As we bid farewell to 2020 - one of the deadliest years in history - we need to take stock. Last year at this time, no one in his/her wildest dreams could have predicted the devastation and tragedy that we experienced this past year. A pandemic that as of this writing has killed over 320,000 people in the US; racial unrest; a wild presidential election – these are just some of the very traumatic events that affected our lives in profound ways.

We, as human beings, are social creatures. We thrive, and in fact, need contact and stimulation from other people. The isolation that Covid-19 imposed on all of us has had long lasting effects on our physical and emotional health. Our children’s schooling has been impacted, our livelihoods have been affected, our daily lives have been turned upside down. It has been a challenge to stay connected with others, and though Zoom has been a lifesaver, it still pales in comparison to the hugs and kisses that we so sorely miss.

With a vaccine in sight and a light at the end of this long dark tunnel, we can begin to wonder what life will be like as we emerge from the pandemic. What will shul look like? What will our lives be like? How will we reestablish our relationships with our family and friends?

Zoom has allowed us as a shul community to pray, socialize and learn. Thanks to our devoted staff and volunteers we have been able to provide weekday and Shabbat services that are well attended and where we can “see” and “interact” with one another. We have provided adult education opportunities both in shul and from the broader Jewish community that you have attended. Our religious school, always on-line for one-on-one weekday Hebrew instruction, has been on-line on Sundays as well. We’ve been able to host comedy nights, Sisterhood events, Chavurah meetings.

Clearly Zoom and the convenience it provides while we attend events from the comfort of our homes, is here to stay. We, as your shul leadership, need to develop a plan that will bring us back into the building while also allowing people the Zoom options as well. Our religious committee, for example, will be meeting in January to discuss how services will be conducted post Covid. Will we go back to what it was – in person services that are livestreamed? Will we allow all services to be Zoom-ed and will we count people on Zoom in the minyan? Will a Zoom participant be allowed to lead a prayer, or will that honor be reserved for only those in physical attendance?

(Cont’d p. 4)
Happy New Year! I hope you were able to join us for some or all of our many Chanukah programs in December. Every part of the Shaare Tefila community had the opportunity to celebrate the holiday with friends, from nightly candle lighting led by families who volunteered to lead the blessings on Zoom to the Community Chanukah Celebration with Renée Brachfeld and Mark Novak, plus other programs in between.

Much thanks goes to Cathy Plotkin, Hyman & Cilla Grosberg, and Jonathan Cohen for working with me to plan and execute what was our first, official in-person program since the middle of March, “Let the Light Shine: Community Menorah Lighting” on the 8th night of Chanukah. In spite of the snowstorm that hit the area the day before, many congregants gathered in our parking lot, staying socially distant in their cars, as we lit the chanukiyah/Chanukah menorah built by Hyman.

★ January 11 at 1:00 pm: ongoing Mondays - Join Rabbi Jonah on this spiritual and educational trip through the Jewish calendar. We will explore and learn about Shabbat, the holidays, prayer, Jewish concepts and Jewish law as the year progresses so that we will gain better insight into what it means to be Jewish.

★ January 24 at 4:00 pm: Makers & Bakers: Fruit Pies - Join Mara Lansky and work on your pie making skills just in time for Tu B’Shevat! Mara will focus on creating pies that are decorated; you will discover how making something that looks complicated is really quite easy. Register here and you will receive the recipes and list of supplies for the session!

★ Monthly Coffee and Happy Hour Gatherings continue on Thursdays, led by Rabbi Layman. Sunday adult education programs will continue online in January too.

Members of our community shared a few laughs on December 24 with ‘Kosher Style Comedy 7: Jewish Hams Telling Jokes’. The show was a great time for all who attended, especially since we could not go out to a movie theater! Thanks to the tireless efforts of Cilla Grosberg, these online comedy shows have served as wonderful opportunities to bring people together to enjoy a low-key event and raise money for Shaare Tefila at the same time. Sadly, due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, we will not be holding our annual Comedy Night event in early February. If you want to support Comedy Night and other programs in the future, please consider making a donation to the synagogue.

B’Shalom, Babette

All Shaare Tefila events, services and programs are now available at this Zoom link unless otherwise indicated.
As many of you, I too am happy to say goodbye to 2020 and welcome in 2021. This past year was a year of unknowns and many challenges due to the Covid pandemic. We started our new year with cheer and hope after we had finished celebrating Rabbi Layman and Lenore’s 25th anniversary with our Shaare Tefila community. We were enjoying and planning out the year with many in-house programs as well as having another successful Comedy Night fundraiser and then the Purim Carnival. Then the world as we knew it came to a halt due to the pandemic. Schools and businesses were forced to shut down, people worked remotely, and new technology (Virtual/Zoom) experiences came into our life. We are still Zooming services and programs but 2021 brings much hope and promise. The Covid vaccine has begun to be administered in the U.S. and our hopes are that we will be gathering again to socialize, learn and pray in our synagogue before the start of 2022.

