

# The Kibbitzer

**Congregation Beth Shalom of Brandon**  
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February 2025 Volume 35 Issue 9



# Rabbinically Speaking

*Written by Rabbi Marc Sack  
Jewish Press of Tampa Bay  
December 2, 2011*



We preachers find that, over the years, there are themes to which we frequently return. Maybe it's because I was made to listen to my grandfather's stories about coming to this country, but one of mine has been that people must tell children the stories of their family. I did not particularly enjoy listening to my grandfather's tales of leaving the Ukraine with his mother and sister in search of my great-grandfather who had come here years earlier; yet now I feel more strongly than ever that the telling of family history is a sacred responsibility.

My great-grandparents immigrated to America with their children in the early 1910s. As a baby-boomer, I am part of the "bridge generation" – one that knows the stories of family struggle and grueling work to become established here, and yet who grew up thoroughly American and comfortably middle class. My kids, however, don't know about that struggle. Their world has only been one of security and comfort. I worry that, no matter how many times I tell them otherwise, they will think that we Jews have always had it this easy.

A friend recently gave me a reprint of a story that ran in the New Yorker in 1998. The Israeli author Aharon Appelfeld wrote about his journey back to his childhood home in the Ukraine, a place he left in 1946 after surviving the Shoah.

Appelfeld was raised in Drajinetz, a village 20 kilometers from the regional capital, Czernovitz. It was in Drajinetz where his mother and grandmother were murdered in 1941 by Germans and Romanians and buried in a mass grave. It was this grave, and the image of his young mother, that called to Appelfeld to visit his family home. He wrote this:

"Every town or village had a neglected Jewish cemetery and, not far away, a mass grave. In a short time, these traces would vanish, and the region would be not only without Jews but without any memory of them."

We are at an awkward juncture in our modern Jewish story. Those who went through and survived the Shoah won't be with us much longer. When they are gone, what will their grandchildren and great-grandchildren know about what happened? Who will know where the mass graves of Europe are in order to visit them?

In my freshman year of college, I dated a woman whose parents were survivors. "What did they tell you," I asked her. "Nothing. They tell me nothing," she answered. The year was 1971 and many survivors had not yet begun to speak openly about their experience. Maybe they told her eventually. But maybe they didn't, and then who will know their story?

I am concerned for those who are buried in those unmarked graves of Europe and, just as strongly, that the memory of our national story, of almost complete vulnerability and then rebirth, will be forgotten to all but the history books. I preach about telling stories because I am worried about future generations having no sense of the places from which we've come.

I am not one of those who believe another Shoah could happen any time soon. Our acceptance in America is firm and the organizational and political strength of our people is without precedent in Jewish history. But we must not allow our children to take our security for granted, or think that our current condition was true for all of our history. The freedom and acceptance of us Jews is a great gift that must never be assumed.

My hope comes from a message buried at the end of Appelfeld's article. He wrote: "When I was in Prague a year ago, I saw how the Czechs had made Kafka into a tourist attraction ... They had stripped his modest life and his secret writing of their clothing, and flashed his portrait on billboards for clubs and restaurants. What do his three sisters, who were murdered in the camps, feel when they see their brother – who was fanatical about his privacy – exposed so cheaply?" (Italics mine.) "What do his three murdered sisters feel from the grave?" Appelfeld reinforced my belief that, for us Jews, there is no past, present and future. We Jews work to blend them together. That's why we say, without qualms, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt." It wasn't in the distant past. It was yesterday.

So, my hope is that our kids will know that these are unprecedented times for us Jews. So much of our history has been full of horror, unmarked graves, and scrapping just to stay alive. I hope they never forget this and pass it on, somehow, to their children. In this process, I think we've got a lot of work to do.

*Rabbinically Speaking is published as a public service by the Jewish Press in cooperation with the Tampa Rabbinical Association which assigns the column on a rotating basis.*

# The President's Corner



Shalom, dear friends!

