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## V'shinatam L'vonecha

04/02/2020 09:31:11 AM



### [President's Note]

Rabbi Aft wanted to send this to you and your children yesterday. You can thank me later. Happy April 2nd. He agreed it's never too late for an April 1 mitzvah:-)

Happy April 2nd! :-)

Dear Friends,

No one ever accused me of always having "good taste."

I thought this might brighten your day and our kids dared me to include the last one...

Stay safe,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

# The best April Fools' Day pranks to play on your family while stuck at home

By [Hannah Frishberg](#)

March 31, 2020 | 11:42am | [Updated](#)

Getty Images

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[Girl crushed not to go to school after parents' mean April Fools' prank](#)

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[Several countries threaten jail time for coronavirus-related April Fools' pranks](#)

[Google to skip April Fools' Day pranks amid coronavirus](#)

In a world turned upside down by a global [coronavirus pandemic](#), it is difficult enough to know what to believe. But there's still a need for some harmless fun that can bring a smile to kids, parents, partners and friends alike.

This April 1, the [internet](#) is pleading with brands not to pull [their regular pranks](#), and Google has canceled its annual April Fools' hoax. The company will "take the year off from that tradition out of respect for all those fighting the COVID-19 pandemic," according to an email obtained by [Business Insider](#). "Our highest goal right now is to be helpful to people, so let's save the jokes for next April, which will undoubtedly be a whole lot brighter than this one."

There are ways to still lightly celebrate the day remotely, [though that](#) can prove to be an excuse to connect with a family member or friend while social distancing at home. Just [don't pretend](#) to have the coronavirus.

## Swap out the family photos

Mom, why did you frame that [random photo of Steve Buscemi](#)? For those quarantining with others, putting a strange new image in front of a familiar photo is an easy way to get a double take — even from people who maybe haven't left the house in weeks. If you're quarantining alone, consider placing a swapped-image frame behind you in a Zoom call, and see if the person you're ~~video-chatting~~ video-chatting with notices.

[Clare Manion@claremaura](#)

My brother has been replacing family photos with pics of Steve Buscemi and my mom hasn't noticed

[54.8K 7:13 PM · Jul 24, 2016](#) [Twitter Ads info and privacy](#)

## Pretend to be typing ... forever

With everyone glued to their phones, the three dots which signal that someone is responding to your text carry great weight. What are they going to say? Will they ever press send? Why does it feel like they've been typing for an eternity? Maybe it's because they aren't actually typing, but just sent you [a gif of the three dots](#).

## Subscribe a pal to a hilarious mailing list

Here's a harmless way to brighten someone's inbox at the expense of a little confusion. The internet has seemingly endless free email newsletters to sign up for, including a great assortment of ones on [raising chickens](#), [community chickens](#) and [chicken secrets](#) — perfect for causing mild bewilderment in that friend who has zero poultry-related interests.

## Text replacement

iPhones have a feature intended to help enhance typing speed that can easily be hijacked in the name of a laugh. Text replacement, while meant to automatically fix quick errors — like when you write "dte" instead of "the" — can also be used to automatically replace "good morning," with "CAN I GET FRIES WITH THAT?" every single time. Here are [instructions](#) on how to do it. (You'll need physical phone access for it, so it's only good for those you're quarantining with.)

## Flatulence

Is there a more perennial hoax than the fart? For those who have a ~~whoopee~~ whoopee cushion on hand or are skilled at the hand-in-the-armpit trick, this one is easy to do the good old-fashioned way. For everyone else, there's a [farting app](#).

Please let me know if we can support you in any way.

B'shalom and stay well,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

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V'shinatam L'vonecha

04/01/2020 09:30:12 AM



Dear Friends,

It is all about our perspective. Take a moment to read the following poem (you may have already seen this).

Have a good day and accomplish something special today!

Rabbi Bruce Aft

Pandemic

What if you thought of it  
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—  
the most sacred of times?  
Cease from travel.  
Cease from buying and selling.  
Give up, just for now,  
on trying to make the world  
different than it is.  
Sing. Pray. Touch only those  
to whom you commit your life.  
Center down.

And when your body has become still,  
reach out with your heart.  
Know that we are connected  
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.  
(You could hardly deny it now.)  
Know that our lives  
are in one another's hands.  
(Surely, that has come clear.)  
Do not reach out your hands.  
Reach out your heart.  
Reach out your words.  
Reach out all the tendrils  
of compassion that move, invisibly,  
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—  
for better or for worse,  
in sickness and in health,  
so long as we all shall live.

—Lynn Ungar 3/11/20

Please let me know if we can support you in any way.

B'shalom and stay well,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

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## V'shinatam L'vonecha

03/31/2020 01:02:10 PM



Hello Everyone,

Five Tips From Natan Sharansky On Maintaining Our Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Health During This Period Of Isolation.

A man who was imprisoned by the Soviet regime for 9 years, half that time in solitary confinement has advice for all of us as we face the Coronavirus crisis. Natan Sharansky, past chairman of The Jewish Agency for Israel, was imprisoned for his work as a Zionist and human rights activist in the U.S.S.R. You can imagine he knows a thing or two about how to get through long bouts of isolation. As the world goes into lock-down mode to fight the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic, Sharansky's advice is helpful and inspiring. #EveryoneOfUsTogether

watch this Youtube video by clicking  
here

Please let me know if we can support you in any way.

B'shalom and stay well,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

## Rabbi Aft's Weekly Message - this too shall pass

03/27/2020 10:34:44 AM



[Starting next week...look for a new quick morning message from Rabbi Aft: V'shinantam L'vanecha...words to teach your loved ones diligently.](#)

Dear Friends,

Another week of physical distancing....I hope we have found ways to connect. Many thanks to Bruce Kaplan, Josh Green, Liz Bayer, Maurice Mizrahi, Carolyn Kaplan, Larry Kugler, Russell Nadel, Mitch Bassman, Bill Korth, Sariel Ende-Alonzo, Carla Richter, Gloria Pioso, Gary Lefkowitz, Vered Margalit, Dan Altman , Glenn Siegel, Andrea Cate, Ann Ungar, and all those I am forgetting who have brought us services, activities, and other wonderful ways to connect during these challenging times. Special thanks to Joan Mizrahi and all those members of the caring committee who have called our membership or reached out in some way to all of you. Hopefully, you have all heard from someone from Adat Reyim. If you wish to make some calls or e-mail members to check in, please let Joan Mizrahi or me know.

Recently, at the conclusion of the sabbatical, Sue and I were in Panama City, Florida where Hurricane Michael devastated the community. The Institute for Southern Jewish Life sends rabbis to communities which cannot afford a rabbi and we help out over a Shabbat, Holidays, or for periodic life cycle events.

You will see two pictures below. One is a tree which fell on a roof next door to the synagogue and the second is of members of the community doing Havdalah on the Gulf of Mexico. I learned an important lesson from the spirit of those who were there, which can be summarized by a Hebrew phrase, which says, "gam zeh yaavor" (this too shall pass). The strength of spirit exhibited by those who live in Panama City is inspirational to us as we deal with the challenges of the corona virus. We can and will rebound from this "plague" and as they have come together, we are coming together by reaching out to each other and comforting each other.

One of the explanations for this week's Torah reading which begins the book of Leviticus, is that the little "aleph" which is in the first sentence of the portion, is to remind us that any little act can make a huge difference. Everything we do to help

someone can make a difference.

I hope to "see" you tonight at the Spirit of Shabbat service at 6:30pm. Please note the special time for this service.

Finally, on Monday and hopefully each day except for Friday and weekends, please look for a brief inspiration. I am eager to share things that inspire you so please send me something that causes you to feel better. The column will be called: V'shinantam I'vanecha, teach your children (or friends and loved ones) diligently. These inspirations which will include lyrics to some of my favorite songs and the lessons I have learned, and hopefully will brighten your day.

Shabbat Shalom and stay well.

Rabbi Bruce Aft



In the midst of the pandemic, Ann Ungar, a member of the congregation, sent me the following. <https://youtu.be/3eXT60rbBVK>

As she said in her note to me, often we turn to the arts to deal with challenges in our lives.

I hope that this brief concert will brighten your day.

Please let me know if we can support you in any way.

B'shalom and stay well,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

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## Rabbi Aft's Weekly Message - What is Important?

03/20/2020 11:55:40 AM

Congregation Adat Reyim



Dear Friends,

I hope that all of us are feeling healthy and PLEASE let us know if you need anything. This is a long article but with everything going on, we probably have extra time to read. So pull up a pillow, stretch out, and "sweet dreams." :-)

Calls have been made to all of you (or will soon be made). We are trying to keep in touch with each other. The average length of my phone calls with many folks has dramatically increased as we all treasure human contact.

This week, the Torah reading is V'yakhel Pekudei, which describes how one builds community through the building of holy space. Rabbi Sacks, in his weekly posting, writes the following about a special way to build community:

Melanie Reid is a journalist who writes a regular column for The (London) Times. A quadriplegic with a wry lack of self-pity, she calls her weekly essay Spinal Column. On 4 January 2020, she told the story of how she, her husband, and others in their Scottish village bought an ancient inn to convert it into a pub and community centre, a shared asset for the neighbourhood.

Something extraordinary then happened. A large number of locals volunteered their services to help open and run it. "We've got well-known classical musicians cleaning the toilets and sanding down tables. Behind the bar there are sculptors, building workers, humanist ministers, Merchant Navy officers, grandmothers, HR executives and estate agents... Retired CEOs chop wood for the fires; septuagenarians ... wait at tables; surveyors eye up internal walls to be knocked down and can-doers fix blocked gutters."

It has not only become a community centre; it has dramatically energised the locality. People of all ages come there to play games, drink, eat, and attend special events. A rich variety of communal facilities and activities have grown up around it. She speaks of "the alchemy of what can be achieved in a village when everyone comes together for a common aim."

In her column describing this, Melanie was kind enough to quote me on the magic of "I" becoming "we": "When you build a home together ... you create something far greater than anything anyone could do alone or be paid to do."

We have been challenged to build a different type of community. We do need each other. Through electronic communication and telephone calls, we are keeping in touch with each other as we attempt to connect with each other. When Barbara Streisand sings, "that people who need people are the luckiest people in the world." she has described the power of building and having community.

Based upon my contact with a number of you, we are all eager to have contact in a world in which we are asked to remain a certain distance from each other.

My Aunt and Uncle, with whom we visited twice during the sabbatical, are isolated from their children now because of the ban on visiting folks in senior facilities. My Uncle has to walk to the entrance gate for his son to be able to put together pills, which he and my Aunt have to take. He told me last night that this human contact

is very meaningful because it has become lonely for them. Their children have created conference calls so that they can keep in touch with each other and their parents.

Our neighbor knocked at our door and sheepishly asked us whether he could go grocery shopping for us since we are in the higher risk segment of our population. It was so thoughtful and of course I made fun of him for calling us old, but he knows how much we appreciate his gesture.

Members of our congregation are struggling with what to do surrounding B'nai Mitzvah celebrations and services, couples are rescheduling weddings or looking to do small intimate ceremonies and rescheduling the receptions, and colleagues are wondering whether they can preside at memorial services and funerals. Life is changing and it is scary.

But, one of our friends sent me a note that said, "our grandparents were called to go to war and we are being called to go to our couches. We can do this."

I hope that as our ancestors gave heartfelt offerings to build the Tabernacle in the wilderness after having mistakenly using their resources to build a golden calf, we will build our community around human contact by calling our friends, family, and loved ones. Perhaps we are learning an important lesson about what is important to us, as did our ancestors when they built the Tabernacle for G-d after the destruction of the golden calf.

Finally, many thanks to Joan Mizrahi and the caring committee for having made the calls mentioned earlier. It continues to be an honor and privilege to be the rabbi of a special community of friends.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

**Friday, March 20th 7:45pm** Erev Shabbat Service with Cantorial

Soloist

Host: Josh Green

Meeting link:

<https://execdirector-200.my.webex.com/execdirector-200.my/j.php?>

[MTID=mcab2d4263603742cb1f2847b8fab6b8c](https://execdirector-200.my.webex.com/execdirector-200.my/j.php?MTID=mcab2d4263603742cb1f2847b8fab6b8c)

Meeting number: 790 333 022

Password: W99GwXEvaP3

Join by phone

+1-408-418-9388 United States Toll

+1-202-860-2110 United States Toll (Washington D.C.)

Access code: 790 333 022

**Saturday, March 21st 9:30am** Shabbat Morning Services with an Extended

Torah Discussion (instead of Torah Services).

HOST: Bruce Kaplan

Meeting link:<https://execdirector-200.my.webex.com/execdirector-200.my/j.php?>

[MTID=mdbe77eb76b7f79831a130a26ed756de6](https://execdirector-200.my.webex.com/execdirector-200.my/j.php?MTID=mdbe77eb76b7f79831a130a26ed756de6)

Meeting number: 794 796 695

Password: GxPGvPGv784

Join by phone: +1-408-418-9388

Access code: 794 796 695

**Sunday, March 22nd - Religious School** - Content for each grade level will be available by Sunday morning. Please note that you will have to login to the synagogue website for access. In addition if you would like to setup any private tutoring with either your teachers or our excellent tutors please let me know.  
<https://www.adatreym.org/rs-online-learning.html#>

**Sunday, March 22nd - Teen Program**

Discussion Topic: Social Distancing, How do you feel about this Pandemic?