December 2020 was a packed month with multiple Chanukah programs. Thank you to Babette Cohn, Education and Programming Director and Cathy Plotkin, Programming VP, for arranging such wonderful events for our community. Membership was happy to coordinate, support and distribute Chanukah gift bags to 235 members. Thank you to Rabbi Layman who stood for 4 hours in the cold handing out gift bags to members curbside. The smiles on peoples’ faces to see Rabbi Layman were “priceless” and his was beaming right back at them. In addition, a special thank you to the volunteers (elves), Ellie Alpert (and her LW volunteers), Mara Lansky, Sherry & Saul Cohen, Fran Kensky, Ethel Levine, Ken Libby, Stuart Carroll, Paul & Sheryl Tilles, Jay & Rita Hagler, Jackie & Dan Benn, Eric & Lori Marshall, Ellen Beebe, Babette Cohn, Cathy Plotkin, Jonathan Cohen and Hyman Grosberg, who helped deliver gift bags to those members who could not come to the building.

Yes, 2020 is over and although Covid put us thru a spin it has also made us appreciate and be grateful for the simple things in life. We have our health, we have learned to cope in the most difficult of times and we came closer together as a community. We have hope in our hearts and we are sharing it by lifting each other up in time of need. We are blessed to be part of this wonderful synagogue family.

Stay connected, join in on virtual services, programs, and your friendship circles (Chavurahs). Wishing you and your loved ones a Healthy, Happy and Safe New Year!

On December 17, the last night of Chanukah, Shaare Tefila hosted our first “Let the Light Shine, a community menorah lighting event. Rabbi Layman conducted the ceremony, lighting our new giant Chanukah menorah with members young and old. Although the weather was a little chilly all gathered outside the synagogue as well as on Zoom and were warmed by the lights of our new chanukiah. Thank you to Hyman Grosberg for building this beautiful new Chanukah menorah for our community. May our community host many more Chanukah celebrations with our new Chanukah menorah.
Happy New Year! As we begin 2021, our amazing education program continues to serve the children of Shaare Tefila online, keeping them engaged in learning the values of our people.

Kitah Alef & Kitah Bet begins their unit on G’vurah/Strength or Power in January. If you would like to learn more about what the La-Bri’it curriculum that K-3 grades is following for this school year, and the G’vurah unit in particular, please take a look at this entertaining video. Classes in grades 4-7 continue studying middot/values as they relate to Jewish families, as well as connecting observance of holidays and accompanying rituals.

There have been some Chavaya staff changes on Sundays. In November Mikayla Elk began teaching Kitah Alef with the departure of Liron Stern. Eitan Isser, who taught Kitah Dalet in 2019-20 and moved up with those students to Kitah Hay this year, graduated from the University of Maryland on December 20 and left his position as a teacher with us. He will be missed by his students, but Jacquelyn Leffel, who co-taught with him since September, is taking over in teaching the class and has built a wonderful rapport with the 7th graders since she began.

Earlier this year I received the certification of Conservative Jewish Educator (CJE) from the Jewish Educators Assembly (JEA), of which I am a member and recently installed Board member. The description of this credential from the JEA is as follows:

The Conservative Jewish Educator credential was introduced to recognize select educators for attaining a standard of achievement in the field of Conservative Jewish education. The goal of this certification is to recognize those elite educators who have achieved the highest professional standards of our organization and profession, as a mark of honor, and to encourage ongoing professional development among our colleagues. Individuals must have advanced formal education, at least five years of administrative experience, a demonstrated commitment to Conservative Jewish education, contributions to the field such as curriculum or program development, projects; and/or continued academic learning.

I am proud to have earned this certification and to be part of the JEA leadership. The thing I miss most about seeing the children of Shaare Tefila in person is spending time with and being inspired by them.

I hope that my commitment to Jewish education for the entirety of our community is apparent in my work with you. Please consider making a contribution to the JEA if you would like to honor me. Information can be found here.

B’Shalom,

Babette
EXCITING PARTNERSHIP!

