

THE CHRONICLE

TEMPLE DECEMBER 2022/VOLUME 24 - ISSUE 12

THE RABBI SPEAKS

RABBI BARRY BLOCK



Not long ago, students in Judaism 101 asked me if I follow the tradition of turning away converts three times before accepting them.

My answer: Yes. And no. Let me explain.

Our conversion program is rigorous. The most important obligation of a conversion candidate at Congregation B'nai Israel is to live as a committed Reform Jew for a full year—practicing Judaism at home, observing Shabbat and holy days, and attending our services regularly on Shabbat, i.e., at least three times a month. In addition, our conversion candidates must complete our Judaism 101 course, or an equivalent program offered by the Union for Reform Judaism; and they must pass an exam at the conclusion. They also meet privately with me to discuss their conversion. If they are in a committed relationship with somebody who is not converting, whether or not that person is already Jewish, that person must take the Judaism 101 course, too. No, the other person is not required to convert. However, the most important covenant a person makes is with their life partner, and nobody should make another covenant that may conflict with that primary one. And partners need to know **what** they are supporting when they say that they are supportive. All those requirements are enforced consistently, albeit with some flexibility as appropriate to individual circumstances.

As I explained to current conversion candidates, having to fulfill those requirements is like being turned away multiple times. Converting to Judaism is not easy.

But there's more. Our conversion candidates are aware of at least two factors that may dissuade them from converting: The first is antisemitism. Earlier in my rabbinate, I would have said, "the history of antisemitism, culminating in the Holocaust." Now, though, in addition to learning about Jewish history, including the history of antisemitism, from me, and learning about the Holocaust from Dorian Stuber, our conversion candidates are

WORSHIP AT-A-GLANCE

FRIDAY NIGHT SERVICES IN DECEMBER

Oneg Shabbat at 5:45 pm
Services at 6:15 pm

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2

MISHKAN T'FILAH SERVICE

led by Rabbi Block

Sermon: "Perceiving God's Presence"

Music:

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9

MISHKAN T'FILAH SERVICE

led by Rabbi Block

Sermon: "Rape, Violence, Pregnancy, and Power: From Dina to Dobbs"

Music:

Welcome to Professor Phillip Spivey's students from UCA

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16

MISHKAN T'FILAH SERVICE

led by Rabbi Block

Sermon: "Growing or Flip-Flopping?"

Music:

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23

SHABBAT IN THE ROCK! ALL MUSIC
SHABBAT FOR CHANUKAH

led by Rabbi Block and The Stars of David Band

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30

MISHKAN T'FILAH SERVICE

led by Emily Adams and Carmen Arick

Music:

(Worship at-a-glance continued on page 2)

(The Rabbi Speaks continued from front page)

if they aren't already, that antisemitism is deadly dangerous even in the United States today. The presence of police officers at the door whenever we gather for worship or study is a clear indication of potential danger. If that does not turn conversion away, that speaks well of those who freely choose to join a people with not only a history of persecution but a present-day threat.

In addition, I have an obligation to make our conversion candidates aware that, should they convert with us at Congregation B'nai Israel or through any process that is not Orthodox, they will not be regarded as Jews by a substantial portion of the Jewish world, including virtually all Orthodox Jews. That, too, may dissuade them from conversion.

So that's the "yes" part of my answer.

We do **not**, however, tell conversion candidates "no" for the sake of a ritual that was devised by our sages at a time when conversion to Judaism was punishable by death for both the person converting and those who received converts.

Our congregation is deeply enriched by the scores of members who began their association with Temple B'nai Israel as conversion candidates. Each of them joins us with seriousness of purpose and deep devotion which they have clearly demonstrated by the time that they, and we, make it official.

Faithfully,



SATURDAY MORNINGS IN DECEMBER

Shabbat Torah Study at 9:30am, led by Rabbi Block on December 3, 10, 17, and 24 and by Lynn and Bruce Greenberg on December 31

Shabbat Worship at 11am, led by Rabbi Block on December 3, 10, 17, and 24 and by Annabelle Imber Tuck on December 31

CONGREGATION RECEIVES MAGNIFICENT BEQUEST FROM E. LEE RONNEL, OF BLESSED MEMORY



When our beloved Temple member Lee Ronnel died earlier in 2022, he left a big hole in the life of his family and in the leadership of our community. His dedication of energy, expertise, and philanthropy deeply enriched UAMS, the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, the Jewish Federation of Arkansas—and, we gratefully acknowledge, Congregation B'nai Israel.