This time, I would like to expand on the article I wrote last month. I'm talking about our Jewish family at CBS and how we are all helping to make our Synagogue better each week. We had a wonderful Friday night service (January 10, 2025) with new families showing up to see what CBS is all about. Our Treasurer Sandy Schwartz led a BEAUTIFUL service and raised the bar for the rest of us. We had new people experiencing our Shabbat prayer and it was wonderful! By the way, I think I had a pretty good joke that night as well..... 😊

**Steve**

Last month, Neil Spindel found "Jewish Families of Fishhawk on Facebook and we both joined at once. Neil has been posting about our new Hebrew Academy, and I have been posting about our Friday night Shabbat services. I am hoping that we draw a family to show up, who will then invite another Jewish family they know to come and continue to build on that. To put a point on this theory, Sandy Schwartz brought several neighborhood friends to his service the other day and they enjoyed it so much, they said they would be back. In a nutshell, I humbly believe we put on a pretty darn good service on our own.

Along with the line of this article, please try and stay on top of your dues if you are behind, Prayer can do a lot, but it can't pay the electric bill or mortgage. We also have things we have to do to keep us functional. Our freezer recently died, and we need to buy a new one. We have decided to get a family-sized freezer to make it cheaper, but we still need a new freezer.

I am doing the best I can to help CBS continue to be a beacon of Jewish Faith in eastern Hillsborough County and I thank the rest of our congregation for giving their all as well. I continue to ask you all to bring all suggestions you have to make us a more successful Synagogue.

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

Steve Billor





**Gabe Lifschitz**

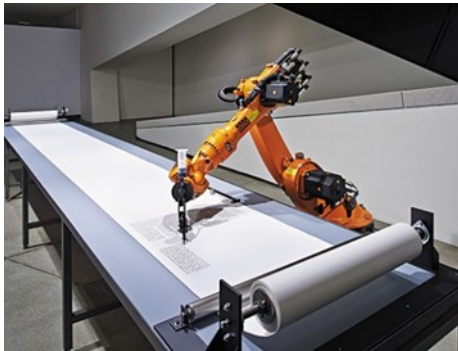
What is the need and benefit to ensure children are skilled in handwriting?

Today's parents face a challenge not found in more than 5,500 years. Young children quickly adapt to pressing buttons in a cell phone, laptop or computer keyboard to type in words and numbers. The challenge a parent has is for young children to use their hands to learn to write and maintain the dexterity to write clearly enough for others to understand.

I learned handwriting in kindergarten, although I taught myself to use a typewriter when I was six, and in college I used a keyboard to write computer programs to solve engineering problems. I learned to write in cursive, and while it is faster than print, this meant I had to think ahead before handwriting and avoid mistakes. A benefit of handwriting over typing text is that you can use any piece of paper, a pencil, or a pen to communicate. Royalty, celebrities, and great leaders handwrite letters to bring a sense of great importance and value to the recipient of the letter. Our declaration of independence was handwritten and signed by our forefathers. In 1790, George Washington wrote a letter "To the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island", the Touro synagogue and the oldest one in the United States. In August of each year, the congregation reads the letter to reaffirm the free exercise of religious choice.



Torah scribes, sofers, have been around for at least two millennium. The skill of preparing and handwriting a Torah is passed from generation to generation (L'dor Vador). A sofer dedicates to scribing Torahs well into old age. The sofer takes painstaking care to repair a portion or portions of a Torah that gets damaged. The photo and image included here shows the delicate work involved in the scribing of a Torah. In comparison, a robot scribe has been manufactured and programmed to write an entire Torah scroll. There is a huge difference between the robot and the human hand. Although the robot is programmed to repeat the same letters precisely, it is only as good as the program in it. It requires a very specialized individual to program the machine, double-check the wording is correct, and that there are no mistakes when the ink contacts the klaf parchment.



While the Torahs in synagogues are reminders of skilled handwriting, handwriting is one skill children can benefit from an early age just like learning arts and crafts and it can be fun. Judaism has a rich history of handwriting and can continue to be a source of inspiration to children. The effort and time needed to teach handwriting is only a few hours a week and a child can be skilled by the third grade.



What would be the benefit for a child to grow into an adult that knows handwriting and can communicate by sending well versed letters, poetry, and caring for family, friends, and the community? Those around the world who read handwriting would appreciate the personal touch.

Taking care of CBS is a mitzvah and every little bit you can do is greatly appreciated. We need help with handy skills like interior electrical work, replacing light bulbs, fixing floor tiles, and plumbing. I also want to mention that there's a significant amount of tree debris to clear, along with removing the damaged wooden fencing. Additionally, some doors need either repairs or replacement, and the blue canvas on the entrance awning needs to be replaced as well. If you know someone who does work for you on a regular basis, please send the name and contact information to: [cbs-building@outlook.com](mailto:cbs-building@outlook.com).