5:00pm Teenagers

Meeting link:

<https://execdirector-200.my.webex.com/execdirector-200.my/j.php?>

[MTID=m9e779225990ef8a89dee9b12f5d15e51](https://execdirector-200.my.webex.com/execdirector-200.my/j.php?MTID=m9e779225990ef8a89dee9b12f5d15e51)

Meeting number: 792 530 702

Password: bp3HPr

Join by phone

+1-408-418-9388 United States Toll

+1-202-860-2110 United States Toll (Washington D.C.)

Access code: 792 530 702

6:00pm Parents of Teenagers

Meeting link:

<https://execdirector-200.my.webex.com/execdirector-200.my/j.php?>

[MTID=maca1d53fa7de58bde00b63702c09f8be](https://execdirector-200.my.webex.com/execdirector-200.my/j.php?MTID=maca1d53fa7de58bde00b63702c09f8be)

Meeting number: 796 629 092

Password: ma7VMj

+1-408-418-9388 United States Toll

+1-202-860-2110 United States Toll (Washington D.C.)

Access code: 796 629 092

**Please Join Rabbi Aft for... "Virtual Coffee Talk"**

**Tuesday, March 24th**

9:15am

<https://execdirector-200.my.webex.com/execdirector-200.my/j.php?>

[MTID=m9b232a36955c8f8fabec0442ef279829](https://execdirector-200.my.webex.com/execdirector-200.my/j.php?MTID=m9b232a36955c8f8fabec0442ef279829)

Meeting number (access code): 797 219 163

Meeting password: AdultEdAdat2020!

Join by landline or phone only: (408) 418-9388

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## Rabbi Aft's Friday Message -Stay Well and Safe.

03/13/2020 11:21:14 AM





### A message from our Co-Presidents....

Please be assured that we are very cognizant of the fact that religious institutions are being closed and services are being cancelled or streamed.

We will have services this Shabbat at 8pm tonight when we will name Bev Nebel's great grandson and will celebrate the B'nai Mitzvah of Leon and Annalise Connor tomorrow morning at 9:30am. There will be Torah study at 8:45 am tomorrow per usual.

There will also be the Family and Friends service tonight at 6:30pm!

Please stay tuned for further information about events/services.

Shabbat Shalom and be safe and healthy.

Bruce Kaplan and Rebecca Geller



Dear Friends,

Recently I received the following note which I think is a perfect description of me and hopefully the next rabbi. In the spirit of Purim, please read and smile. Please substitute (S)he or they for he.

Then please read my comments afterwards. This is a long article but I hope you will take time to read it.

#### The Perfect Rabbi

The results of a computerized survey indicate the perfect Rabbi preaches exactly 15 minutes. He condemns sins but never upsets anyone. He works from 8 AM until midnight and is also a janitor. He makes \$50 a week, wears good clothes, buys good books, drives a good car, and gives about \$50 weekly to the poor. He is 28 years old and has preached 30 years. He has a burning desire to work with teenagers and spends all of his time with senior citizens. The perfect Rabbi smiles all the time with a straight face because he has a sense of humor that keeps him seriously dedicated to his work. He makes 15 calls daily on congregation families, shut-ins and the hospitalized, and is always in his office when needed. If your Rabbi does not measure up, simply send this letter to six other synagogues that are tired of their Rabbi, too. Then bundle up your Rabbi and send him to the synagogue on the top of the list. In one week, you will receive 1,643 Rabbis and one of them will be perfect. Have faith in this procedure. One congregation broke the chain and got its old Rabbi back in less than three weeks.

I want to share some thoughts that I have heard about the rabbinic search process.

Everyone is to be commended for a comprehensive process that I understand has reached 93% of our congregants in some way. It is wonderful how much you all care about the future of our congregation, Adat Reyim.

As you meet on Sunday to approve the board's choice for our next rabbi, I hope

that you will continue the positive process by sharing any questions which you might have and supporting those who have worked tirelessly to make sure we continue to meet the varied needs of our community of friends.

In total transparency, and not surprisingly, I have been approached by a number of people with questions. I have recommended that they speak to Bruce Kaplan since I have not been part of the process but been supportive of the process all along the way.

Please share your questions. In speaking with Esther Bland, Bruce Kaplan, and Rebecca Geller, they are all unanimous in wanting to address all questions and make sure the process continues on a positive note.

I will reiterate an important point on Sunday night that I want you to remember. Whether I have been a good rabbi or a not so good a rabbi, I am not the person I was 29 years ago and together we have all learned a lot. I am reminded of the story my father used to tell about the college student, who upon their graduation, was amazed how much their parents had learned over the four years they were in college:-)

I certainly have learned and grown and hope that the next rabbi will grow together with all of us and that we will continue to enjoy a wonderful future.

Finally, there is a poem by S.H. Payer that I wish to share which my mother shared at our wedding and which I occasionally share at weddings at which I officiate.

As you read the poem, please remember that the moment of absolute certainty never arrives. (See below)

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

Live each day to the fullest.  
Get the most from each hour, each day, and each age of your life.  
Then you can look forward with confidence, and back without regrets.  
Be yourself, but be your best self.  
Dare to be different and follow your own star.  
Don't be afraid to be happy and enjoy what is beautiful.  
Love with all your heart and soul. Believe that those you love, love you.  
When you are faced with a decision, make that decision as wisely as possible,  
then forget it.  
The moment of absolute certainty never arrives.  
Above all, remember that God helps those who help themselves.  
Act as if everything depended on you and pray as if everything depended on God.

Dear Friends,

I received an e-mail from a colleague and have included an excerpt from her prayer.

I will share this prayer over the weekend but wanted you all to see it.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

A prayer in the midst of a Pandemic Virus  
Given that we are in new territory and uncertainly regarding the COVID-19

virus.....

I pray:

- That all my loved one and family, friends, colleagues, neighbors community, city, country, and people of the world, stay safe from harm;
  - for the health care workers and their families, first responders and those that serve day in and day out -are free from disease and don't take it home to their families;
  - That the policy makers make good decisions.
  - That science is supported and research funded;
  - That we find a vaccine soon, and that it be used to make peace between nations;
  - That we over overcome our fears and irrational reactions and are able to think clearly and take healthy precautions;
  - That we all find things to do during our "Time Out" of social isolation like a new hobby, art, music or projects we have neglected
  - That we find ways to stay connected to those that live alone;
  - That we enjoy each others company;
  - That we all have enough to eat during this time and that the most vulnerable of our population do not suffer with paltry paychecks;
  - That deaths decline from flu and other diseases because we are taking better precautions;
  - That we find the moral courage to help each other through this;
  - That our anxiety doesn't lead to blaming others;
  - That we still find moments of humor and joy amidst the uncertainty;
  - That we remember we are a resilient species, having survived plagues, wars, famines and other hardship through the centuries
- Rabbi Geela Rayzel RaphaelRayzel

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## Rabbi Aft's Friday Message - Happy Purim!

03/06/2020 10:00:43 AM

Congregation Adat Reyim



Dear Friends,

It is customary to poke fun at sacred institutions and have fun at Purim.

So.....please enjoy and remember this should not be taken seriously.

Good Morning,

I used to be the King of Persia. After the incident which occurred at Purim, I

decided to look for something to do in retirement.

I have decided to become the next rabbi at Adat Reyim. If chosen as your rabbi I will do the following:

1) Oneg Shabbats will replace services and will be ongoing. I am great at giving parties and have already offered Beryl Ebert the use of the kitchen as her home to bake!

2) I will appoint Haman to be music director so we can include the grogger as a new musical instrument when we have to pray!

3) In deference to Rabbi Aft, we are planning to change the logo to the White Sox emblem.

4) Given his desire to use musical lyrics to teach and sermonize, we will sing "So long, it's been good to know you" with the hope he can take a hint.

5) All references to Chicago will be banned since most of us know that the Midwest is a foreign country.

Finally, we will not replace wine and challah with Dr. Pepper and cashews!

Happy Purim!

King Ahashveurus



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## Rabbi Aft's Friday Message -

02/28/2020 10:00:11 AM



Dear Friends,

This Shabbat I am participating as a rabbi in residence at a congregation in Vancouver, British Columbia, which is served by a former student of mine from BBYO's International Leadership Kallah (a Jewish study program) from many years ago. When he was 16 years old, he attended Kallah and he was a catcher. I pitched to him and from 60 feet 6 inches (the distance between the pitcher's mound and home plate); he and I would talk about religious and spiritual issues.

He claims that because of these discussions, he decided to become a rabbi. I know his family had a lot to do with that decision based upon their commitment to Jewish life, but his kind words always make me feel good:-). Actually, I think he was praying that my pitches would not bounce in the dirt or that if there were a batter, he wouldn't hit it too far!

As I prepare for this weekend in Vancouver, I am reminded of a conversation, which I had with a student at Kallah the summer that my father died. The student asked me if my Dad and I ever kissed each other. I remember that he used to kiss me occasionally on the "kepe" (Yiddish) or forehead. I knew my father loved me but he was not physically affectionate.

I did tell the student that every time my dad and I played catch and the ball hit our mitts, we were kissing each other. This was the way in which we showed affection.

When Rabbi Dan Moscovitz tells the story about how he was inspired, it reminds me of the love that my father and I shared and those interactions are richer than any physical kiss. When Rabbi Dan invited me to speak at his son, Judah's Bar Mitzvah about a year ago, I felt the love in the sanctuary which I felt from my Dad when we would play catch, and from my Mom, when she would always encourage to "not overdo and have fun, you two!"

May we all find meaningful ways to show the people we love, that we care. May we show affection and "kiss each other" often.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

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## Rabbi Aft's Friday Message -

02/21/2020 10:44:43 AM



Dear Friends,

A brief update from our sabbatical...

We have returned from Prague and our opportunity to teach, mentor, visit friends, and to meet Ruth Halova, the survivor of the kindertransport.

We also had a wonderful family get together with our children and grandchildren in the Midwest for Sue's birthday and are truly blessed by the love, which brings us together.

We are off to spring training, visiting more family and friends, and my serving as rabbi in residence in Vancouver, BC, and Panama City, Florida. I look forward to seeing you again at our Purim celebrations on March 9!

Last night on a brief visit back to the area for a couple of meetings and to vote absentee in the Virginia Primary (I hope you all will vote!), we attended a concert called "1964: The Tribute" which was an evening of Beatles music. It was a nostalgic recollection of this special time for those of us who remember the Beatles (where were you when they appeared on the Ed Sullivan show?) Those of you who don't remember Ed Sullivan should search for Ed Sullivan and the Beatles:-)

So...why am I mentioning this? One of the things, which I am doing on sabbatical, is reflecting on having served as your rabbi for the past 29 years. As you might guess, it is a time for reflection and for thinking about the precious moments we have shared with each other. During the concert, I was particularly moved hearing the following lyrics; these words helped me think about my own growth and the evolution of our relationships with each other. The song reminded me of the sacred roles we play for each other in joyful, stressful, happy, challenging, and sad times. I hope that we truly have built a community where we have helped each other to grow and feel supported and that we will continue to be there for each other. (See below)

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

The Beatles Lyrics  
"Help!"  
("Help!" Version)

Help! I need somebody  
Help! Not just anybody  
Help! You know I need someone  
Help!

(When) When I was younger (When I was young) so much younger than today  
(I never need) I never needed anybody's help in any way  
(Now) But now these days are gone (These days are gone) and I'm not so self  
assured  
(And now I find) Now I find I've changed my mind, I've opened up the doors

Help me if you can, I'm feeling down  
And I do appreciate you being 'round  
Help me get my feet back on the ground  
Won't you please, please help me?

(Now) And now my life has changed (My life has changed) in oh so many ways  
(My independence) My independence seems to vanish in the haze  
(But) But ev'ry now (Every now and then) and then I feel so insecure  
(I know that I) I know that I just need you like I've never done before

Help me if you can, I'm feeling down  
And I do appreciate you being 'round  
Help me get my feet back on the ground  
Won't you please, please help me?

When I was younger, so much younger than today  
I never needed anybody's help in any way  
(Now) But now these days are gone (These days are gone) and I'm not so self  
assured  
(And now I find) Now I find I've changed my mind, I've opened up the doors

Help me if you can, I'm feeling down  
And I do appreciate you being 'round  
Help me get my feet back on the ground  
Won't you please, please help me?

Help me, help me  
Ooh



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## Rabbi Aft's Friday Message - Unforgettable!

02/14/2020 12:06:16 PM



Dear Friends,

Sometimes I speak about unforgettable moments which I am privileged to experience! This past Shabbat was certainly one of them.

Many people celebrated love yesterday on February 14 and on Shabbat last week, we fell in love with a true heroine who we never knew!

Sue and I visited here in the Czech Republic with Ruth Halova, a survivor from the kinder transport which were trains that brought children from danger to England and to safety during WWII. The stories of heroism and sacrifice are amazing and a testimony to the power of the human spirit!

