold Warren Israel

Nancy Israel

Frances Novy

Stanley Novy

**Gandler, Chodorow, and Beerman
families**

Michael & Michaele Brown

Hanukkah 2019

THANK YOU to all who purchased items from the Hanukkah event to make it a great success. Also, a very special THANK YOU to all who donated their time on decorations, crafts, gift items, supplies, and help in the kitchen preparing the delicious food.







Safety & Security Guidelines for 2020

Starting in January, we will have new security guidelines in place for the shul. We will have a police officer on site for Shabbat services on both Friday night and Saturday morning. To ensure a safe environment for everyone, we ask you to please help us by doing the following:

Arrive on time before services start

We want to enable everyone to attend the services that we offer and will no longer have members in the lobby area once the service has begun. If you arrive by 6:00 pm on Friday or 9:30 am on Saturday, entry to the shul will be the same as always. If you arrive after those times, you will need to show a member card to the officer in order for him to let you into the building.



Karen has these cards prepared and we will issue them to each adult member. She will mail them out to the congregation with the tax mailing in January but if you need your card before that time, please contact Karen and she will make arrangements to get the card to you.

By arriving on time or having your card ready, you will help maintain security and allow your fellow members to be part of the service.

Sit where an usher asks you to sit

In most cases, you are free to sit where you like, but we have reserved four chairs in the Chapel for the ushers. There may be occasions when you may be asked to move to accommodate an identified need. When we meet in the sanctuary, we ask that people sit toward the front and we would like to keep the back three rows open for security reasons.

Know what to do in each type of emergency

This was covered in the member meeting in December but we will be scheduling emergency drills in the first quarter to ensure that you know what to do in case of medical emergency, fire, extreme weather, power outage, or an active threat.

Be prepared to follow safety instructions

We will be training ushers to respond to the different types of emergencies. Please follow any instructions they may give.

Be prepared to help when asked

In the event of an emergency, you may be asked to assist someone who is unable to help themselves. Please be prepared to do this to the best of your ability. But also, be aware of your own safety and don't volunteer to help when it is likely to hurt you.

Remember, we are all in this together and the goal is to keep everyone safe.

HOW TO OBSERVE THE YAHRZEIT

It is traditional to kindle a Yahrzeit Candle in the home on the evening Yahrzeit begins. It should remain lighted until sunset the next day. Possible prayer before lighting a Yahrzeit candle: Eternal God, I/we light this candle in memory of (name) _____, my/our beloved (relationship) _____. The light of the flame rekindles all the warm memories of the moment we shared together, and reassures me /us that a piece of his/her soul dwells in my/our heart(s) forever. May his/her soul be bound up with the bonds of eternal life. Amen. Candles are available at the Gift Shop. Every effort should be made to say Kaddish at congregational services. It is meritorious to perform some Mitzvah or to contribute to the synagogue in commemoration of the deceased.

Kaddish will be read on January 3

*Teveth 6 S.H. Gardner
Louis Stein*
Teveth 7 Katie Kirschner
*Teveth 8 Ivan Esserman
Rose Gerson
Ida Kaplan
Isaac Loewenstein
Leon Meinstein
Bessie Cohen Sachs*
Teveth 9 Ben Adelman
Morris L. Gardner*
Nathan Wood**
*Teveth 10 Benjamin Adams
Tillie Miller**
Teveth 11 Nate Chodorow
Marie Genecov Adams*
*Teveth 12 Alphonse Podrizki**

Kaddish will be read on January 10

*Teveth 14 Sarah Adams
Ida Farbstein*
Ruben Gandler*
Mrs. Sam (Freda) Genecov*
Hattie Lansky*
*Teveth 15 Mrs. Hermine Block
J.M. Freeman
Eli Frankfort
Charlotte Gelber
H. Rosenberg
Fannie Wolf**
Teveth 16 Elias Greenfield
Mrs. B.R. Goldberg
Hilda Hoffman*
Mrs. L. Ringold*
Arthur Rubel*
Bert Altman*
Herman Levi**
*Teveth 17 Jacob Arnold Fischman
Rachael Levy**
*Teveth 18 Taube Jacobson Cohen
Frances G. Jacobson*
Pauline Kolom*
Nathaniel Louis Kaplan*
Ben Levin*
Madeleine Richings
M.B. Farmer
Dr. Hyman Irwin Mendelson
Shirley Ginsburg*
Teveth 19 Frances Novy
Hanina Pinto*