In his estate planning, Lee assured that the organizations that mattered most to him, which would be bereft of his leadership after his death, would continue to benefit from his dedication. For Congregation B'nai Israel, that charitable impulse has provided us with the largest bequest in our congregation's history—and, perhaps more important—a vision of what our congregation may become in the years and decades ahead.

At its October meeting, the Board of Trustees gratefully established The E. Lee Ronnel Fund for Cantorial Music. The Ronnel Fund will enable our congregation to engage cantors and student cantors, whether on a full-time or part-time basis or as guests. In addition, the Fund will empower us to enhance wor-



FROM THE PRESIDENT, ANNABELLE IMBER TUCK

Ronnel bequest continued...

Ideally, Congregation B'nai Israel will employ a student cantor to visit us for full weekends at least once a month in 2023-24. Student cantors are much in demand, and we cannot be guaranteed that a student cantor we wish to employ will also select us, but we will do our best! Whether or not we have a student cantor, we will bring ordained cantors to our congregation as guests to enhance our music on a Shabbat and throughout a weekend, including at Religious School on Sunday, which is a significant priority for the Ronnel family.

All of us at Congregation B'nai Israel may be deeply grateful for this magnificent guest provided by E. Lee Ronnel, of blessed memory, and for the vision articulated by the Ronnel family as they collaborated with Temple leadership to establish a fund that will benefit our congregation now and in perpetuity.

We are also grateful to all of our volunteer musicians, on Shabbat and High Holy Days, whose contributions to our congregation's worship will continue and will be enhanced by the opportunity to work with cantors brought to us by the Ronnel Fund.

SOCIAL ACTION OPPORTUNITY FOR THE WINTER HOLIDAYS

Division of Children and Family Services
P.O. Box 1437, Slot 5560
Little Rock, AR 72203-1437
501-682-8772 · Fax: 501-682-6968

DHS | Division of Children & Family Services

It's A
Winter
Wonderland!

On any given day, there are thousands of children and young adults, ages 0-21, in foster care in Arkansas. Each year, Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) staff band together to help provide these children gifts for Christmas, clothing and other items. As part of those efforts, DCFS is in need of sponsors to help provide these items.

Would you consider sponsoring our efforts to help our children?

It's a time for giving and making the world a better place...

Sign up to sponsor a Foster Child, get a wish list, shop, and return the items to Temple.

We encourage all religious school families and other members families to sign up for one foster child this season if possible as an act of tzedakah. Please call or email Eileen - ehamilton@bnai-israel.us or social outreach chair, Kirsta Nigro—kirstanigro1@gmail.com to express your interest.

You shop for the gifts on the list, then return them to Temple for pick up by December 11.

Chabad Hanukkah Menorah Lighting and Parade

Join the community festivities on Thursday, December 22

5:00 pm at XXXXXX, S. Bowman Road—First Hanukkiah lighting.

5:45 pm— car parade down Markham

6:45 pm—Chanukkiah lighting at Clinton Library.

Fun, spirit, treats, music and camaraderie.

B'nai Israel Hanukkah Party and Celebration
Sunday, December 18, 2022: 5:00 – 7:00 pm
Dinner. Blessings. Games, Fun, and Activities for all Ages



Join your B'nai Israel Family for Hanukkah Fun
 This is the Sunday session for all of religious school with learning activities and Hanukkah themed projects.
 RSVP is requested from all who plan to attend.
 Dinner is free for all religious school students.
 All others (parents, grandparents, siblings, and other members and guests) - \$15/adults, and \$8/kids under 12.

RSVP by Wednesday, December 14 to Templesecretary@bnai-israel.us or call the Temple office—501.225.9700.



LaFTY and Latkes at Eileen's.
 Friday, December 23
 7:30 pm after services.
 Join Temple for Hanukkah in the Rock, then to Eileen's for dinner, games, and s'mores by the fire pit.