Thank you,

Gabe Lifschitz

# Dinner With the Tribe

## Liang's Bistro

**Liang's Bistro**  
**812 Providence Rd**  
**Brandon, FL 33511**

**Saturday**  
**February 22, 2025**  
**6:30 PM**

We will get our Asian food fix in February. We can enjoy traditional Chinese and Thai foods at Liang's Bistro in Brandon. On the recommendations of Diana Gutenstein and Toby Koch, who have been there several times, this is a great place to go. It's easy to get to with plenty of parking. Let's enjoy ourselves. They have the usual dishes, large portions, and you can have spicy dishes done to your taste.

Please RSVP so I can get an accurate head count.

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



## The Baal Shem Tov

Rabbi Yisrael (Israel) Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760), the founder of Chassidism, was orphaned from his father, Rabbi Eliezer, at the age of five. The last words spoken to him by his father before his passing were: "Yisrolik, fear nothing but G d alone. Love every single Jew, without exception, with the full depth of your heart and with the fire of your soul, no matter who he is or how he behaves."

His father's final words not only shaped the Baal Shem Tov's personal life, as is evident from the countless stories of the extents he went to help and uplift others, but indeed, served as the cornerstone in the revolutionary movement and philosophy he founded, known as Chassidism.

To "love your fellow as yourself" was not a new idea discovered in 1703. It's a verse in the Torah,<sup>1</sup> part of our heritage for the past 3,300 years. And 1,600 years before the Baal Shem Tov was born, a Mishnaic sage stressed that this mitzvah is "a cardinal rule in the Torah."

The Baal Shem Tov's revolution was not in the discovery of this universal truth, but in the "depth of heart and fire of soul" that he revealed within this profound mitzvah, which changed the face of Judaism for all time to come.



# Yahrzeits



|                      |            |                              |
|----------------------|------------|------------------------------|
| Eugene Baruch Becker | 02/18/2025 | Father of Lynn Kaler         |
| Meyer Bloom          | 02/07/2025 | Father of Gail Verlin        |
| David Brill          | 02/05/2025 | Grandfather of Myron Feldman |
| Pearl Brill          | 02/09/2025 | Grandmother of Myron Feldman |
| Ruth Glickman        | 02/10/2025 | Mother of Diana Gutenstein   |
| Lawrence Gould       | 02/06/2025 | Brother of Sandra Saviet     |
| Vivian Kay           | 02/15/2025 | Grandmother of Iylene Miller |
| Irving Melcer        | 02/07/2025 | Father of Marshall Melcer    |
| Selma Sperry         | 02/03/2025 | Mother of Bruce Sperry       |
| Florence Workman     | 02/16/2025 | Mother of of Anna Feldman    |
| Daniel Workman       | 02/28/2025 | Nephew of Anna Feldman       |
| Sol Zweibach         | 02/09/2025 | Father of Stephen Zweibach   |

# Candle Lighting Times

| Date                | Time    | Parsha    |
|---------------------|---------|-----------|
| Friday, February 7  | 5:51 PM | Beshalach |
| Friday, February 14 | 5:56 PM | Yitro     |
| Friday, February 21 | 6:00 PM | Mishpatim |
| Friday, February 28 | 6:04 PM | Terumah   |



## February Sponsors

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

Talmud, Mo'eJ Katan

|                    |                  |                              |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>February 7</b>  | CBS Congregation | Please bring a dish to share |
| <b>February 14</b> | CBS Congregation | Please bring a dish to share |
| <b>February 21</b> | CBS Congregation | Please bring a dish to share |
| <b>February 28</b> | CBS Congregation | Please bring a dish to share |

**If you'd like to sponsor an oneg, please call**

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



# Tu Bishvat

Traditionally, Tu Bishvat was not a Jewish festival. Rather, it marked an important date for Jewish farmers in ancient times. The Torah states, “When you enter the land [of Israel] and plant any tree for food, you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden for you, not to be eaten”. Only the fruit of older trees could be eaten. This law raised the question of how farmers were to mark the “birthday” of a tree. The rabbis therefore established the 15th of the month of Shevat as a general “birthday” for all trees, regardless of when they were planted.

Fruit trees were awarded special status in the Torah because of their importance in sustaining life and as a symbol of God’s divine favor. Even during times of war, God warns the Israelites, “When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees... Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city? Only trees that you know do not yield food may be destroyed”.

