



קשר

THE JEWISH CONNECTION

JANUARY 2025 • ISSUE 97

דבר הרב

D'VAR HA'RAV: A WORD FROM RABBI MARK

Sour Cream or Applesauce?

With the collision of Hanukkah into Christmas and New Year's day this year, my normal dilemma of which latke topping to choose (of course the answer is "yes, a dollop of both please") was a bit more nuanced. The "mitzvah" of enjoying Chinese food along with the annual reflection of the passing of the secular year provided a lot to chew on (pun intended). Many of us recently enjoyed a taste of this delicious fusion at our community new year's day brunch. Where else in the Upper Valley is it possible to find a menu of Montreal bagels, latkes, and ample schmoozing on January 1, 2025! Along with the delicious holiday foods and musings of the holiday season, come questions. Before we move too far along into the new year, what elements of 2024 were more, or less, savory? Which were sweet, or less sweet? At the end of the day, Jewish wisdom on Hanukkah isn't much concerned with condiments, but with oil and light, and their deep symbolism for our lives beyond just eight nights.

On Hanukkah we ingested some oil to honor and remember the ancient miracles, commemorating the little bit of oil that was supposed to last for just one day, but lasted for eight instead. There's also the miracle of the few over the many, and the weak over the strong, as the ancient Temple was rededicated (Hebrew word, *Hanukkah*) following its desecration by King Antiochus IV (167-164 BCE). Oily foods brought along some extra calories and tastes of the story. But, it's the lighting of the candles (think ancient oil lamps lit with pure olive oil) and doing *pirsum ha'nes* / publicizing the miracle that really count.

The menorah was placed in our windows so that it wasn't just for us to remember and enjoy its light, but literally, for all to see. Of course, set on the kitchen table or counter, the menorah's light also brightened our homes. When we sang the blessings, we brought to mind not only the miracle of long ago that happened at this season—"she'asha nisim lavoteinu bayamim hahem bazman hazeh"—but also the ones that are happening right now. Our daily miracles may not transcend nature, but especially during these eight days *and on each day of our lives*, we can see and feel the miraculous nature of life. The "smaller" miracles like waking up, breathing, laughing, and loving, sustain us and fuel our lives long after the candles burn out. These small-but-big life moments are so essential that they are elevated, bringing light even to G-d. "The soul / essence / *neshama* of each person is G-d's candle." (Proverbs 20:27)

[Continued on pg 7...]



במהרה

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

TALK OF THE SEASON:

Don't miss a recap of some of the fun we had during Fall 2024 in the Community Photo Album (pg 4)

ביתך

GATHER TOGETHER

Building Resilience and Community in the Face of Antisemitism

SUNDAY, MARCH 9, 2025
1 - 5:30 PM

Symposium and workshops featuring keynote speaker Dr. Susannah Heschel

Please stay tuned to the Weekly Update email on Thursdays for more programs and calendar/venue information, or check our website: www.uvjc.org

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please contact president@uvjc.org.*

מורה שניא COMMUNITY MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

When you read this issue of The Connection, our sunsets will be just a tad later than they were on December 21, but the hours of dark will still far exceed those of light. Winter will be here for real. The political dynamics here and in the Middle East will be challenging. And, thankfully, Kol Ha'Emek, the Upper Valley Jewish Community, will remain a source of community, warmth, continuity, and Yiddishkeit.

I invite each of you to take part in the ordinary and extraordinary activities that take place here. Our Shabbat services on Saturday mornings have grown in attendance, and when we have a kiddush, we often stay and visit well into the afternoon. Our religious school on Tuesday afternoons and Sunday mornings is full of lively energy. We have the largest religious school in New Hampshire, and it is fun to be at the Roth Center when the kids are here, enjoying one another and Jewish learning.

Our second annual New Year's Brunch has shaped up to be an extraordinary opportunity for all of us to get together to enjoy a delicious array of food and each other's company. Thank you to Monte Blaustein and his committee for spearheading this fun event. Monte is already thinking ahead to our congregational Second Seder—yes, spring will come!