Chanukah Candles, Dreidels, and Gelt

will be available for sale at the Temple from December 1 through Chanukah

Limited selection

Stop by between 9 am—4:30 pm to the Temple office daily to purchase your Chanukah supplies.



FROM EILEEN HAMILTON, DIRECTOR, ADMINISTRATION, EDUCATION & YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

One of my favorite children's books for Hanukkah is "Like a Maccabee". At this point it's hard to find it, it's old. And while there are newer books for the holiday, I think this one is the best and most clever. Basically, it teaches children to speak up when they need to when it's right. This is like being a Maccabee.

I am really impressed that in today's world, kids speak up. While the past of sitting quietly and minding one's own business is passe, kids take issues to heart and stop them in their ugly tracks. When a teen stops others from bullying, it's like being a Maccabee. When a toddler shares their toys, it's like being a Maccabee. When injustice occurs in the classroom, or fairness is compromised on the play yard, and someone steps in to defend and correct it, it's like being a Maccabee.

Judah and his brothers stood up and fought. A small and determined band of brothers, took on the Greeks to reclaim their right to be Jews. In today's world it's common to hear 'you do you' as an affirmation that we all can do and be who we want to. We can dress the way we want, use different names and pronouns, express ourselves creatively and freely – to just be ourselves. That is like being a Maccabee.

When we say what is right, when we do what is fair and just, when we be our best selves, we are being like a Maccabee. When we share, care, give, make a difference, and extend a hand to others, we are like a Maccabee. This Hanukkah, we can be proud of ourselves for taking action and standing up for what is right. In a time when antisemitism is growing in our country and our future is uncertain with unfriendly comments and unwanted discrimination, our children will need more than ever, the courage to speak up. The fortitude to stand up in the face of adversary. The strength to be an advocate for themselves and friends. The bravery to stand firm in their Jewish identity and convictions to worship as they please. The absolute resolve be themselves and feel comfortable in their own skin. These are attributes of being like a Maccabee.

The true Hanukkah gift this year is our voices and our action as we move forward. Being like a Maccabee is providing for the future with confidence and fairness, with education and helpful words, with compassion and strength. How can you be like a Maccabee this Hanukkah season?

Religious School dates for December: Sunday, December 4—9:00 am; December 11—9:00 am; and
December 18—5 pm—Hannukah Celebration for all
Confirmation Class dates: December 7

Thanks to the Sukkah Construction and Take-Down Crew

Many thanks to the terrific volunteers who helped to construct and/or deconstruct our Temple Sukkah in 5783/2022

Scott Jordan, Captain	Bruce Greenberg
Rabbi Barry Block	Mark Himelfarb
Glenn Block	Miranda Keith
Alex Daniel	James Lawhon
Eoin Dockter	Keith Nigro



Thank you for this month's office and building
volunteers:

Jan Alman	Shelley Ballew
Esther Gordon	Doris Krain
Janet Korenblat	

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

2nd Valeria Faber
Jill Flaxman

3rd Mary Lou Cohn

4th Phil Kaplan

5th Thomas McGarry
Robert Oliva
Patricia Solomon

7th Shelley Ballew
Sandie Lubin

8th Lauren Berkman
Eli Goldman

9th Asiah Beck
Mark Mackey

10th John Austin Levin
Roxy Sonnier

11th Karen Pear

12th Silvana Berlinski

13th Corbin Levin
Avery Webb

14th Sheila Bronfman
Ron Lanoue
Susan Rosenthal Kantrow

16th Jamie Axelroth

18th Ben Flaxman

19th Danette Devlin

20th Tina Bernstein

21st Fran Eiseman
Cici Singer

23rd Don Pfeifer
Maci Schlesinger

24th Milt Baer
Doris Krain

25th Mira Krain

26th Marc Williams

27th Aaron Rabirotf
David Ronnel

29th Regina Young

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Jan 1 Michelle Lemaire and Milton Loeb
12 years

Jan 1 Nancy and Steve Rousseau
45 years

Jan 3 Anna and James Moses
42 years

Jan 3 Susie and Brian Rosenthal
36 years

Jan 7 Flavia and Stephen Jacobs
13 years

Jan 10 Julie and David Shindler
41 years

Jan 12 Sheree and Doug Meyer
33 years

Jan 12 Kelli and Scott Schlesinger
12 years

Jan 15 Elizabeth Cohen and Lauren Johnston
1 year

Jan 17 Elsa and Avi Helton
18 years

Jan 17 Suzanne Klimberg and Sam Storthz III
30 years

Jan 18 Patricia and Barry Solomon
59 years

Jan 24 Patty and Herb Monoson
58 years

Birthdays continued...