We spent a remarkable afternoon with her. One of the most inspiring thoughts

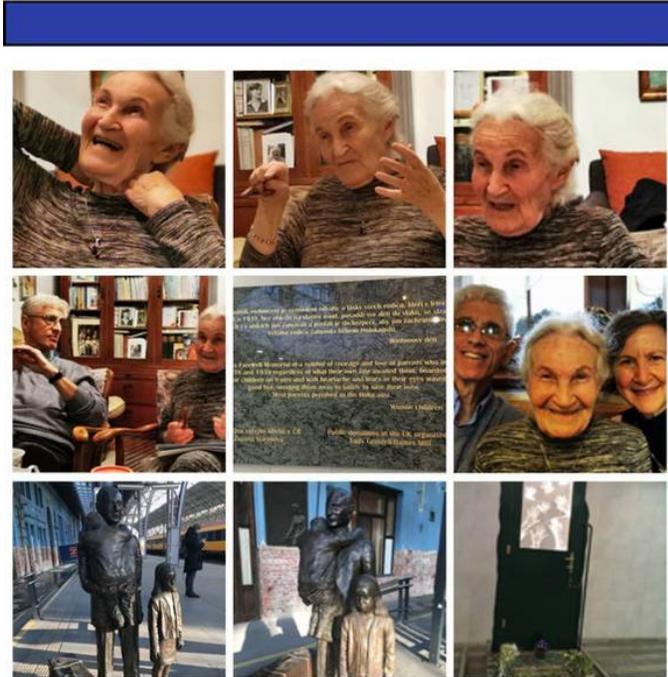
she shared was her belief, after all she had experienced, that our goals in life should be to be happy and help others to be happy!  
She also taught us that "compassion is not a dirty word." Finally, our 93 year old new friend told us that she had learned that she might not be able to help others , but she could weep with them when they were hurting.

As I reflect on our 29 years together, I may not have helped you but hopefully my presence may have provided comfort when you were hurting!

Please take a look at the pictures below!

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft



Stories of Heroism  
& Sacrifice...  
*Unforgettable*



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A Message from Rabbi Aft - Tu B'shevat Seder from Deicin

Congregation Adat Reyim



Dear Friends,

I had the privilege to participate in a Tu B'sh'vat Seder in Deicin which is in the Czech Republic.

As our parents planted seeds for us, I hope I planted seeds for members of this small Jewish community! Some of the children are part of four generations who were present!

We all are part of a wonderful world wide Jewish community!

Hag Tub'shvat Sameach!

Rabbi Bruce Aft

LOOKS OF WONDER.....

FROM DEICIN



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## Rabbi Aft's Friday Message - Tu B'shevat

02/07/2020 10:02:44 AM

Congregation Adat Reyim

*Congregation Adat Reyim Presents...*

# Rabbi Aft's Corner



**While Rabbi Aft is on sabbatical, he will not be reminding you about the yahrzeits you are observing. Please check the e-mail notifications which are sent out from the office.**



Friday evening, February 7, 2020, is the beginning of Shabbat Shira, and our choir has prepared some special musical selections for our Annual Shabbat Shira service.

Shabbat Shira (Parshat Beshalach) is the Sabbath of Song. The Torah reading discusses the redemption from Egypt and the passage through the Red Sea. Chapter 15 of Exodus includes the moving song (shira) composed by Moses after he saw the Egyptians perish in the returning waters:

"Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spoke, saying:

I will sing unto the Lord, for He is highly exalted;  
The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." (Exodus 15:1)

Not only did the Israelites join their leader in singing, but there was also instrumental accompaniment led by Moses's own sister: "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dances." (Exodus 15:20)

We hope you'll be able to join us.



Dear Friends,

Shabbat Shalom from Prague. The parents of our religious school students have received a copy of this story which was sent to me by Russell Nadel.

[Click here for the story.](#)

As we celebrate TuB'shevat, I hope you will find the story to be an important reminder about the difference we can make in the lives of those who come after us.

Happy New Year of Trees and once again, Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft



We are with a staff person from Moishe House here in Prague. Moishe House is international and serves 20 and 30 year olds around the world who are interested in Jewish life.

Please check their website!

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## Rabbi Aft's Friday Message -

01/31/2020 09:00:42 AM



**While Rabbi Aft is on sabbatical, he will not be reminding you about the yahrzeits you are observing. Please check the e-mail notifications which are sent out from the office.**

Dear Friends,

This week the world commemorated the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

A friend sent me the following and hope you will take the time to listen to this moving broadcast. (See below)

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

from a friend:

Today is the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. My friend David Kupfer, a child of survivors and a psychologist, was interviewed for this broadcast, as was Deborah Lipstadt, the scholar of anti-semitism. Please take the time to listen, I guarantee you will not be sorry. David talks about his own and his parents' experience, and what resilience can mean.

[Click Here For Broadcast](#)

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## Rabbi Aft's Friday Message -

01/24/2020 10:09:16 AM



**While Rabbi Aft is on sabbatical, he will not be reminding you about the yahrzeits you are observing. Please check the e-mail notifications which are sent out from the office.**

Dear Friends,

It started over 45 years ago. Sue and I were out on a date with my parents. We had just started dating and I wanted my parents to meet her.

As my parents dropped her off and my dad opened the door for her (do people still do this???), he looked at her and said, "it is nice to meet you and que sera sera, what will be will be." (For those who were at the Chanukah Latkes and Lights, this song may truly be my favorite of all time...)

I was so embarrassed. I called Sue after my parents had dropped me off and was trying to apologize. In her special way, she told me not to worry and that she thought it was cute.

At our wedding, as we were leaving the chuppah, a special friend of Sue's family, Sol Cohen, who as I recall was over 90 years old, played "Que Sera Sera" on the violin as inspirational advice to us as we began our journey together.

Now let me fast-forward the recording to yesterday. We were with my Aunt and

Uncle celebrating her 90th birthday. My Aunt is struggling with memory issues and we treasure our time together with her and my Uncle. (We will see them later on my sabbatical again)

They live in a senior facility in West Palm Beach, Florida, and we attended a concert in the facility where they live. Sharon Steinberg, a Cantor (and Rabbi) who used to serve at Beth El, was giving a concert. The songs were from the 40's and 50's and one of them was "Que sera sera, what will be will be." A flood of memories returned and I took a picture of Sue and my Aunt singing these words.

As Sue and I prepare for the last part of my chapter as rabbi at Adat Reyim and begin our next chapter as rabbi emeritus and doing other things, and as the congregation continues to prepare for its next chapter when you interview my colleagues, I can't help but believe that we heard these words yesterday for a reason. If it was merely a coincidence, then perhaps another colleague was correct when he told me that "coincidences are miracles where G-d chooses to remain anonymous." I know that as my Aunt and Uncle "mature" and grow older together, the words also ring true for us personally.

Please read the lyrics below and Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft



[Doris Day - Que Sera, Sera \(Whatever Will Be Will Be\).Video](#)

Doris Day Lyrics  
"Que Sera, Sera"  
(feat. Jimmy Joyce children's choir)

When I was just a little girl  
I asked my mother, "What will I be?  
Will I be pretty? Will I be rich?"

Here's what she said to me

Que sera, sera  
Whatever will be, will be  
The future's not ours to see  
Que sera, sera  
What will be, will be

Since I am just a boy at school  
I asked my teacher, "What should I try?  
Should I paint pictures? Should I sing songs?"  
This was her wise reply

Que sera, sera  
Whatever will be, will be  
The future's not ours to see  
Que sera, sera  
What will be, will be

When I grew up and fell in love  
I asked my lover, "What lies ahead?  
Will we have rainbows day after day?"  
Guess what my lover said

Que sera, sera  
Whatever will be, will be  
The future's not ours to see  
Que sera, sera  
What will be, will be

Now I have children of my own  
They ask their mother, "What will I be?  
Will I be pretty? Will I be rich?"  
I tell them, "Wait and see."

Que sera, sera  
Whatever will be, will be  
The future's not ours to see  
Que sera, sera  
What will be, will be  
Que sera, sera

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## Rabbi Aft's Friday Message -

01/17/2020 10:55:13 AM

Congregation Adat Reyim

*Congregation Adat Reyim Presents...*

# Rabbi Aft's Corner



CONGREGATION ADAT REYIM

## MLK SABBATH OF SOLIDARITY

Interfaith Service

---

JANUARY 17, 2020  
7:30PM

6500 Westbury Oaks Court  
Springfield, VA 22152  
(703) 569-7577

**While Rabbi Aft is on sabbatical, he will not be reminding you about the yahrzeits you are observing. Please check the e-mail notifications which are sent out from the office.**

Dear Friends,

This will be my last Friday article until March 13 since Sue and I leave on sabbatical on Tuesday and return for Purim on March 9.

We will be seeing our children, grandchildren, other family members, celebrating a big birthday for Sue (21plus:-)), celebrating my Aunt's 90th birthday, and I will be teaching in the Czech Republic, Vancouver, and Panama City, Florida.

And this will surprise no one...we hope to get to see some spring training baseball games!!!

While I am away, you all will be interviewing three rabbis and I wish you all

wisdom and vision as you meet them. The future of Adat Reyim promises to be dynamic, I look forward to continuing connections as rabbi emeritus, and this is certainly an exciting time for all of us.

As Rebecca Geller was installed as co-president of the congregation last Friday night, it was a significant moment for me since she was my student at the BBYO International Leadership Kallah in 1994. I would be happy to share stories about her as a teenager for a significant donation to the synagogue;-), but the one story that is most important, is that she was inspired to serve and I know that our future will be bright with her working as our co-president.

I also would be remiss if I didn't mention my enduring friendship with Bruce Kaplan who has served as president for two years and will continue as co-president for one more year. I have been privileged to work together with Bruce who has regularly attended services and Torah study for many years. He truly has been my teacher and friend and we are fortunate that he and Rebecca will guide us through the transition period.

We have built upon the shoulders of giants over these past 281/2 years and when I return for Purim on March 9, I look forward to the last few months as your rabbi.

It has been, is, and will continue to be avodat kodesh, a holy opportunity.

On a very SERIOUS note, we pray for safety in Richmond on Monday, knowing that our members Eileen Filler Corn and Dan Helmer are serving us in the VA House of Delegates. May the protests on Monday be peaceful.

Finally, I hope to see many of you tonight as we share the vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at our Sabbath of Solidarity at 7:30pm.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

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## Rabbi Aft's Friday Message - A beautiful day in the neighborhood

01/10/2020 09:54:40 AM



ADULT EDUCATION

# WHAT MAKES MUSIC JEWISH?

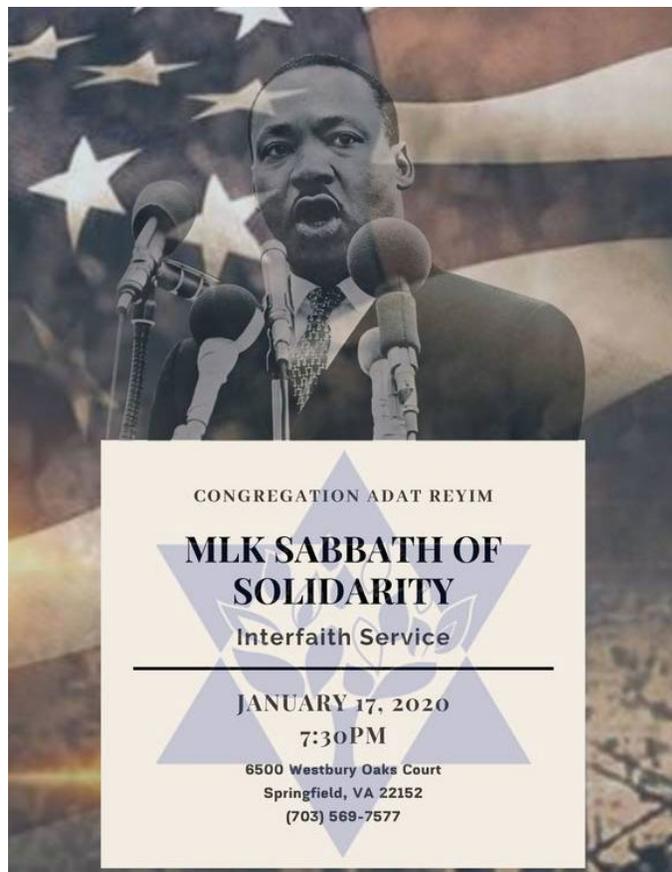
JEWISH MUSIC IN  
AMERICA

Take a look at Jewish  
America through lecture,  
discussion, and, of course,  
music!

Sunday, January 12 2020 ·  
7:00 pm to 8:25 pm  
Congregation Adat Reyim

Please join Hazan Dienstfrey  
from Agudas Achim  
Congregation as she guides us  
along the musical path that Jews  
have created in America.





CONGREGATION ADAT REYIM

**MLK SABBATH OF  
SOLIDARITY**

Interfaith Service

---

JANUARY 17, 2020

7:30PM

6500 Westbury Oaks Court  
Springfield, VA 22152  
(703) 569-7577

Dear Friends,

You don't expect me to be a movie commentator but Sue and I recently saw "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," the movie about Mr. Rogers.

On this Shabbat when we read the conclusion of the book of Genesis, we see a beautiful scene where Jacob has the opportunity to bless his children.

We know that it is customary to bless our children or those with whom we are close on Shabbat and Festivals (although a Hug and blessing are always welcome!!!).

The traditional words in English are:

May the Lord Bless you and guard you

May the Lord Let the Divine shine upon you and be gracious unto you

May the Lord Lift up the Divine Countenance on you and grant you peace.