Before we jump ahead to spring, please save March 9 from 1 - 5:30 PM for a symposium on Building Resilience and Community in the Face of Antisemitism, cosponsored by the UVJC and Shir Shalom in Woodstock. Shir Shalom will be hosting the symposium. Dr. Susannah Heschel will be our keynote speaker, followed by workshops throughout the afternoon. Lunch will be provided. Thank you to Jewish Communities of Vermont and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation for supporting this bi-congregational event.

Over the past year and a half, we have emphasized the need to ensure the endurance of a strong, vibrant Jewish community here in the Upper Valley and are working to build the UVJC's Endowment Fund for our future.

[Continued on pg 4...]

מזל טוב
MAZAL TOV, B'NAI MITZVAH!

NOAH SMOLIN | NOVEMBER 9, 2024
Son of Jessica and Jonathan Smolin

בית ספר HEBREW SCHOOL AND YOUTH HAPPENINGS

Hello from the Hebrew School Hallway,

It's been a busy fall with the chagim and getting school off to a good start. I also had the privilege of leading the Jew Crew and teens from other Vermont congregations on a trip to Montreal over Veteran's Day weekend. It was a wonderful trip! Here are some highlights:

We started with a "shul-in," (aka sleepover) at reform temple Emanu-El Beth Shalom with 40 other teens from Toronto and Montreal. Everyone eventually did fall asleep, including me. Their service included a soprano who sang songs that had been written by and for holocaust victims in commemoration of Kristallnacht.

We attended Saturday morning services at "the Spanish," a modern orthodox synagogue where one of our students had an aliyah, one carried the Torah around the sanctuary, all the boys sang Adon Olam from the bimah, and the girls kvelled from the women's section. We met interesting Montreal folks and enjoyed Sephardic food at the kiddish luncheon.

We enjoyed Havdalah with Rabbi David Fainsilber of JCOGS (the Jewish Community Of Greater Stowe), a Montreal native. He also led us on a food tour of the Jewish neighborhood, Mile End. We compared bagels (St. Viateur and Fairmount), sampled smoked meat and shlishkes, tried babka and rugelach from Cheshkies, ate falafel, looked for hechures in a kosher grocery store, and heard about musician Leonard Cohen in front of a mural of him in the neighborhood.

At the Montreal Holocaust museum we met a Holocaust survivor who passed away in 2022 but was still able to answer our questions via the magic of AI.

We toured the JCC/YMHA and visited a boys' and a girls' yeshiva to see how those students learn differently from the ways we do. My own experience there was fascinating—we saw the second grade girls chanting (not leyning, but reading along in singsong with the teacher) from the week's parsha. They would sing one Hebrew word and then its English translation, then the next Hebrew word, and its translation.

It wasn't all Jewish stuff, though. We rode on a zipline next to the St. Lawrence River, toured Chinatown and ate at a restaurant where they stretch noodles in the front window, and checked out Old Montreal. We planned to attend a McGill basketball game but it was sold out! If only Dartmouth games were so popular maybe they would have some spoils to fight over in their union negotiations...

I'm very proud of our teens. They were respectful, engaging, good sports about walking a lot (even in the drizzle), and didn't complain about anything. I'm very glad that I was leading this lovely group. Thanks to all the adults who co-led the trip with me; I could not have managed without them: Zack Brooks of JCVT, Scott Hertzberg of the Manchester VT Jewish community, Rabbi David Fainsilber of JCOGS, and our very own Monte Blaustein!

Melissa



שיחת השנה

TALK OF THE SEASON: UVJC COMMUNITY PHOTO ALBUM FALL 2024



Images (clockwise, from top left): unrolling the Torah with the Hebrew School; environmental advocacy at a Dayenu Circle meeting; Micah Award dinner; and King Arthur baking classes (3 photos).

[MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT continued from pg 2]

The good news is that since July 1, 2023, we have raised close to \$229,500 for the Endowment Fund with an additional \$137,400 in pledges, and we have several community members who have let us know that the UVJC is in their estate plan. If you would like to know more about our work to build the Endowment Fund, please reach out to me at president@uvjc.org or via my personal e-mail address at abelberner@gmail.com.

Thanks to the Sustainability Fund, spearheaded by past presidents Debbe Callaghan and Rusty Sachs, and the Endowment Fund, we know that we can continue to employ our outstanding staff, meet our other obligations, and never let dues or school tuition be an impediment to joining our community or sending children to our religious school.

As I think of our amazing staff, I want to share with you that our beloved administrator Chris DePierro has had some significant health challenges in December. Please join me in wishing him a speedy and complete recovery in this season. Happy Hanukkah, Happy New Year, and best wishes for a good, healthy, meaningful year ahead!

Roberta

**DONATIONS (THRU 12/20/24)
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GENERAL FUND

Richard Abel and Roberta Berner in memory of Mark Severs

James and Judith Bernat in memory of Barry Scherr, a good kind human being, brilliant scholar, and leader of the UVJC and beyond

James and Judith Bernat in memory of Mark Severs

Monte Blaustein in appreciation of Roberta Berner

Barbara Brown, End of Year Appeal

Barbara Brown in memory of Mark Severs

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Sue and Paul Etkind in appreciation of Eastman Shabbat services

Sue and Paul Etkind, End of Year Appeal

Sue and Paul Etkind in honor of Shari Boraz's retirement as the Director of the Ava Gallery

Sue and Paul Etkind in honor of the birth of Kaya Rey Manning

Sue and Paul Etkind in honor of the marriage of Sam Neirman to Kelsie Leu

Harriet and Rick Fingerroth in memory of Mark Severs

Carolyn Gordon and David Webb in memory of Mark Severs

Carolyn Gordon and David Webb in memory of Donald Walker, father of Robyn Jacobs

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Deborah and Aaron Kaplan in memory of Mark Severs

Judy and Thomas Oxman in memory of Mark Severs

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Meredith Lewko in appreciation of the UVJC Musical Shabbat services

Meredith Lewko in appreciation of the Mussar group and Literature Lovers

Robert Lewy, End of Year Appeal

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Sally Scharff in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of her grandson, David Solitaire

Nancie Severs, End of Year Appeal in appreciation of Rabbi Mark Melamut's care

Jessica and Jonathan Smolin in honor of their son Noah becoming a Bar Mitzvah

SCHOOL PROGRAMMING FUND

Gloria and Sydney Finkelstein in memory of Barry Scherr, may his memory be for a blessing, Barry was a memorable true leader for the UVJC

Gloria and Sydney Finkelstein in memory of Donald Walker, father of Robyn Jacobs

Gloria and Sydney Finkelstein in

memory of Merle Corobow Gold

Gloria and Sydney Finkelstein in memory of Harry "Skippy" Gold

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Gloria and Sydney Finkelstein in memory of Anna Finkelstein

Gloria and Sydney Finkelstein in memory of Joseph Finkelstein

Gloria and Sydney Finkelstein in memory of Jacqui Heather Gold

Gloria and Sydney Finkelstein in memory of Selma Gold

Gloria and Sydney Finkelstein in honor of Rabbi Mark, Chris DePierro, Melissa Herman, and Roberta Berner

Gloria and Sydney Finkelstein in honor of Rabbi Seth & Deana Linfield's new granddaughter, Naomi Marilyn

Gloria and Sydney Finkelstein in honor of the marriage of Sam Neirman to Kelsie Leu

Gloria and Sydney Finkelstein in memory of Mark Severs

Gloria and Sydney Finkelstein in honor of our special friend Betty Lauer

Gloria and Sydney Finkelstein, best wishes to Mark Severs, thinking of you

Gloria and Sydney Finkelstein, Shana Tovah to the UVJC community for a sweet and healthy New Year

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Debbe and Carey Callaghan

Talia and Jeremy Manning in memory of Donald Walker, father of Robyn Jacobs

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Barbara Brown in memory of Joseph Halpern, her father

Jane Lipson in memory of C.C. "Kelly" Gotlieb, her father

Arline and Barry Rotman in memory of Theodore Stahl, father of James Stahl

[Continued on pg 6...]