After the murder of George Floyd this summer, the Social Action Committee has concentrated the bulk of our 2020-2021 focus on racial justice. Earlier this fall, Babette Cohn facilitated a powerful series of discussions on Ibrahm X Kendi’s “How to be an Anti-Racist.”

There is so much work to be done and sometimes it’s overwhelming to know where to begin. Recently, Rabbi Layman, Babette Cohn and I attended a virtual 3-day conference on racial justice through a Jewish lens. It was inspiring and informative.

To be effective allies and activists, we must first be truly educated about the history of race in America and genuinely understand the insidious, historical existence of racism in every major American institution.

We have recently partnered with a local Baptist Church. Our partnership will not be about religion. We are two faith-based organizations, one predominantly black and one predominantly white, collaborating to learn, share, form relationships and work together in the community.

Our first joint program will focus on the history of race in America and will be facilitated by the Equal Justice Initiative (www.eji.org). This event will be virtual and in honor of MLK Day in January. Exact date and time will be determined soon, with registration information to follow.

Stay tuned....

HEADPHONE HUB SUCCESS!

In November, we started a fundraiser for the Children’s Opportunity Fund, which manages the Education and Equity HUBS, providing distance learning space for MCPS students who have neither internet connection nor parental supervision at home during the school day.

Through the Social Action Committee, our synagogue “adopted” a HUB of 52 students at Highland Elementary School. Our first goal was to raise $1,040 to provide head-phones for each student. There are 13 students in each classroom (x 4 rooms), supervised by an adult who troubleshoots and supervises the children who are each in his/her own virtual classroom, from K-12.

The program runs from 8:30-5:30 each day, with activities, meals and snacks provided before and after instructional hours. The cost per child is $1,000/month. Public funding from MCPS is lagging way behind the need. Private donations have helped to cover costs. Even when MCPS funding does come through, it will not cover all costs as the program continues to expand to add more schools and students in need.

At some point, MCPS may begin a hybrid format, with schools open to “in person” learning every other week. Under that plan, the HUBS should be able to remain in place during the “off” weeks, and tuition would be reduced to $500/month/child.

We are thrilled to report that our initial fundraising efforts raised nearly $1,300 from ~25 generous donors. Contributions ranged from $18-$100. Thank you all! Each and every donation made a difference!

We’ve now connected with the children at the Highland Elementary HUB and would like to continue to do what we can. As such, our fundraising efforts will be ongoing. As long as there is a need, the Social Action Committee has pledged to partner with the Children’s Opportunity Fund and Highland Elementary. We will keep our fundraiser “open” until the pandemic is no longer preventing kids from attending school in person. Our donations will go toward the scholarship fund that covers the $1,000/month/child cost to attend the HUB.

Give what you can, if you can. Checks should be made payable to Children’s Opportunity Fund and mailed to Shaare Tefila/Social Action. We hope to share stories from the Highland HUB and will keep you updated on our fundraising progress throughout the remainder of the school year and beyond, if necessary.
Happy New Year all. I hope you are all doing well and had a good Chanukah this year even if we could not spend it with all of our family, including our synagogue family. January will be a very busy month for Sisterhood with many ways to come together.

We want to give our Sisterhood members a chance to talk via Zoom in breakout rooms. The first meeting will be on Tuesday, January 19 at 8:00 pm. All Sisterhood members will receive the link for this event which is free for all Sisterhood members. We are hoping that this will be a monthly event. If you are not familiar with “breakout rooms,” it is a way to visit with a few other people on Zoom in private rooms.

On Saturday, January 23 at 7:00 pm we will have our first Zoom bingo. The fee is five dollars for Sisterhood members and seven dollars for non-members of Sisterhood. If payment is sent via US mail then send it to Jackie Benn directly. The payment needs to be received no later than Wednesday, January 20. Payment can be sent directly to Sisterhood’s Venmo account. Please contact Jackie Benn-relaybenns@gmail.com - for details on how to make a payment to Sisterhood. Once your payment is received, the link to the Bingo event will be sent to you. The payment through Venmo will need to be received by Friday, January 22 at 5:00 pm.

Our Women’s Rosh Chodesh Circle, a very popular program, is open to all women. No preparation is needed. Just come with an open mind and courtesy to others. The next session will be on Sunday January 24 at 3:00 pm.

Lastly, If you would like to be a member of Sisterhood, it’s not too late to join. Please complete the registration form that appears on pg. 7 and send the completed form along with your check to Audrey Haber.