At a later time, the rabbis of the Talmud established four “new years” throughout the Jewish calendar—Rosh Hashanah, or the Jewish new year for the calendar date; a new year for establishing the reign of kings; a new year for tithing animals of Jewish farmers to be given to the Temple; and finally, Tu Bishvat, the new year for the trees (Mishnah, Rosh Hashanah 1:1). The rabbis discussed why this date was chosen; saying that Tu Bishvat falls after mid-winter (usually in February), they concluded that the majority of the annual rainfall has usually already fallen by this time in the land of Israel, thus yielding a healthy, water-logged soil in which to plant new trees.

In medieval times, kabbalists (Jewish mystics) gave Tu Bishvat greater spiritual significance. Seeing in Tu Bishvat a vehicle for mystical ideas, the kabbalists imbued Tu Bishvat with new religious significance as well as created elaborate new symbolic rituals. According to Lurianic Kabbalah (which is a form of mysticism studied by the students of Isaac Luria), all physical forms—including human beings—hide within them a spark of the Divine Presence. This is similar to some kinds of fruits or nuts, which hide within them seeds of new life and potential growth. In Jewish mysticism, human actions can release these sparks and help increase God’s presence in the world. On Tu Bishvat, the kabbalists would eat certain fruits associated with the land of Israel as a symbolic way of releasing these divine sparks.

In modern times, Tu Bishvat has become a symbol of both Zionist attachment to the land of Israel as well as an example of Jewish sensitivity to the environment. Early Zionist settlers to Israel began planting new trees not only to restore the ecology of ancient Israel, but as a symbol of renewed growth of the Jewish people returning to their ancestral homeland. While relatively few Jews continue to observe the kabbalistic Tu Bishvat seder, many American and European Jews observe Tu Bishvat by contributing money to the Jewish National Fund, an organization devoted to reforesting Israel.

For environmentalists, Tu Bishvat is an ancient and authentic Jewish “Earth Day” that educates Jews about the Jewish tradition’s advocacy of responsible stewardship of God’s creation as manifested in ecological activism. Among them, contemporary versions of the Tu Bishvat seder, emphasizing environmentalist concerns, are gaining popularity.

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/tu-bishvat-ideas-beliefs/>



**Tu Bishvat: The Jewish Holiday & "Birthday of the Trees"**  
*Click on the tree to watch a short video.*



The *Mosaic* Daily | January 13, 2025

with Andrew Koss, senior editor

## The Summary

To say that events in the U.S. since October 7, 2023 have been a wake-up call to American Jews about the rising tide of anti-Semitism has already become something of a cliché, true though it may be. But if you've been reading *Mosaic*, what has transpired, and in particular the strength of fanatical hatred of Israel on the political left and on **college campuses**, shouldn't come as much of a surprise. The anti-Semitic currents that have revealed themselves nakedly in the past fifteen months have been evident to anyone with eyes to see for the past fifteen years.

But even those who have been talking about anti-Semitism have tended to focus on its ideological manifestations: on the hard left, among Muslims, and on an anti-Israel **segment of the right** that has grown in force since 2015. The most common form of pre-October 7 anti-Semitic violence in the U.S., however, didn't fall into any of these categories: rather it consisted of one-off **attacks on Hasidic Jews** by young African Americans on the streets of New York City, Brooklyn especially. Because these attacks mostly target Hasidim, the Jewish mainstream largely **ignored them**. The phenomenon also raised uncomfortable questions of race relations, further discouraging discussion.

It is hard to get any clear sense what motivated these attacks aside from **failures of law enforcement** and the fact that Hasidic Jews stand out. But we don't have to go back very far to find a precedent for violence against Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn. One need only look to the pogrom in Crown Heights in 1991. Much has changed since then, but alas, much has not.

*Editor's note: By clicking the arrow, you can access the short film, "Get the Jew": The Crown Heights Riot Revisited.*

*This 20-minute film sheds light on the worst antisemitic riot in American history, which occurred in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, in 1991. Triggered by a Hasidic man running a red light and accidentally hitting and killing a young black child, the riot led to attacks on Jews. Stores and police cars were burned, and a Hasidic man was killed. David Dinkins, New York's mayor at the time, allowed the riot to go on for three full days, while the media downplayed the antisemitism at the heart of the violence. The film's interviews include Rev. Al Sharpton and then Deputy Police Chief Ray Kelly as well as WSJ Opinion writer Elliot Kaufman. The current wave of antisemitism makes these events newly relevant and worthy of reconsideration.*



**"Get the Jew": The Crown Heights Riot Revisited**

# Calling All Special Teams!

Join us for a Super Bowl Showdown on  
Sunday, February 9, 2025  
1:00 PM to 4:00 PM!