(Please feel free to search for "Priestly Blessing" for the Hebrew words for this blessing).

As we watched the movie about Mr. Rogers, I believe the following quotes ( (See below) are a beautiful source of blessing for all of us. In my opinion, the movie is

the best Yom Kippur sermon on forgiveness which I have ever seen. I hope you will discuss these quotes with the people you love and will talk about the issues which they raise. These are intense conversations and have the potential to create blessings in our relationships. Please let me know if you would like to discuss these meaningful quotes and how they can affect your life.

I hope you will go see the movie and that the quotes below will inspire you.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

#### A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood Quotes

1. "I think the best thing we can do is to let people know that each one of them is precious." – Mr. Rogers
2. "Do you consider yourself a hero?" – Journalist, Tom Junod
3. "We are trying to get the world positive ways of dealing with our feelings." – Mr. Rogers
4. "You love broken people... like me." – Tom to Fred  
"I don't think you are broken." – Fred Rogers
5. "Sometimes, we have to ask for help. And that's okay." – Fred Rogers
6. "He's just about the nicest person I've ever met." Tom about Fred
7. "Just take a minute and think about all the people who loved us into being." – Mr. Rogers
8. "Thank you. For that perspective." – Fred to Tom
9. "Fame is a 4 letter word, but ultimately what matters is what we do with it." – Mr. Rogers
10. "Look for the helpers. You'll always find people who are helping." – Fred Rogers
11. "Do you know what forgiveness means? It's a decision we make to release a person from the feelings of anger we have against them." – Fred Rogers
12. "Sometimes it's hardest to forgive the ones we love." -Mr. Rogers
13. "There's always something you can do with the mad you feel." – Mr. Rogers
14. "To die is human, and anything human is mentionable. Anything mentionable is manageable." – Fred Rogers
15. "Children need to know that even when adults make plans, sometimes they don't turn out as they hoped." – Fred Rogers

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## Rabbi Aft's Friday Message

01/03/2020 12:11:09 PM

Congregation Adat Reyim



Shiva Minyan remembering Michael Bloom  
Sunday, January 5, 2020  
7:30 pm at Congregation Adat Reyim

May his memory be for a blessing.



## Be a Better Parent in 2020

### Here's the story

Join us for a discussion and strategy session on compassion parenting from a Jewish angle.

### When/Where

Rabbi Aft's home Jan 4<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 to 2:30. Babysitting will be provided.

### And there is more...

We have Barnes and Noble gift cards for participants from our compassion grant.

Ideas/Thoughts/Questions:  
Please e-mail Deb [debshauer@gmail.com](mailto:debshauer@gmail.com) or  
Sariel [sariel.ende.alnonzo@gmail.com](mailto:sariel.ende.alnonzo@gmail.com)



# A NIGHT TO CELEBRATE HISTORY



Speaker-Designee  
Eileen Filler-Corn  
(The first woman Speaker of  
the House in Virginia's  
history)

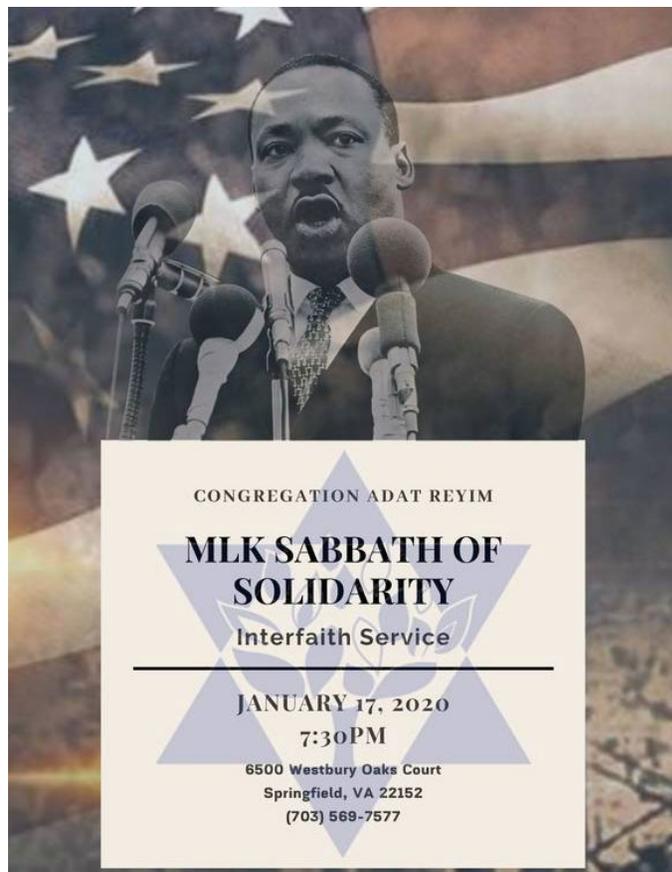
&

Delegate-Elect  
Dan Helmer



**JAN. 04 | 7 PM TO 9 PM**  
**CONGREGATION ADAT REYIM**  
**6500 WESTBURY OAKS CT.**

Please join us for an evening of celebration  
followed by a Havdalah reception.



Dear Friends,

I hope that we all enjoyed some quality family time or meaningful time with good friends during the Holiday break.

I also hope that we all enjoy a peaceful, healthy new year of 2020, filled with meaningful visions of a world where our hopes and dreams can be a bit more fulfilled. As we enter an election year, many of us have strong beliefs in the direction our country and commonwealth should go and I hope we will work hard on the causes which are important to us. I also hope that we will see a lessening of the anti semitism that we are seeing, particularly after the Chanukah stabbings in NY. We pray for a recovery of body, mind, and spirit for those who were impacted by this horrible event.

On a happier note, we look forward to honoring Eileen Filler Corn as the first female Jewish Speaker of the House in Virginia, as we wish her well tomorrow night at our special reception where we also will honor Delegate Elect Dan Helmer.

A moment of personal reflection:

Sue and I were out on New Year's eve and as we were listening to reggae music, (not sure why it occurred at that moment...), it suddenly became very real.

I realized that for the past 15 years since I signed an agreement to serve Adat

Reyim though June, 2020, the year 2020 seemed like a point way in the future. Then the performers wished everyone a Happy 2020 and it hit me that this is the year for which we have been planning for a long time. The new chapter is just six months from beginning, both for the congregation, Sue, our family, and me.

Frankly, in that moment, I was overwhelmed. I also realized that with my sabbatical from January 21-March 8, there are 18 Shabbatot left for me to lead services and be present at Adat Reyim as your rabbi.

I hope we will make the most of our time together and that we will see each other numerous times. You will hear much from me as the date approaches for new beginnings, and I hope that our remaining time together with me as your rabbi, will be good. You may remember that I wrote in the HH Quarterly Kol that the gematria or numerical value for 29 is "zeh tov" or "this is good."

May good times fill our lives throughout 2020.

Finally, please note the poem/reading that Russell Nadel forwarded to me. It reminds us very poignantly of the power of community to make a difference. May our community of friends continue to support and inspire us all.

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

#### **It Takes A Village**

The saying goes, "It takes a village to raise a child."

I believe that it does.

Our children need all of the strong, caring, compassionate adults we can stack around their lives, but if we stop there we have stopped well short of the mark.

Not only does it take a village to raise a child ...

It takes a village to care for those who grow old in our midst.

It takes a village to welcome and to include the newcomers.

It takes a village to care for the fragile and vulnerable among us.

It takes a village to help couples find their way through the challenges of life.

It takes a village to dance in our moments of joy.

It takes a village to stand shoulder to shoulder with us in times of need holding us up when we can not stand up on our own.

By and large, I think we have forgotten this and we are paying the price.

Our sense of community ...

Our sense of responsibility towards one another ...

Our sense of caring for one another ...

Has been pushed it aside in favor of the myth of rugged individualism.

That I can do it all on my own.

That I am responsible for myself and for no one else.

That my own strength and willpower and hard work is enough.

But none of that is true.

It just is not

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Congregation Adat Reyim



**Friday, December 27th**

6:30pm Spirit of Shabbat Service with Shir Reyim.

Service led by Russell Nadel with participation by Shir Reyim. Russell will tell stories or give a child friendly sermonette.

**We will not have an 8pm service.**

# A NIGHT TO CELEBRATE HISTORY



Speaker-Designee  
Eileen Filler-Corn  
(The first woman Speaker of  
the House in Virginia's  
history)

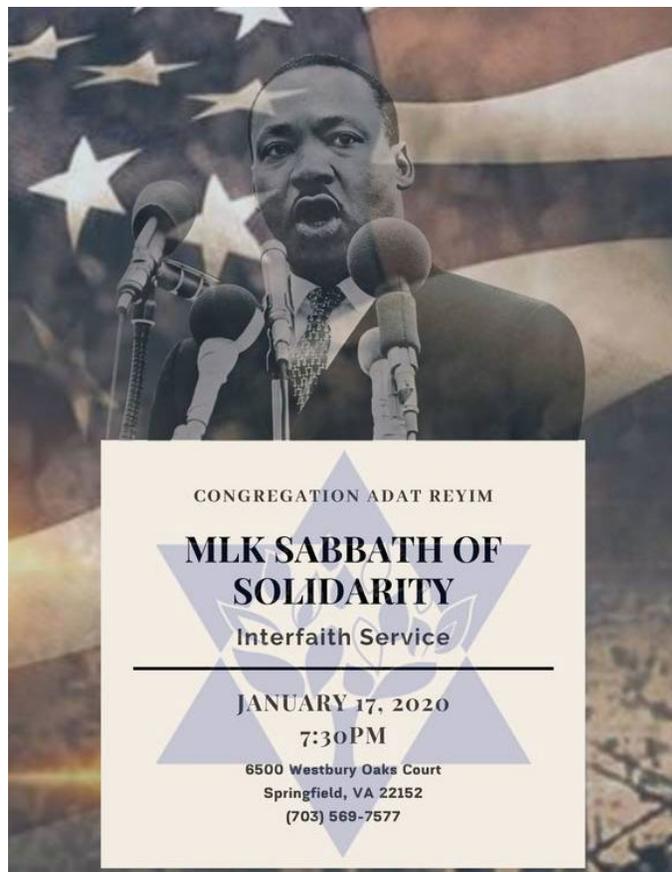
&

Delegate-Elect  
Dan Helmer



**JAN. 04 | 7 PM TO 9 PM**  
**CONGREGATION ADAT REYIM**  
**6500 WESTBURY OAKS CT.**

Please join us for an evening of celebration  
followed by a Havdalah reception.



Dear Friends,

As we prepare for 2020, I hope that everyone is healthy and safe in the new year.

I recently received a Chanukah message from Clal, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership.

"T'was the weeks before Chanukah and all through the house, were fears and dissension, about which all liked to grouse...

With new questions arising, and long-held assumptions under threat, anxiety is rising, on that you can bet"

In response to the challenges we face, the Center raises the following questions which I hope you will discuss with those with whom you are celebrating the Holidays:

Where might the urgency of this moment be leading us to blind spots of zealotry and what can we do to ease some the tension in our own lives?

As we try to understand the "other" where might we find light among some of whatever you see as the dark forces of today?

These are provocative questions which must be addressed in the new year as we wrestle with the polarization in our world today.

On January 3, I will address these questions in a new year's sermon and hope that you will conclude your Winter Break by attending services that night.

I also hope you will join us on Jan. 4 to honor Eileen Filler Corn and Dan Helmer as we celebrate the historic moment of Eileen becoming the Virginia Speaker of the House(see flyer which is part of this article).

Finally, please note that services tonight will be at 6:30pm and we encourage families with young children to attend. There is no late Friday night service and services are at the regular time tomorrow morning, preceded as always by the Torah study at 8:45am.

Shabbat Shalom and Happy 2020.

Rabbi Bruce Aft

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## Rabbi Aft's Chanukah Message

12/23/2019 01:54:40 PM



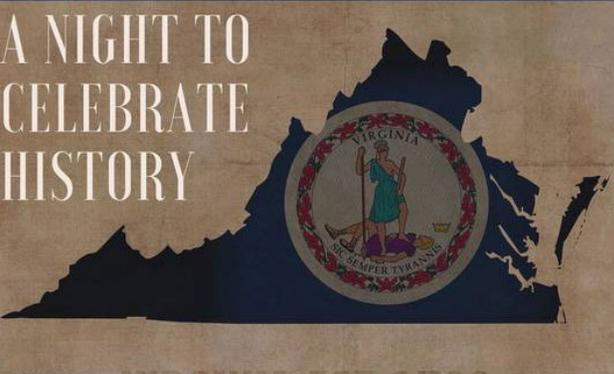
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A NIGHT TO  
CELEBRATE  
HISTORY



Speaker-designee  
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JAN. 04 | 7 PM TO 9 PM  
CONGREGATION ADAT REYIM  
6500 WESTBURY OAKS CT.

Please join us for an evening of celebration  
followed by a havdalah reception.



Dear Friends,

I was perusing the internet and found these inspirational readings from Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. Please read one or more each night of Chanukah and discuss them with those with whom you are celebrating.

May all of us enjoy a joyous Chanukah.

On a personal note, Sue and I wish to thank Shir Reyim for the wonderful musical tribute last night at Latkes and Lights. We were very touched.