Kaddish will be read on January 17

*Teveth 20 Samuel B. Epstein
Isadore Fred*
E. Hoffman*
Louis Shanin*

Teveth 21 Barnet Silevitch
Sara Adelman*
Robert Bloch
Harry Jornitzky*
Teveth 22 Mae Altman
Mrs. Sam Aronson*
Clarine Brinkley
Asher Lowich**
*Teveth 23 Sam Adelman
Julius J. Jacobson*
David Levy*
Teveth 25 Abe Hayman
Gussie Hayman*
Leo Ringold
Pearl Rubenstein**
*Teveth 26 Harold Fink
Cal Goldberg*

Kaddish will be read on January 24

*Teveth 27 Jake Lynn**
*Teveth 28 Ella Bettis
Mrs. H. Novich*
David Brickman
Morris Fred*
Fannie Reed*
Abe A. Rosenberg*
J. Rubin*
Mary Ruttenberg
Harry Fetter**
Shevat 2 Annie Hoffman
Rebecca Borschow*

Kaddish will be read on January 31

*Shevat 5 Aaron Levy
Leonard Parven
B. Tobolowsky*
Henry Heyman*
Elizabeth Israel
Mary Ann Schiller Akers
Morris Hoffman*
Diane Koss
Florine Zeo Watson Campbell
Dave Lebowitz*
Max Budin*
Florence Rubinsky*
Abe Miller
Jeanette Schein*
William Atlas
Mrs. N. Suravitz*
Abe Hoffman*
Fay Goldberg
A. Brickman*
Mrs. H.B. Cohen*
Sam Genecov*
Chaim Goodman
B. Levinson**

**Memorial Plaque on wall*

January 2020

4 Tevet 5780 - 5 Shevat 5780

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 7:47AM/5:11PM NO SCHOOL 4 Tevet Niddah 70	2 7:47AM/5:12PM 5 Tevet Niddah 71	3 7:47AM/5:12PM jj4:54PM Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 p.m.	4 7:47AM/5:13PM §5:58PM Shacharit 9:30 a.m.
5 7:47AM/5:14PM MINYAN 10:00 a.m.-11:00 p.m. TALMUD CLASS 11:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. 8 Tevet Berachos 2	6 7:47AM/5:15PM 9 Tevet Berachos 3	7 7:47AM/5:16PM §6:01PM Fast of Tevet 10	8 7:47AM/5:17PM RELIGIOUS SCHOOL 4:15 - 5:45 p.m. 11 Tevet Berachos 5	9 7:47AM/5:18PM 12 Tevet Berachos 6	10 7:47AM/5:19PM jj5:01PM Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 p.m.	11 7:47AM/5:20PM §6:05PM Shacharit 9:30 a.m.
12 7:46AM/5:21PM MINYAN 10:00 a.m.-11:00 p.m. TALMUD CLASS 11:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. 15 Tevet Berachos 9	13 7:46AM/5:22PM 16 Tevet Berachos 10	14 7:46AM/5:23PM 17 Tevet Berachos 11	15 7:45AM/5:25PM RELIGIOUS SCHOOL 4:15 - 5:45 p.m. 18 Tevet Berachos 12	16 7:45AM/5:26PM 19 Tevet Berachos 13	17 7:44AM/5:27PM jj5:09PM Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 p.m.	18 7:44AM/5:28PM §6:13PM Shacharit 9:30 a.m. FELICITY JORTNER BAT MITZVAH
19 7:43AM/5:29PM MINYAN 10:00 a.m.-11:00 p.m. TALMUD CLASS 11:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. 22 Tevet Berachos 16	20 7:43AM/5:30PM 23 Tevet Berachos 17	21 7:42AM/5:32PM 24 Tevet Berachos 18	22 7:42AM/5:33PM RELIGIOUS SCHOOL 4:15 - 5:45 p.m. 25 Tevet Berachos 19	23 7:41AM/5:34PM 26 Tevet Berachos 20	24 7:40AM/5:35PM jj5:17PM Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 p.m.	25 7:40AM/5:36PM §6:21PM Shacharit 9:30 a.m.
26 7:39AM/5:38PM MINYAN 10:00 a.m.-11:00 p.m. TALMUD CLASS 11:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. 29 Tevet Berachos 23	27 7:38AM/5:39PM Rosh Hodesh 1 Shevat Berachos 24	28 7:37AM/5:40PM 2 Shevat Berachos 25	29 7:36AM/5:41PM RELIGIOUS SCHOOL 4:15 - 5:45 p.m. 3 Shevat Berachos 26	30 7:35AM/5:42PM 4 Shevat Berachos 27	31 7:34AM/5:44PM jj5:26PM Kabbalat Shabbat 6:00 p.m.	5 Shevat Berachos 28