30th Stanley Goldberg 31st Liam Wagner
Sam Hoffman

DONATIONS

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

In appreciation
 Anonymous
 In memory of Eddie Ceitlin
 Bonnie and Sam Nickol
 In honor of Nancy Rousseau and Liz
 Lucker
 Elaine and Rick Lowens
 In memory of Iris Oliva
 Robert Oliva
 In memory of Richard Paul Yoder
 Beth Miller and family
 In memory of
 Karin Waugh Zucker and Martin
 Boyle

Yahrzeit Fund

In memory of Bob Arnold
 Laurie Arnold
 In memory of Maurice S. Rubenstein
 Bill and Kitty Rubenstein
 In memory of Manford H. Levy
 Paula Patton and Mort McKenzie
 In memory of Shirley Sherman, Dan
 Levin, and William Sherman
 Harriet Levin Balkind
 In memory of Joseph Spiegelman
 Pat and Barry Solomon
 In memory of Avrome David and
 Jean T. Goldberg
 Ellen Goldberg
 In memory of Alan Cole Springer
 Deborah and Bernie Bevill
 In memory of Sydney Waltzer
 Bobbye and Gene Levy
 In memory of Robert Axelroth
 Susan and Philip Axelroth

Vogel Caring and Sharing Fund

In appreciation
 Robert Oliva
 In memory of Rose Vogel Schwartz
 The Vogel Family

Pfeifer Community Outreach

Speedy recover to Steve Bauman
 Linda and Gene Pfeifer

Sustaining Fund

In appreciation
 James Lawhon

Salinger Landscape

In memory of Mac Lyons II
 Holly and Mark Mathisen
 In memory of Mac Lyons II
 Nan Selz

Endowment Fund

In honor of Steve Bauman's birthday
 Karla and Larry Back

Bauman Family Music Fund

Speedy recovery of Steve Bauman
 Ellie and John Moore

Security Support

Kelly Coffield

Rabbi Gene and Bobbye Camp Scholarship Fund

In memory of Mac Lyons
 In memory of Iris Oliva
 For the special Birthday of Patty Monoson
 For the special Birthday of Jane Levine
 For the birthdays of Trudy and Jerry Jacobson
 For the birthday of Jesse Krane
 For the birthday of Sheri Simon
 For the birthday of Liz Lucker
 Bobbye and Gene Levy
 In memory of Dr. Joshua Epstein
 In memory of Dr. Paul Yoder
 Bobbye and Gene Levy

Thank you to all the Thanksgiving Basket Sponsors for
 this year:

Shelley Ballew	Corbin and John Levin
Kathy and David Bauman	Bobbye and Rabbi Gene Levy
Rabbi Barry Block	Liz Lucker and Mary Machen
Gus Block	Carol Parham
Carol Fields	Dale Ronnel
Judy Grundfest	Nan Seltz
Lynn and Bruce Greenberg	Annabelle Tuck
Trudy and Jerry Jacobson	First United Church of Little Rock

A special thanks to Kirsta and Keith Nigro for their coordination efforts and to those who packed and delivered the goods: Bobbye Levy and Amber Thomas

DECEMBER YAHRZEITS

DECEMBER 2/3

Joseph Cohen
 Louis Cohen
 Harry L. Ehrenberg
 Sheila Fine
 Flora S. Franklin
 Yosyp Himelfarb
 Gus L. Kahn
 Ike Kempner
 Hattie Kronberg
 Adolph Meyers
 Ronald L. Mulkey
 Virginia Estelle
 O'Briant
 Emma Jo Parsish
 Mae Lyons Pfeifer
 S. William Ross
 Barbara Schlesinger
 Gege Thalheimer