Hag Chanukah Sameach,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

#### **8 SHORT THOUGHTS FOR 8 CHANUKAH NIGHTS**

Tags: Chanukah, Holidays, Religion, Tradition, Antisemitism, Judaism, Inspiration and Hope

Rabbi Sacks, community leader and former Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, has become known for his sharing of wisdom for Jews around the world. He has written eight short thoughts, one for each night of Chanukah. Print and read one with your family just before you light your own Chanukah lights this year. Share the graphics on social media and spread the light, or send to your community educators and encourage them to utilize these important messages for their

learners of all ages.  
Chanukah sameach!

## 1. INSPIRED BY FAITH, WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

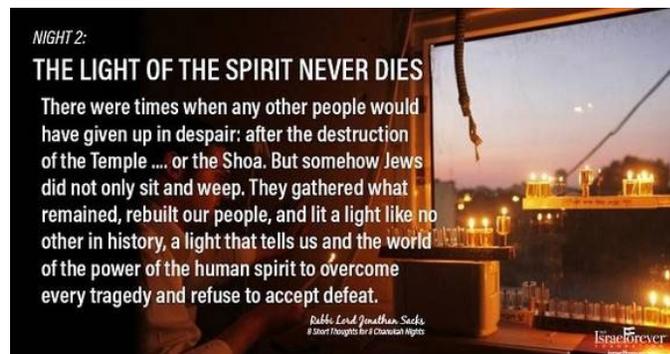


Twenty-two centuries ago, when Israel was under the rule of the empire of Alexander the Great, one particular leader, Antiochus IV, decided to force the pace of Hellenisation, forbidding Jews to practice their religion and setting up in the Temple in Jerusalem a statue of Zeus Olympus. This was too much to bear, and a group of Jews, the Maccabees, fought for their religious freedom, winning a stunning victory against the most powerful army of the ancient world. After three years they reconquered Jerusalem, rededicated the Temple and relit the menorah with the one cruse of undefiled oil they found among the wreckage.

It was one of the most stunning military achievements of the ancient world. It was, as we say in our prayers, a victory of the few over the many, the weak over the strong. It's summed up in wonderful line from the prophet Zechariah: not by might nor by strength but by my spirit says the Lord. The Maccabees had neither might nor strength, neither weapons nor numbers. But they had a double portion of the Jewish spirit that longs for freedom and is prepared to fight for it.

Never believe that a handful of dedicated people can't change the world. Inspired by faith, they can. The Maccabees did then. So can we, today.

## 2. THE LIGHT OF THE SPIRIT NEVER DIES



There's an interesting question the commentators ask about Chanukah. For eight days we light lights, and each night we make the blessing over miracles: she-asah nissim la-avotenu. But what was the miracle of the first night? The light that should have lasted one day lasted eight. But that means there was something miraculous about days 2 to 8; but nothing miraculous about the first day.

Perhaps the miracle was this, that the Maccabees found one cruse of oil with its

seal intact, undefiled. There was no reason to suppose that anything would have survived the systematic desecration the Greeks and their supporters did to the Temple. Yet the Maccabees searched and found that one jar. Why did they search? Because they had faith that from the worst tragedy something would survive. The miracle of the first night was that of faith itself, the faith that something would remain with which to begin again.

So it has always been in Jewish history. There were times when any other people would have given up in despair: after the destruction of the Temple, or the massacres of the crusades, or the Spanish Expulsion, or the pogroms, or the Shoa. But somehow Jews did not only sit and weep. They gathered what remained, rebuilt our people, and lit a light like no other in history, a light that tells us and the world of the power of the human spirit to overcome every tragedy and refuse to accept defeat.

From the days of Moses and the bush that burned and was not consumed to the days of the Maccabees and the single cruse of oil, Judaism has been humanity's ner tamid, the everlasting light that no power on earth can extinguish.

### 3. CHANUKAH IN TIMES OF GOOD AND BAD



Back in 1991 I lit Chanukah candles with Mikhail Gorbachev, who had, until earlier that year, been president of the Soviet Union. For seventy years the practice of Judaism had been effectively banned in communist Russia. It was one of the two great assaults on our people and faith in the twentieth century. The Germans sought to kill Jews; the Russians tried to kill Judaism.

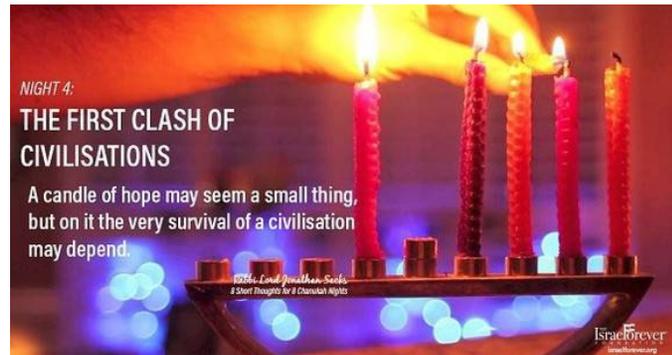
Under Stalin the assault became brutal. Then in 1967, after Israel's victory in the Six Day War, many Soviet Jews sought to leave Russia and go to Israel. Not only was permission refused, but often the Jews concerned lost their jobs and were imprisoned.

Around the world Jews campaigned for the prisoners, Refuseniks they were called, to be released and allowed to leave. Eventually, Mikhail Gorbachev realized that the whole Soviet system was unworkable. Communism had brought, not freedom and equality, but repression, a police state, and a new hierarchy of power. In the end, it collapsed, and Jews regained the freedom to practice Judaism and to go to Israel.

That day in 1991 after we had lit candles together, Mr. Gorbachev asked me, through his interpreter, what we had just done. I told him that twenty-two centuries ago in Israel after the public practice of Judaism had been banned, Jews fought for and won their freedom, and these lights were the symbol of that victory. And I continued: Seventy years ago, Jews suffered the same loss of freedom in Russia, and you have now helped them to regain it. So you have become part of the Chanukah story. And as the interpreter translated those words into Russian, Mikhail Gorbachev blushed.

The Chanukah story still lives, still inspires, telling not just us but the world that though tyranny exists, freedom, with God's help, will always win the final battle.

#### 4. THE FIRST CLASH OF CIVILISATIONS



One of the key phrases of our time is the clash of civilisations. And Chanukah is about one of the first great clashes of civilisation, between the Greeks and Jews of antiquity, Athens and Jerusalem.

The ancient Greeks produced one of the most remarkable civilisations of all time: philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, historians like Herodotus and Thucydides, dramatists like Sophocles and Aeschylus. They produced art and architecture of a beauty that has never been surpassed. Yet in the second century before the common era they were defeated by the group of Jewish fighters known as the Maccabees, and from then on Greece as a world power went into rapid decline, while the tiny Jewish people survived every exile and persecution and are still alive and well today.

What was the difference? The Greeks, who did not believe in a single, loving God, gave the world the concept of tragedy. We strive, we struggle, at times we achieve greatness, but life has no ultimate purpose. The universe neither knows nor cares that we are here.

Ancient Israel gave the world the idea of hope. We are here because God created us in love, and through love we discover the meaning and purpose of life.

Tragic cultures eventually disintegrate and die. Lacking any sense of ultimate meaning, they lose the moral beliefs and habits on which continuity depends. They sacrifice happiness for pleasure. They sell the future for the present. They lose the passion and energy that brought them greatness in the first place. That's what happened to Ancient Greece.

Judaism and its culture of hope survived, and the Chanukah lights are the symbol of that survival, of Judaism's refusal to jettison its values for the glamour and prestige of a secular culture, then or now.

A candle of hope may seem a small thing, but on it the very survival of a civilisation may depend.

#### 5. THE LIGHT OF WAR AND THE LIGHT OF PEACE

NIGHT 5:

## THE LIGHT OF WAR AND THE LIGHT OF PEACE

Why did Judaism, alone among the civilizations of the ancient world, survive? Because it valued the home more than the battlefield, marriage more than military grandeur, and children more than generals. Peace in the home mattered to our ancestors more than the greatest military victory.

*Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks  
 8 Short Thoughts for 8 Chanukah Nights*

Israel Forever  
www.israel4ever.org

There is a law about Chanukah I find moving and profound. Maimonides writes that 'the command of Chanukah lights is very precious. One who lacks the money to buy lights should sell something, or if necessary, borrow, so as to be able to fulfill the mitzvah.'

The question then arises, What if, on Friday afternoon, you find yourself with only one candle? What do you light it as — a Shabbat candle or a Chanukah one? It can't be both. Logic suggests that you should light it as a Chanukah candle. After all, there is no law that you have to sell or borrow to light lights for Shabbat. Yet the law is that, if faced with such a choice, you light it as a Shabbat light. Why?

Listen to Maimonides: 'The Shabbat light takes priority because it symbolises shalom bayit, domestic peace. And great is peace because the entire Torah was given in order to make peace in the world.'

Consider: Chanukah commemorates one of the greatest military victories in Jewish history. Yet Jewish law rules that if we can only light one candle — the Shabbat light takes precedence, because in Judaism the greatest military victory takes second place to peace in the home.

Why did Judaism, alone among the civilizations of the ancient world, survive? Because it valued the home more than the battlefield, marriage more than military grandeur, and children more than generals. Peace in the home mattered to our ancestors more than the greatest military victory.

So as we celebrate Chanukah, spare a thought for the real victory, which was not military but spiritual. Jews were the people who valued marriage, the home, and peace between husband and wife, above the highest glory on the battlefield. In Judaism, the light of peace takes precedence over the light of war.

## 6. THE THIRD MIRACLE



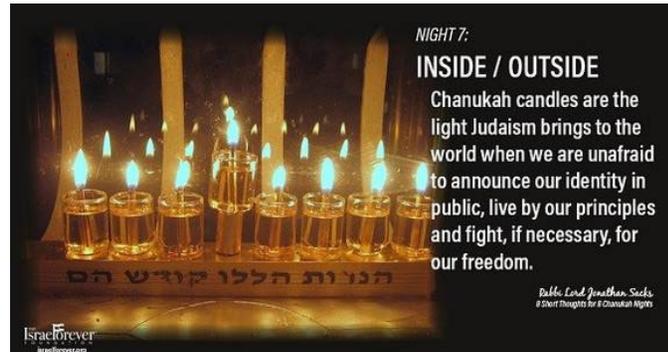
We all know the miracles of Chanukah, the military victory of the Maccabees against the Greeks, and the miracle of the oil that should have lasted one day but stayed burning for eight. But there was a third miracle not many people know about. It took place several centuries later. After the destruction of the second

Temple, many rabbis were convinced that Chanukah should be abolished. After all, it celebrated the rededication of the Temple. And the Temple was no more. It had been destroyed by the Romans under Titus. Without a Temple, what was there left to celebrate?

The Talmud tells us that in at least one town, Lod, Chanukah was abolished. Yet eventually the other view prevailed, which is why we celebrate Chanukah to this day.

Why? Because though the Temple was destroyed, Jewish hope was not destroyed. We may have lost the building but we still had the story, and the memory, and the light. And what had happened once in the days of the Maccabees could happen again. And it was those words, *od lo avdah tikvatenu*, "our hope is not destroyed," became part of the song, *Hatikvah*, that inspired Jews to return to Israel and rebuild their ancient state. So as you light the Chanukah candles remember this. The Jewish people kept hope alive, and hope kept the Jewish people alive. We are the voice of hope in the conversation of humankind.

## 7. INSIDE / OUTSIDE



There is more than one command in Judaism to light lights. There are three. There are the Shabbat candles. There is the havdalah candle. And there are the Chanukah candles. The difference between them is that Shabbat candles represent *shalom bayit*, peace in the home. They are lit indoors. They are, if you like, Judaism's inner light, the light of the sanctity of marriage and the holiness of home.

The Chanukah candles used to be lit outside — outside the front door. It was only fear of persecution that took the Chanukah candles back inside, and in recent times the Lubavitcher Rebbe introduced the custom of lighting giant menorahs in public places to bring back the original spirit of the day.

Chanukah candles are the light Judaism brings to the world when we are unafraid to announce our identity in public, live by our principles and fight, if necessary, for our freedom.

As for the havdalah candle, which is always made up of several wicks woven together, it represents the fusion of the two, the inner light of Shabbat, joined to the outer light we make during the six days of the week when we go out into the world and live our faith in public.

When we live as Jews in private, filling our homes with the light of the Shekhina, when we live as Jews in public, bringing the light of hope to others, and when we live both together, then we bring light to the world.

There always were two ways to live in a world that is often dark and full of tears. We can curse the darkness or we can light a light, and as the Chassidim say, a little light drives out much darkness. May we all help light up the world.

## 8. TO LIGHT ANOTHER LIGHT



There's a fascinating argument in the Talmud. Can you take one Chanukah light to light another? Usually, of course, we take an extra light, the shamash, and use it to light all the candles. But suppose we don't have one. Can we light the first candle and then use it to light the others?

Two great sages of the third century, Rav and Shmuel, disagreed. Rav said No. Shmuel said Yes. Normally we have a rule that when Rav and Shmuel disagree, the law follows Rav. There are only three exceptions and this is one.

Why did Rav say you may not take one Chanukah candle to light the others? Because, says the Talmud, ka mach-chish mitzvah. You diminish the first candle. Inevitably you spill some of the wax or the oil. And Rav says: don't do anything that would diminish the light of the first.