תודה רבה
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[DONATIONS continued from pg 5]

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Darlene Armstrong

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Judy and Jim Bernat in appreciation
for Rabbi Mark, Roberta Berner, Chris
DePierro and all those that worked to
give us a meaningful High Holidays

Arnold and Annette Brown

Jill and Martin Butler, High Holiday
flower donation

Deborah and Carey Callaghan in
appreciation of Roberta Berner & Chris
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Audra Charron and David Leib

Karen Cheney and Scott Rebhun for
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Colleen and Peter Tannenbaum

[Continued on pg 7...]

[D'VAR HA'RAV continued from pg 1]

Even playing the simple game of dreidel and its gamble of gelt was more than just that, pointing us towards something deeper and miraculous. The letters “*nun, gimmel, hey, and shin*” stand for the phrase “*nes gadol hayah sham* / a great miracle happened there.” Immediately following this year’s Hanukkah celebration, we might ask: “How can each of us cultivate the inner presence to not only be aware of the miracles happening ‘there,’ but right here?” “*Nes gadol hayah po*”—a great miracle ‘is happening’ right here. (Note: this second phrase is generally reserved for dreidels in Israel, and is marked with the Hebrew letter “*pey*” instead of “*shin*,” emphasizing “here,” that is, in Israel).

In our dark, wintry nights, even after the holiday is long over, Hanukkah’s light can continue to reignite the essential light within each of us. Just as each night brought more and more light, so too can we bring more and more light to see into the darkness with opportunities to rededicate ourselves. Each night of our lives “is a night of knowing one’s identity, of being grounded in an inner courtyard of calm and courage, regardless of the chaos of the world outside.” (*Zion & Spectre, A Different Light*, p.102)

May the afterglow of Hanukkah bring more light into our hearts, our homes, and our world. Best wishes for a happy, healthy, and peaceful 2025, *Rabbi Mark*

[DONATIONS continued from pg 6]

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Jeanne Zucker

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Bruce Pacht in memory of Jeanette Pacht, Bruce’s mother
Sharon and Robert Racusin in memory of Shirley Racusin, Robert’s mother
Marlene and Rusty Sachs in memory of Christopher Sachs, Rusty’s brother
Marlene and Rusty Sachs in memory of Ernest Sachs Senior, Rusty’s grandfather
Marlene and Rusty Sachs in memory of Ernest Sachs Junior, Rusty’s father
Sharon and Jerome Smith in memory of Isadore Greenberg, Sharon’s father
Ellis Rolett in memory of Mary Warshaw Rolett, his mother

WE JOYOUSLY WELCOME OUR NEWEST MEMBERS!

RABBI BRIAN BESSER ◦ NANCY GRAHAM ◦ EMILY & ANDREW MEYER* ◦
ELLEN RABER ◦ REBECCA REIMERS ◦ DANIEL SCHAPIRA & ETHAN FELSON ◦
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- Education Fund** (to support adult programs and special school/teen programs over and above the curriculum)
- Endowment Fund** (to support the future of the community)
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- Social Action Fund** (to support outside non-profit organizations that benefit the wider community in the spirit of *tikkun olam*)

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The UVJC owns and maintains our own cemetery to comfort and serve you in times of need. We encourage our members to think about their future needs in advance. For more info, please call the office at 603-646-0460 or email office@uvjc.org.



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HAPPY NEW YEAR 2025!