We're hosting a "**Big Game**" **Get-Together** with plenty of food and games to get you pumped before heading home to watch the epic battle of the pigskin in the comfort of your own living room.

- **What to Wear:** Football attire from any team!
- **What to Bring:** A dairy-covered dish to share.

## Coordinators:

Jackie Perez Feldman (813-361-9337)

Myron Feldman (813-361-9590)

**RSVP:** Contact Myron or Jackie to let them know you're attending and what dish you'll be bringing.





|  |                     |                  |                     |
|--|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Bad Shabbos</b><br><i>Shanna &amp; Bryan Glazer JCC</i>   | Tuesday             | 18-Feb           | 7:00 PM             |
| <b>Midlife</b><br><i>Shanna &amp; Bryan Glazer JCC</i><br><i>Shanna &amp; Bryan Glazer JCC</i>                       | Wednesday<br>Sunday | 19-Feb<br>23-Feb | 7:00 PM<br>2:30 PM  |
| <b>Running on Sand</b><br><i>AMC Woodlands Square 20 - Oldsmar</i>   | Thursday            | 20-Feb           | 7:00 PM             |
| <b>Never Alone (Film, Lunch, &amp; Conversation)</b><br><i>The James Museum - St. Pete</i>                           | Friday              | 21-Feb           | 11:00 AM            |
| <b>The Glory of Life</b><br><i>The James Museum - St. Pete</i><br><i>Shanna &amp; Bryan Glazer JCC</i>               | Friday<br>Sunday    | 21-Feb<br>23-Feb | 2:00 PM<br>12:30 PM |
| <b>The Stronghold</b><br><i>Shanna &amp; Bryan Glazer JCC</i>  | Saturday            | 22-Feb           | 7:30 PM             |
| <b>All About the Levkoviches</b><br><i>AMC Woodlands Square 20 - Oldsmar</i><br><i>Shanna &amp; Bryan Glazer JCC</i> | Thursday<br>Sunday  | 20-Feb<br>23-Feb | 5:00 PM<br>10:30 PM |
| <b>Seven Blessings</b><br><i>Shanna &amp; Bryan Glazer JCC</i>   | Sunday              | 23-Feb           | 4:30 PM             |

To Buy Tickets:

<https://jewishtampa.ticketspice.com/tbjff-29th-annual-film-festival>

For More Information: Brandy Gold

[brandy.gold@jewishtampa.com](mailto:brandy.gold@jewishtampa.com)

Or call: (813)769-4725

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**Congregation Beth Shalom**  
of Brandon

# February 2025

## February 'Rabbis'

- 7-Feb Steve Billor
- 14-Feb Neil Spindel
- 21-Feb Sandy Schwartz
- 28-Feb Anita Clifford



## Tampa Bay Jewish Film Festival

02/19 through 02/23

| Sun                              | Mon | Tue  | Wed                             | Thu  | Fri  | Sat  |
|----------------------------------|-----|--|---------------------------------|--|--|--|
|                                  |     |  |                                 |  |  | 1  |
| 2                                | 3   | 4<br>Ex Com Mtg<br>6:30 PM<br>Board Mtg<br>7:00 PM | 5<br>Hebrew Lessons<br>6:00 PM  | 6  | 7<br>Erev Shabbat<br>Service 7:00 PM<br>  | 8  |
| 9<br>Superbowl<br>Tailgate Party | 10  | 11   | 12<br>Hebrew Lessons<br>6:00 PM | 13<br><b>Tu B'Shevat</b><br> | 14<br>No Shabbat<br>Service<br>           | 15<br>Shabbat<br>Service 10 AM<br><b>Rabbi Katz</b><br> |
| 16<br>Food Bank<br>1 PM to 3 PM  | 17  | 18   | 19<br>Hebrew Lessons<br>6:00 PM | 20   | 21<br>Erev Shabbat<br>Service 7:00 PM<br> | 22   |
| 23                               | 24  | 25   | 26<br>Hebrew Lessons<br>6:00 PM | 27   | 28<br>Erev Shabbat<br>Service 7:00 PM<br> |   |