But Shmuel disagrees, and the law follows Shmuel. Why?

The best way of answering that is to think of two Jews: both religious, both committed, both living Jewish lives. One says: I must not get involved with Jews who are less religious than me, because if I do, my own standards will fall. I'll keep less. My light will be diminished. That's the view of Rav.

The other says No. When I use the flame of my faith to light a candle in someone else's life, my Jewishness is not diminished. It grows, because there is now more Jewish light in the world. When it comes to spiritual goods as opposed to material goods, the more I share, the more I have. If I share my knowledge, or faith, or love with others, I won't have less; I may even have more. That's the view of Shmuel, and that is how the law was eventually decided.

So share your Judaism with others. Take the flame of your faith and help set other souls on fire.

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## Rabbi Aft's Weekly Article

12/20/2019 09:58:39 AM





# MUSIC SHABBAT

DECEMBER 20, 2019 8 - 10PM

**FEATURING**

**A CONGREGATIONAL SIGN-ALONG! THIS IS RABBI AFT'S  
FINAL CHANUKAH MUSIC SHABBAT, SO WE'LL BE BRINGING  
BACK ONE OF HIS FAVORITE PIECES OF MUSIC.**



*Congregation Adat Reyim*

## LATKES & LIGHTS

DECEMBER 22 | 6PM-9PM

Bring your menorah and join us for the first night of Chanukah. Enjoy dinner, crafts, a special song tribute to Rabbi & Sue Aft and much more!

RSVP:<https://www.adatreyim.org/event/latkes--lights.html>

Dear Friends,

I have told the story numerous times over the years and we read about it every year at this time of the Torah reading cycle. In the weekly portion we read the section found below, (courtesy of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks).

How many of us have opportunities to be an "angel" for someone? Will buying a gift card for one night for others brighten someone's life and will we be the angels that do that? Will we be the angels who save someone's life as we all have seen the movie, "It's A Wonderful Life?"

What role can we play in the lives of others, which will brighten their lives?

Sue and I recently saw Newsies and one of the songs could have been written about this week's portion. (See the lyrics below)

I hope that each one of us can be there for at least one person as we remember that if one saves one life, one saves an entire world. I hope that each of us will inspire someone by letting him or her know we believe in him or her.

As you light your Chanukah Menorah (Chaukiah) on Sunday night and throughout the week, please remember the power of one to light up the darkness.

I hope to see you tonight as the choir leads us in Chanukah music. I also hope you will join us for our very special Shabbat service tomorrow and a Lunch and

Learn about Chanukah, and then at Latkes and Lights on Sunday night.

I also hope you will join us for minyan on Dec. 25 as we will kindle the Chanukah lights and enjoy some singing at a family friendly minyan, beginning at 7:30pm that will last no longer than 35 minutes including Chanukah songs!

Shabbat Shalom and Chappy Chanukah,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

Joseph is envied and hated by his brothers. So deep has the animosity gone that they cannot talk peaceably with one another. Now the brothers have left home to tend their sheep, and Jacob tells Joseph to go and see how they are doing. This encounter will set in motion the central drama from which all else will follow: the moment when the brothers sell Joseph into Egypt as a slave.

But it nearly didn't happen. Joseph arrived at Shechem where he expected his brothers to be, but they were not there. He might well have wandered around for a while and then, failing to find them, gone home. None of the events that take up the rest of the Torah would have happened: no Joseph the slave, no Joseph the viceroy, no storage of food during the years of plenty, no descent of Joseph's family to Egypt, no exile, no slavery, no exodus. The entire story – already revealed in broad outlines to Abraham in a night vision – seemed about to be derailed. Then we read the following:

A man found [Joseph] wandering around in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?" He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?" "They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. (Gen. 37:15-17)

I know of no comparable passage in the Torah: three verses dedicated to an apparently trivial, eminently forgettable detail of someone having to ask directions from a stranger. Who was this unnamed man? And what conceivable message does the episode hold for future generations, for us? Rashi says he was the angel Gabriel. Ibn Ezra says he was a passer-by. Ramban however says that "the Holy One, blessed be He, sent him a guide without his knowledge."

I am not sure whether Ramban meant without Joseph's knowledge or without the guide's knowledge. I prefer to think both. The anonymous man – so the Torah is intimating – represented an intrusion of providence to make sure that Joseph went to where he was supposed to be, so that the rest of the drama could unfold. He may not have known he had such a role. Joseph surely did not know. To put it as simply as I can: he was an angel who didn't know he was an angel. He had a vital role in the story. Without him, it would not have happened. But he had no way of knowing, at the time, the significance of his intervention.

The message could not be more significant. When heaven intends something to happen, and it seems to be impossible, sometimes it sends an angel down to earth – an angel who didn't know he or she was an angel – to move the story from here to there.

"Something To Believe In"

(performed by Jeremy Jordan & Kara Lindsay)

(from "Newsies (Original Broadway Cast Recording)" soundtrack)

[Katherine:]

Till the moment I found you

I thought I knew what love was  
Now I'm learning what is true  
That love will do what it does  
The world finds ways to sting you  
And then one day decides to bring you

Something to believe in  
For even a night  
One night may be forever  
But that's all right  
That's all right  
And if you're gone tomorrow  
What was ours still will be  
I have something to believe in  
Now that I know you believed in me

[Jack:]  
We was never meant to meet  
And then we meet  
Who knows why  
One more stranger on the street  
Just someone sweet passing by  
An angel come to save me  
Who didn't even know she gave me

Something to believe in  
For even a day  
One day may be forever  
But that's okay  
That's okay  
And if I'm gone tomorrow  
What was ours still will be  
I have something to believe in  
Now that I know you believed in me

[Both:]  
Do you know what I believe in  
Look into my eyes and see

[Jack:]  
If things were different

[Katherine:]  
If you weren't going to Santa Fe

[Jack:]  
And if you weren't an heiress  
And if your father wasn't after my head

[Katherine:]  
You're not really scared of my father

[Jack:]  
No, but I'm pretty scared of you

[Katherine:]  
Don't be

[Jack:]

And if I'm gone tomorrow

[Katherine:]

What was ours still will be

[Both:]

I have something to believe in

Now that I know you believed in me

[Jack:]

I have something to believe in

[Both:]

Now that I know you believed in me

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## Rabbi Aft's Weekly Article

12/13/2019 11:50:42 AM

Congregation Adat Reyim



Dear Friends,

We recite the following prayer during Chanukah which reminds us of one of the most important miracles of the Festival of Chanukah.

And [we thank You] for the miracles, for the redemption, for the mighty deeds, for the saving acts, and for the wonders which You have wrought for our ancestors in those days, at this time—

In the days of Matityahu, the son of Yochanan the High Priest, the Hasmonean and his sons, when the wicked Hellenic government rose up against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah and violate the decrees of Your will. But You, in Your abounding mercies, stood by them in the time of their distress. You waged their battles, defended their rights, and avenged the wrong done to them. You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the wanton sinners into the hands of those who occupy themselves with Your Torah. You made a great and holy name for Yourself in Your world, and effected a great deliverance and redemption for Your people Israel to this very day. Then Your children entered the shrine of Your House, cleansed Your Temple, purified Your Sanctuary, kindled lights in Your holy courtyards, and instituted these eight days of Chanukah to give thanks and praise to Your great Name.

As we watched event unfold in Jersey City this week, we were once again reminded that in every age there are people who will try to hurt Jewish people. I personally struggle with whether these are hate crimes or whether they are blatant acts of anti-Semitism. Unfortunately in the past year or so, we have seen violence in too many places. Shootings in Pittsburgh, San Diego, and Germany and the recent vandalism at the 6th and I synagogue and the bomb threat called into the Pozez JCCNV serve as a reminder that hate toward Jewish people has not disappeared.

In the Chanukah song, "Mi Yemalel" (Who can retell) (See words below), we are reminded that in every age a hero or sage came to our aid.

I hope that each of us will be especially mindful of acts of prejudice and discrimination. One of the most important things we learn from Judah Maccabee is that sometimes we need to be devoted to a cause and be fanatic in our attempt to combat evil when we see it. As the prayer above reminds us, we must work to deliver the hands of the many into the few...although I would hope that the acts of hatred are really just "the few."

Please note that there are community agencies that combat hatred and work toward bringing people together. Please check out the websites of the ADL (Anti Defamation League) and the JCRC (Jewish Community Relations Council) to see how you might get involved.

Personally, when I transition from being the rabbi of Adat Reyim, I will be working with the George Mason University School for Conflict Resolution as a visiting scholar in order to bring various groups together to dialogue with each other. I hope that members of our congregation will participate in these community dialogues, which also will be done for students on the campus of GMU.

Finally, and on a totally different NOTE, (is anyone reading this and will you catch the pun???), please join us for two important events this weekend. First, please join us on Sunday night for the Zemer Chai concert. I heard them rehearsing on Wednesday night and we are in for a treat!

Secondly, please join us in religious school on Sunday for the Latke Hamantaschen Debate. I am taking an excerpt of the article that was sent to the religious school families because I am sure you will be convinced that the hamantaschen is the food for the Jewish people:-) (See below)

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

Who can retell the things that befell us,

Who can count them?

In every age, a hero or sage

Came to our aid.

Hark!

In days of yore in Israel's ancient land

Brave Maccabeus led the faithful band

But now all Israel must as one arise

Redeem itself through deed and sacrifice.

Hebrew:

Mi yimalel gevurot Yisrael,

Otan mi yimne?

Hen be'chol dor yakum ha'gibor

Goel ha'am.

Shma!

Ba'yamim ha'hem ba'zman ha'ze

Maccabi moshia u'fode

U'v'yameinu kol am Yisrael  
Yitached yakum ve'yigael!

from my religious school article...

In an article by Giora Shimoni, she writes,

"In Israel, hamantashen are called oznei haman, which means Haman's ears. But originally, oznei haman referred to a different type of pastry altogether: fried dough drenched in honey or sugar syrup that was popular throughout the Sephardic world."

One of the many reasons which we will discuss about why from my perspective, the hamantaschen is a far superior food, is how important it is to listen. When we know someone is listening to us, we know how sweet it is...

So...although I hope you will attend the debate, I think I have already proved my point. Honey, syrup, and sweetness, certainly are better for us than oily, greasy fattening pancakes:-)

And hope you will "listen:-)" to my position and be sweet to me by supporting the only decision that can be made about this important topic!!!

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## Rabbi Aft's Weekly Article

12/06/2019 10:54:12 AM

Congregation Adat Reyim



Dear Friends,

As we gathered with two of our children and their partners over Thanksgiving, the subject of my upcoming retirement from Adat Reyim at the end of June was discussed. As I told them, Sue and I are looking forward to the new challenges which await us as I spend time working with Jewish students at GMU, build dialogue groups through the School of Conflict Resolution at GMU, and we volunteer at the Washington Nationals Baseball Academy. Sue will continue to do her tutoring through Fairfax County and most importantly, we will travel back and forth to the Midwest a lot to see our kids and grandkids.

We also spoke about some of the highlights of serving at Adat Reyim. One of the recent highlights was when it was announced recently that one of the most important items in the job description which has been mentioned by rabbinical candidates, is the following:

"lvidu HaShem b'simcha" which translates as "serve G-d with joy." Candidates have remarked that coming to a place, which believes that serving G-d with joy is an important part of the congregational culture is exciting to them.

I hope that over the years we have built a relationship filled with joy and gladness. When I interviewed at Congregation Adat Reyim in 1990-91, I told the committee that I believe that being a rabbi is avodat kodesh, a holy profession. A key aspect of holiness is to realize the power of joyful moments to inspire good mental and emotional health. When we worship and celebrate Shabbat and Festivals together, (hopefully) we have created a sense of joy and happiness.

As we approach Chanukah, we certainly are entering a joyful time of year. Please join us for any and all of the special events, which we will be celebrating.

Dec.15, there will be a special religious school program to which all of you are invited where a number of us will be debating whether the latke or hamantaschen should be the primary food of the Jewish people. This debate originated many years ago at the University of Chicago where professors would debate the merits of each food. This should be a lot of fun so please join us.

Dec.15, we are also hosting a concert of Zemer Chai, a nationally known choral group in the DC area that will be performing at Adat Reyim. A number of our members will be participating, including Eileen Kugler, Mitch Bassman, and Russell and Tara Nadel. Please order your tickets soon since there are limited seats left!!!

Dec.20, the choir will be participating in the Shabbat service and will be singing a number of festive Chanukah songs and melodies. This service is always a highlight of the Chanukah season.

On Dec. 22, we will be celebrating Latkes and Lights, which brings all generations of our congregation together to celebrate stories, songs, and good food.

Finally, please participate in the "One Night for Others" social action project that collects gift cards and creates joy in the lives of those who are less fortunate.

So...let us all serve G-d with joy throughout this festive season and beyond and create a culture of happiness.

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

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## Rabbi Aft's Weekly Article

11/26/2019 09:58:42 AM

Congregation Adat Reyim



Dear Friends,

We are sending the Friday article earlier this week since we hope you will join us tonight for the 36th Annual Thanksgiving service. This service is family friendly for children who are 10 and over and their families. Younger children will enjoy the singing, but the keynote will be about Charlottesville and the events, which occurred there in the summer of 2017. We leave it to your discretion.