DECEMBER 9/10

Jeff Bell
 Sgt. Sherrill Bernstein
 Raymond V. Biondo M.D.
 Alice Blass
 Phyllis Block Brotman
 Alice Blass Cohen
 Bernard Cohen
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 Eleanor Gross
 Maurein Frauenthal Grundfest
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 Herbert Storthz
 Julius Tenenbaum
 Sol Thalheimer Sr.
 Sandra Waxman
 Sidney Jacob White
 R. Paul Yoder
 Mike Yout

Yahrzeits continued on next page

YIZKOR ELOHIM

WE RECORD WITH SORROW THE
 DEATH OF OUR MEMBERS

RICHARD PAUL YODER

HUSBAND OF BETH MILLER,
 FATHER OF HANNAH AND RACHEL YODER
 SON IN LAW OF HARVEY MILLER

DR. JOSHUA EPSTEIN

HUSBAND OF ANNA MARX
 FATHER OF DINA EPSTEIN

We mourn the loss of

JOHN TOWBIN

Brother of Lucy Towbin

Thank you for your continued support to B'nai Israel.

The end of the calendar year is fast approaching and all donations to be included in this FY of 2022-2023, must be received and processed before December 31.

To check your charitable donations, please refer to your *Rakefet* statement on line by signing on to your portal.

To re-engage on *Rakefet*, please use this link: <https://us.rakefetonline.com/#/login>

DECEMBER YAHRZEITS *CONTINUED***DECEMBER 16/17**

Ted Baer
 Larry Bentley
 Leslie R. Nunes Carvalho
 Linda 'JJ' Factor
 Jennie Ottenheimer Falk
 Barbara 'Bobbi' R. Goldman
 Harvey 'Ray' Jordon
 Justin Komiss
 Louis Krain
 Julia Goldman Levy
 Selene Marks Lyons
 Esfir Lyublinskaya
 Catherine Nachmann
 Gloria Sack
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DECEMBER 23/24

Mark Adler
 Louis Henry Altman
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 Irma 'Chickie' Dollinger
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 Stanley Falk
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 Lena Pinkus
 Martin Reinsch
 Robert D. Remet
 Charlotta Ringelhaupt
 Bob Rosen
 Herbert Siegel
 Francis B. Stern
 Annette Norma Yahn

DECEMBER 30/31

Marcus Adler
 Henry Altman
 Elsie Axler
 Clara Zinn Block
 Sarah R. Cohen
 Elias Cohen
 Sallie L. Epstein
 Warren Kaupel
 Sylvia Fredman
 Henry Joseph Friedman
 Gertrude Gans
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 Henry Simon
 Donald Vogt
 Hannah Wagner
 Amelia Levy Weiss



We are using the Rakefet database to produce our yahrzeit lists from now on. If you believe a name of your loved one is missing from our lists, please call the Temple office to let us know. We appreciate you informing us so we can correct our records. Thank you.

We are reuniting at Temple for Friday Shabbat Services. Your sponsorship is greatly appreciated.



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Call the Temple office 501.225.9700 or email templesecretary@bnai-israel.us to reserve your sponsorship date.

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Send an email to
templesecretary@bnai-israel.us
or call us at 501-225-9700



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Please contact Laurie Arnold (larnold032937), Alison Vann (melderalison@gmail.com), ehamilton@bnai-israel.us, or 501-225-9700.

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In memory of: _____

In appreciation of: _____

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- | | |
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The purpose of the Congregation B'nai Israel Legacy Society is to secure the future of our Reform Jewish congregation. Legacy gifts are deferred gifts that will benefit Temple B'nai Israel by sustaining our congregation for future generations. No gift is too small and every gift is a testament to your Jewish heritage.

Legacy gifts might include:

- A bequest in your will
- A portion or all of an existing life insurance policy
- A portion or all of an IRA or 401k
- A portion or all of an annuity
- A portion or all of a charitable trust
- Or some other deferred commitment

Legacy donors become members of the Congregation B'nai Israel Legacy Society. If you would like more information on making a legacy gift, please leave your name with the Temple office (225-9700) and a volunteer will contact you.

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 CONGREGATION B'NAI ISRAEL