We also hope you will join Larry Kugler and me as we lead an early Friday night service on Friday, Nov. 29 at 4:30pm. There will be no late Friday night service so that many of us can have a leisurely Shabbat dinner with our families.

I hope that everyone has a Happy Thanksgiving and enjoys the following quotes. (See below) One of my brothers sent me the following message after I wished him Happy Thanksgiving. He responded, "Thanks, Happy Giving!" I hope that each of us will find some way in which we can give to others and show our appreciation for our blessings by helping others.

Happy Thanksgiving and a very early Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

"A day wasted on others is not wasted on one's self."— Charles Dickens

"I slept and I dreamed that life is all joy. I woke and I saw that life is all service. I served and I saw that service is joy."— Kahlil Gibran

"When you are able to shift your inner awareness to how you can serve others, and when you make this the central focus of your life, you will then be in a position to know true miracles in your progress toward prosperity."— Wayne Dyer

**Please note the following story from Reader's Digest which I have shared in a variety of settings recently!**

When Mrs. Klein told her first graders to draw a picture of something for which they were thankful, she thought how little these children, who lived in a deteriorating neighborhood, actually had to be thankful for. She knew that most of the class would draw pictures of turkeys or of bountifully laden Thanksgiving tables. That was what they believed was expected of them.

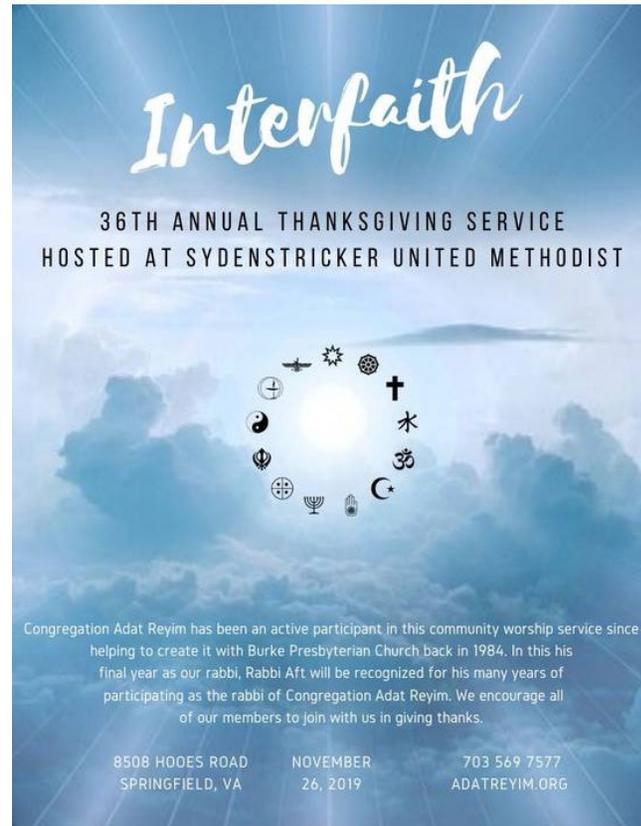
What took Mrs. Klein aback was Douglas's picture. Douglas was so forlorn and likely to be found close in her shadow as they went outside for recess. Douglas's drawing was simply this:

A hand, obviously, but whose hand? The class was captivated by his image. "I think it must be the hand of God that brings us food," said one student.

"A farmer," said another, "because they grow the turkeys."

"It looks more like a policeman, and they protect us." "I think," said Lavinia, who was always so serious, "that it is supposed to be all the hands that help us, but Douglas could only draw one of them."

Mrs. Klein had almost forgotten Douglas in her pleasure at finding the class so responsive. When she had the others at work on another project, she bent over his desk and asked whose hand it was. Douglas mumbled, "It's yours, Teacher." Then Mrs. Klein recalled that she had taken Douglas by the hand from time to time; she often did that with the children. But that it should have meant so much to Douglas ... Perhaps, she reflected, this was her Thanksgiving, and everybody's Thanksgiving—not the material things given unto us, but the small ways that we give something to others.



The poster features a blue sky background with white clouds and a bright sun. At the top, the word "Interfaith" is written in a white, cursive font. Below it, the text "36TH ANNUAL THANKSGIVING SERVICE" and "HOSTED AT SYDENSTRICKER UNITED METHODIST" is displayed in a white, sans-serif font. In the center, a circular arrangement of various religious symbols surrounds a bright sun. The symbols include a cross, a crescent moon, a yin-yang, a menorah, a Khanda, a Yin-Yang, a Star of David, a Om symbol, a Shinto torii, a Wheel of Dharma, a Yin-Yang, a Khanda, a Yin-Yang, a Shinto torii, a Wheel of Dharma, a Yin-Yang, a Khanda, a Yin-Yang, a Shinto torii, and a Wheel of Dharma. At the bottom, there is a paragraph of text and contact information.

Congregation Adat Reyim has been an active participant in this community worship service since helping to create it with Burke Presbyterian Church back in 1984. In this his final year as our rabbi, Rabbi Aft will be recognized for his many years of participating as the rabbi of Congregation Adat Reyim. We encourage all of our members to join with us in giving thanks.

8508 HOES ROAD      NOVEMBER      703 569 7577  
SPRINGFIELD, VA      26, 2019      ADATREYIM.ORG



## FRIDAY NIGHT W/ FAMILY & FRIENDS

Led by Rabbi Aft &  
Larry Kugler

November 29 | 4:30 PM  
Congregation Adat Reyim

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## Rabbi Aft's Weekly Article

11/22/2019 10:18:11 AM



Dear Friends,

On occasion I encounter a teaching that challenges my belief system and my faith. It raised questions for me for which I may not have clear answers. It creates a conflict and causes me to have to wrestle with something for which I do not know how I would react.

This week's Torah reading presents one of those teachings. The weekly portion is called "Chaye Sarah" which translates as the life of Sarah. And yet, we know that at the beginning of the portion Sarah dies.

So why is the portion called "Chaye Sarah?"

Let's look at what Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has to say in a weekly posting from a number of years ago...please read the following excerpt...

In one of the most extraordinary sequences of words in the Torah, his grief is described in a mere five Hebrew words: in English, "Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her." Then immediately we read, "And Abraham rose from his grief." From then on, he engaged in a flurry of activity with two aims in mind: first to buy a plot of land in which to bury Sarah, second to find a wife for his son. Note that these correspond precisely to the two Divine blessings: of land and descendants. Abraham did not wait for God to act. He understood one of the profoundest truths of Judaism: that God is waiting for us to act. How did Abraham overcome the trauma and the grief? How do you survive almost losing your child and actually losing your life-partner and still have the energy to keep going? What gave Abraham his resilience, his ability to survive, his spirit intact?

I learned the answer from the people who became my mentors in moral courage, namely the Holocaust survivors I had the privilege to know. How, I wondered, did they keep going, knowing what they knew, seeing what they saw? We know that the British and American soldiers who liberated the camps never forgot what they witnessed. According to Niall Ferguson's new biography of Henry Kissinger, who entered the camps as an American soldier, the sight that met his eyes transformed his life. If this was true of those who merely saw Bergen-Belsen and the other camps, how almost infinitely more so, those who lived there and saw so many die there. Yet the survivors I knew had the most tenacious hold on life. I wanted to understand how they kept going.

Eventually I discovered. Most of them did not talk about the past, even to their marriage partners, even to their children. Instead they set about creating a new life in a new land. They learned its language and customs. They found work. They built careers. They married and had children. Having lost their own families, the survivors became an extended family to one another. They looked forward, not back. First they built a future. Only then – sometimes forty or fifty years later – did they speak about the past. That was when they told their story, first to their families, then to the world. First you have to build a future. Only then can you mourn the past.

So, would we be able to look to the future in the midst of enduring significant pain? I wish I could say that I knew I would be able to do this. When one lives a blessed life, sometimes it is hard to contemplate what our response might be. Over the years, I have been inspired by so many of you who have been able to celebrate life, despite having endured horrible events. One of the other teachings that this portion provides us is the power of kindness. Rebecca is chosen as Isaac's wife because she cares for animals and exudes kindness.

Perhaps the "take away" teaching moment is that each of us should look for opportunities to be kind. As we approach Thanksgiving, and the Holiday season, there are many opportunities to do kind things. I hope you will search for opportunities to pay off lay away bills (Maybe Wal-Mart or Target? If you find a place that will accept payments for layaway bills, please let me know). Our social action committee annually sponsors "one night for others" when we collect gift cards for those who are less fortunate.

Finally, the words to the song which is based upon the lesson of Pirke Avot (Ethics of the Fathers, or Teachings of the Sages), reminds us of the pillars of our faith that might help us deal with those moments in our past that can be overwhelming and guide us to build for the future:

Al Shlosha Devarim © Steven Dropkin, used by permission

Listen on the web: [www.trt.org/worship](http://www.trt.org/worship)

Al shlo-sha de-va-rim, Al shlo-sha de-va-rim ha-o-lam o-med. Al shlo-sha de-va-rim, Ha-o-lam ha-o-lam o-med. (repeat) Al ha-Torah, ve-al ha-a-vo-dah, Ve-al ge-mi-lut ha-sa-dim. Al ha-Torah, ve-al ha-a-vo-dah, Ve-al ge-mi-lut ha-sa-dim. Al shlo-sha de-va-rim, Al shlo-sha de-va-rim ha-o-lam o-med. Al shlo-sha de-va-rim, Ha-o-lam ha-o-lam o-med. Al shlo-sha de-va-rim, Al shlo-sha de-va-rim ha-o-lam o-med. Al shlo-sha de-va-rim, Al shlo-sha de-va-rim ha-o-lam o-med, Al shlo-sha, al shlo-sha de-va-rim. (repeat)

"The world stands on three things: On study, On prayer, And on deeds of loving-kindness." (Mishna, Pirke Avot)

May we find comfort and inspiration in our study, our worship and in doing deeds of loving-kindness.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

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## Rabbi Aft's Weekly Article

11/15/2019 09:49:43 AM





**Nov 17, 2019 | Sign In - 1:15pm**

**Walk - 2:00pm**

**Fairfax Presbyterian Church**

Walk Distance: 2.8 miles (approx. 5K). A shorter Golden Mile route is also an option.

Contact: Janet Smithburkeva.crop@cox.net 703.455.9025

Dear Friends,

This week the Torah reading describes the binding of Isaac, which we read during Rosh HaShanah.

The birth of Isaac and the binding of Isaac are important stories, which raise more issues than one article or sermon can address.

I want to share again something which I shared on Rosh HaShanah this year based upon a commentary about Sarah laughing when she found out that she would give birth at an advanced age. First of all, we have spoken often about how difficult this story is for those who have struggled with giving birth or who are unable to do so. I recognize that this annual reminder of Sarah's struggle and then laughter evokes many emotions.

In the commentary I discussed this year, we talked about Sarah's laughter as being a bitter, cynical laughter that after all these years of trying, why does she now give birth at such an advanced age when she can no longer enjoy motherhood in the way she would have liked. According to the commentary, she also laughed at the insensitivity of her husband who didn't get that this was traumatic for her.

In the #metoo movement, I believe that there is probably significant cynical

laughter on the part of women who have been victimized in all sorts of situations. Finally, folks are beginning to become more sensitive and responsive to women's stories of victimization.

I find it interesting that after reading about the birth of Isaac, we continue reading the story about the binding of Isaac. Abraham takes Isaac up the mountain in order to bind him to the faith in which he believes. There is no recorded conversation in the Bible between Abraham and Sarah about this momentous event in the life of their son. Can we imagine what it would be like to plan a Bar/Bat Mitzvah without discussing this with our partner?

I believe that the power of these stories is in inspiring us to communicate our feelings to each other and hopefully having open interaction with the people we love. Too often I encounter folks who just don't take the time to share their feelings and then are filled with frustration and resentment and even withdraw from relationships.

I hope that Sarah's cynical laughter can be replaced by laughter from joy as we transmit our heritage from one generation to another. I also hope we can share the challenging moments we face with empathy and sensitivity, and be there for the people with whom we are close.

Finally, as I write this, there is violence again in Israel and we continue to pray for peace throughout Israel and the Middle East.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

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## Rabbi Aft's Weekly Article

11/13/2019 03:08:06 PM





COMMUNITY-WIDE  
WORKSHOP

## PRACTICING COMPASSION

HOW THE HEART CAN  
LEARN WHAT THE  
MIND UNDERSTANDS

**November 10**

**7pm**

Guest Speaker  
Dr. Alan Morinis

Dear Friends,

As we commemorate the 81st anniversary of Krystallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, I want to begin with an infomercial.

I hope that you will join us this evening for our Jewish Muslim Worship Service. On a weekend when we remember what happened when people did not get along, I think that coming together as faith communities to share in worship will be meaningful. We once again saw the ugly face of hate in Pueblo, Colorado this week and fortunately, the plot to destroy the synagogue was foiled.

I want to add another infomercial. Last night Sue and I attended "Letters to Sala" a play by Arlene Hutton. The performance was at Woodson High School. I don't know how many of you are familiar with the story but STRONGLY encourage you to attend the final performance tomorrow night at 7:30pm. You will be touched by the story and the teens' performance will remind you that the Holocaust happened to real people with real human stories. Please support this community effort if there is any way you can go. I believe that this is appropriate for students 10 years old and older especially if they are there with parental support. I apologize for the short notice but had no idea of the impact that this play would have on Sue and me.

On a Shabbat when we read about the beginning of Abraham's journey to becoming the first Jew, we know he had to go forth into a new world with the courage to make his life a blessing for generations to come. Each of us has opportunities to go forth from our comfort zones and make a difference in some way in our world. I hope that the story of Abraham will remind us that each of us has the potential to do great things and that sometimes when we take risks to stand up for what we believe in, we can create blessings for others.

On Saturday morning, we will have a unique celebration at Adat Reyim as for only

the second time I can remember (I am sure Gary Lefkowitz will correct me:-)), we have a B'not Mitzvah with a mother and daughter celebrating together. What a wonderful example of teaching one's children diligently and may Harriet Vorona and her daughter, Carolin, continue to go from strength to strength on their journeys to new places in their spiritual identities.

And finally...although we all share our own personal political beliefs, I want to congratulate two members of our congregation who are demonstrating their willingness to journey to new places to make a difference in our world based upon their desire to make changes in the political arena. Mazel tov to Eileen Filler Corn and Dan Helmer for their devotion to their ideals, May G-d bless them and guard them and provide guidance to them to help bring people together in our commonwealth to live safer, more peaceful lives with liberty and justice for all.

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

[Click Here For Tickets to "Letters to Sala"](#)

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## Rabbi Aft's Weekly Article

11/12/2019 11:04:37 AM





COMMUNITY-WIDE  
WORKSHOP

## PRACTICING COMPASSION

HOW THE HEART CAN  
LEARN WHAT THE  
MIND UNDERSTANDS

**November 10**

**7pm**

Guest Speaker  
Dr. Alan Morinis



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Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

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## Rabbi Aft's Weekly Article

11/08/2019 10:57:11 AM





COMMUNITY-WIDE  
WORKSHOP

## PRACTICING COMPASSION

HOW THE HEART CAN  
LEARN WHAT THE  
MIND UNDERSTANDS

**November 10**

**7pm**

Guest Speaker  
Dr. Alan Morinis

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Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

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## Rabbi Aft's Weekly Article

11/01/2019 11:08:47 AM



Dear Friends,

This week we read the Torah portion, which describes Noah and the Flood.

Although I often refer to postings by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, this week I want to include the following from his weekly post.

One of the many detailed ark-building instructions given to Noah is particularly important: Make a tzohar for the ark and terminate it within a cubit of the top. (Bereishit 6:16) There is a difficulty understanding what "tzohar" means, since the word does not appear anywhere else in Tanach (Bible). All our commentators agree that it is a source of illumination. It is what will give light within the ark itself. But what exactly was it? Rashi quotes a Midrash in which two Rabbis disagree as

to its meaning: Some say this was a window; others say that it was a precious stone that gave light to them. It is fascinating to think about why the Rabbis of the Midrash, and Rashi himself, would spend time on a question that has no practical relevance. God promises us at the end of this week's parsha that there will be no further flood. We will never again need an ark floating on the water to save humankind. So why should it matter what source of light Noach had in the ark during those stormy days? Why this discussion? What is the lesson here for the future generations? I would like to offer a possible interpretation. The answer, I suggest, lies in the history of the Hebrew language. Throughout the biblical era, the word tevah is used to mean an ark – a large one in the case of Noach and the flood, and very small one in the case of the basket that protected baby Moses on the River Nile (Shemot 2:3). More generally, it means "box." However, by the time of the Midrash, tevah had come also to mean "word." It seems to me that the Rabbis of the Midrash were not so much commenting on Noach and the ark as reflecting on a fundamental question of Torah. Where and what is the tzohar, the brightness, the source of illumination... Does it come solely from within, or also from without? Does the Torah come with a window or with a precious stone? Can we find truth in ideas outside the Torah or only from within it?

In our Friday night Shabbat services, we often recite a section of Psalm 97:

Or zarua laTzadik, u'l'yishray lev simcha

Plant the seeds of Joy and Light; Tend them carefully day and night,  
In this soil so dark and deep, I plant the dreams that Love will reap. (Psalm 97)

I hope that each of us will find meaningful ways to plant seeds of joy and light in our world. As we read about the Flood, we remember the potential for negative behavior. As we continue to remember the tragic shootings in Pittsburgh from a year ago, we can sometimes be overwhelmed by these horrible events.

Perhaps through bringing light to the darkness, we can fulfill the words from Peter, Paul, and Mary's song, "Don't let the light go out.." and we can continue to build a world of love ("olam chesed yibaneh")

Finally, Mazel tov to the Washington Nationals and all their fans whose lives were brightened this week by their World Series Championship. Sue and I were blessed to go to games with three of our children and one of our grandchildren. The precious memories of being together and even watching game seven with our children by texting and face timing back and forth, make the baseball game more than just a game for us. It bonds us as it bonded me with my parents and I am grateful to share special moments together with our family.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

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## Rabbi Aft's Weekly Article

10/25/2019 10:44:10 AM



Dear Friends,

This week I am writing **two articles...**

The second one is about the World Series. I hope you find it interesting and that it will help provide insight to you about how baseball has taught me much about life. I will write more about this next week after we know whether the Nationals are World Champions of Baseball. Go Nats!!!

I know that many of you will be at the game tonight and/or watching it on TV. I do want you to know that we will be commemorating the first anniversary of the shooting in Pittsburgh at services as one of a number of commemorations. Shir Reyim will be signing "Olam Chesed Yibaneh, which means we should create a world of chesed or kindness. I will speak about the power of creating meaningful relationships and what a difference these can make as we try to build a world of kindness.

I want to call your attention to the program at the JCC on Sunday (See below)

I also want to encourage you to attend the GMU Hillel 25th anniversary celebration on Nov. 3, which is also publicized below. As you can see, the keynote speaker will be talking about the importance of continuity in light of what he, his congregation, and community endured and continue to endure in Pittsburgh.

So...perhaps if you wish to DVR the first part of the game tonight, (which I am doing), join us for services tonight as we remember.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

Sunday, October 27th, marks the first anniversary of the horrific shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. With the rise in anti-Semitic incidents throughout the United States, as well as in our own community, it is more important than ever that we work together to combat this rising tide of hate. ADL Washington, D.C. and the Pozez JCC of Northern Virginia, with support from the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, are excited to announce a new initiative, launching a series of critical and timely educational programs designed to empower members of the Northern Virginia community and provide them with the necessary tools and resources to recognize and respond to anti-Semitism in their everyday lives.

"Words to Action: NoVA Confronts Anti-Semitism" will hold its kick-off event on Sunday, October 27th from 1-4pm at the Pozez JCC. This initial gathering will be comprised of community leaders from various synagogues, organizations, youth groups, Hillel, etc. to learn about the state of anti-Semitism in America and begin developing skills to confront anti-Semitism in our community.

Highlights of the program include:

- Opening - commemoration ceremony honoring the memories of those who died at the Tree of Life Synagogue.
- ADL - presentation on the state of anti-Semitism in the nation.
- Breakout Sessions - divide into facilitated groups based on participant type (teens, college students, adults) for deeper discussions.

We hope that you will consider being a part of this new initiative to combat anti-Semitism and join us in this fight against bias and bigotry. We invite you to send two adult representatives and two teen representatives from your community to attend this initial gathering, as we begin to face these challenges head on. If you would like to participate, please email [Laurie.Albert@theJ.org](mailto:Laurie.Albert@theJ.org) by October 11th. If you have any questions please let us know.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Jeff Dannick and Doron Ezickson

**25**  
*Anniversary Celebration*  
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY HILLEL

3 Nov 2019 | Sunday | 6 Cheshvan 5780  
Join us for dinner and a meaningful gathering 6-9 PM  
After-party with DJ and dancing 9 PM

HONORING  
**SCOTT BROWN**  
*for Excellence in Jewish Leadership*

KEYNOTE  
**STRONGER THAN HATE: MAKING A DIFFERENCE**  
**RABBI JONATHAN PERLMAN**  
*New Light Congregation, at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh*

This memorable evening features a kosher dairy buffet dinner reception, a marvelous silent auction, additional community leaders (see back), a communal sharing of Hillel joy (past, present and future) and a surprise or two. Business attire.

RSVP online at [alumni.gmu.edu/Hillel25](http://alumni.gmu.edu/Hillel25)  
or via the e-response card by Friday, Oct 25

**ADDITIONAL GUEST SPEAKERS**

**Anne Holton, Interim President** *(invited)*  
George Mason University

**Adam Lehman, Interim CEO**  
Hillel International

**Mark Levitt, President**  
The Jewish Federation of  
Greater Washington

**EVENT LOCATION**  
Dewberry Hall  
Lower Level, Johnson Center  
George Mason University  
4400 University Dr  
Fairfax, VA 22030

**PARKING**  
At Mason Pond Parking Deck  
(near Center for the Arts) available  
at reduced rate through advance  
purchase online ([alumni.gmu.edu/  
Hillel25](http://alumni.gmu.edu/Hillel25)) or via the e-response card

**ACCOMMODATIONS**  
If you require special  
accommodations, please call  
Na'ama Gold at (703) 993-3321



**Na'ama Gold, Executive Director**  
**Shir Hasson, Israel Fellow**

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Tell us your plans for GMU Hillel's

**25<sup>th</sup>**  
*Anniversary Celebration*

Two ways to RSVP by Friday, October 25

**1. Go online to [alumni.gmu.edu/Hillel25](http://alumni.gmu.edu/Hillel25)**  
(on this website you can register for the event, make  
a gift, sponsor a student and/or make tributes)

**2. Print and complete this response card (2 pages).**

When finished, mail with payment to:  
George Mason University Hillel  
4400 University Dr. MSN.2C7  
Fairfax, VA 22030



**QUESTIONS?**  
Contact Na'ama Gold  
703-993-3321  
[Hillel@gmu.edu](mailto:Hillel@gmu.edu)

I/We will attend no. of guests \_\_\_\_\_  
Names of attendees \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Preferred Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Preferred Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Additional Guest names \_\_\_\_\_

**TICKETS**  
General  $154+14^* = 158$  x no. of tickets \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Students & Hillel young alum (up to age 30)  
 $136+14^* = 140$  x no. of tickets \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Parking validation  $15$  x no. of cars \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
To sponsor a student's ticket,  
please see next page.

Total purchase amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Enclosed is my check payable to George Mason University Foundation  
Registration via credit card available online at:  
[alumni.gmu.edu/Hillel25](http://alumni.gmu.edu/Hillel25)

To place a tribute in the program or make a gift,  
please see next page.  
\*Fees for event tickets and parking are not tax-deductible.

**DONATIONS**  
 I/We want to support the student experience through Mason Hillel with a tax-deductible contribution of (check one):  
 \$2,500  \$1,800  \$360  \$180  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**SPONSOR A STUDENT'S TICKET to the event**  
 \$36+\$4 event fee=\$40 x no. of tickets \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TRIBUTES \*\$25 each**  
 Tribute listing of names honoring (check all that apply)...  
 GMU Hillel for 25 years (\*25) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Scott Brown (\*25) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Na'ama Gold & Shir Hesson (\*25) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Personal message to your sons & daughters (12 word limit, \*25) \_\_\_\_\_

Write your name as you wish it to appear on the tribute list... \_\_\_\_\_

**WAYS TO GIVE**

- Check enclosed made payable to the George Mason University Foundation
- Charge my credit card in full
- Donations may also be made online when completing the online registration form

**CREDIT CARD AUTHORIZATION**  
 Please place a one-time charge on the credit card listed for the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Total for donations, sponsor a student & tributes. Ticket purchases via credit card available online only.)

Card Type:  Visa  MasterCard  American Express

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_  
 Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ CVC \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name as it appears on the card \_\_\_\_\_

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 Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

The George Mason University Foundation is a registered 501 (c)(3), EIN: 54-1602842. Your gift is tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by the law.

Dear Friends,

Now that we have completed the Fall Holidays, Bruce Kaplan likes to remind us that "Jacob went on his way." This is a reminder that it is now up to each one of us to decide whether what we prayed for over the Holidays will impact upon our behavior in the New Year. Each of us promised to make changes and now reality sets in. In the midst of our daily activities, we need to think about whether our promises were sincere and whether we really can live differently than we have in the past. Changes are hard to make and they occur slowly. I hope that we will have the "courage to make our lives a blessing" and that as Hazel Solomon, a beloved congregant who moved, used to say, "do one more mitzvah this year that you didn't have time for or make time for during the past year."

As we watch the World Series, I want to share a quote with which I concluded services recently. George Plimpton, an American journalist and sportswriter wrote, "The pitcher is happiest with his arm idle. He prefers to dawdle in the present, knowing that as soon as he gets on the mound and starts his wind up, he delivers himself to the uncertainty of the future." (Out of My League, 1961)

I hope as we wind up and pursue our own activities, we will face the future with confidence and the realization that our actions can make a positive difference in our world. As we begin the Torah reading with the story of creation, may each of us do something that will create a more peaceful, just world. Please remember the theme of our High Holiday Reflections Booklet, "If not now, when?" and begin to create positive difference RIGHT NOW.

Shabbat Shalom and Go Nationals,

Rabbi Bruce Aft

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