In mid-fall Beth Adler, formerly Director of the Gates of Discovery Preschool here at Shaare Tefila, was presented with farewell gifts from Shaare Tefila in appreciation of her ten years of service to our community. The Tree of Life aptly represents Beth’s nurturing of our youngest children, planting seeds of knowledge and character to guide them through life.
JOIN OUR SHAARE TEFILA SISTERHOOD!!!
Shaare Tefila Women = Fun, Community, Caring B’Yachad, Togetherness!

Please fill out this form and mail it with your dues to Audrey Haber at the address below.

NAME: ___________________________________________

EMAIL ADDRESS: ___________________________________

HOME ADDRESS:____________________________________

TELEPHONE/MOBILE NUMBER:______________________________

Please select your dues level:

$45.00 Regular Membership ________

$60.00 Patron Membership ________

$36.00 Senior Membership (ages 70+) ________

$55.00 Senior Patron (70+) ________

Dues are accepted by check, made payable to:
SHAARE TEFILA SISTERHOOD
PLEAse MAIL THIS MEMBERSHIP FORM AND YOUR DUES TO:
SHAARE TEFILA SISTERHOOD
c/o AUDREY HABER
15000 Pennfield Circle Unit 204
Silver Spring, MD 20906

Jackie Benn, President
Audrey Haber, Financial Secretary, ahaber@verizon.net
The Shofar

Beth Shalom's Annual Author Series
co-sponsored with Shaare Tefila, our "sister shul"
January 10, February 7, & March 14, 2021

Join us for one or all of these amazing authors:

Florence Adler Swims Forever: A Novel
by Rachel Beanland
Sunday, January 10 at 7:45 p.m.

We welcome Rachel Beanland as she discusses her her first novel she has has written. Rachel has a MFA in creative writing from Virginia Commonwealth University. USA TODAY lists this novel as one of the “Best Books of 2020.” Good Morning America refers to the novel in “20 Novels You’ll Want to Read This Summer.” You are in for treat!

This compelling debut novel, set in Atlantic City, 1934, is about a multigenerational Jewish family whose summer starts off with a tragic accident. The family tries to keep the bad news under wraps, resulting in layers of secrecy and deception. This book has many discussable elements including relatable characters, historical events and family traditions.

Searching for Bubbe Fischer: the Path to Mah Jongg Wisdom
by Karen Goen
Sunday, February 7 at 10:00 a.m.

Join Maj Jongg instructor and writer Karen Goodwin from Randolph, NJ as she delights us with her engaging stories about her passion.

Part Mah Jongg manual, part memoir, this book tells the story of how the author searches for the ultimate mentor, learned to play the game, and eventually became a Mah Jongg aficionado. The book, filled with humorous anecdotes along with helpful tips and strategies, is enjoyable for both beginners and more experienced players.

The Book of Lost Names
by Kristin Harmel
Sunday, March 14 at 11:00 a.m.

We are excited to have Kristen Harmel, NY Times Best Selling Author. Join us for our third author in our series, Kristin has been writing professionally since age 16 beginning with sports writing covering major league baseball and NHL hockey for a local magazine in Tampa Bay, FL. a former reporter for People magazine, and stints writing for many other magazines, including covering everything from the Super Bowl to high-profile murders to celebrity interviews. She also contributed to numerous TV shows and has appeared on Good Morning America. Kristen currently lives in Orlando, FL.

World War II fiction inspired by a true story. A young Jewish woman is recruited to forge documents to assist in the escape of Jewish children, giving them a chance to live under a new identity. But how will the very young ever regain their original identity? This heart-wrenching, well researched novel goes into great detail to answer this mystifying question while taking readers into Nazi occupied France on a journey which includes many twists and turns.
**MEN’S DISCUSSION GROUP ON ZOOM**  
Wednesday, January 13 at 10:00 am  
Discussion Leader: Ron Weber, former voice of the Washington Caps  
**Topic: THE HISTORY OF THE CAPITALS.**  
**All Men Are Invited**

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**WOMEN’S ROCH CHODESH CIRCLE**  
Led by: Susan Rubenstein  
Click here for the [ZOOM LINK](#)  
**Meeting Time Begins at 3:00 pm**  
Rosh Chodesh Shevat - Sunday, January 24  
Rosh Chodesh Adar - Sunday, February 21  
Rosh Chodesh Nisan - Sunday, March 21  
Rosh Chodesh Iyyar - Sunday, April 25  
Rosh Chodesh Sivan - Sunday, May 23

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**MORNING MINYAN ON ZOOM**

SUNDAY, MONDAY AND THURSDAY  
AT 8:45 AM

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**MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

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**JANUARY**

January 7: First Thursday Coffee Hour  
January 10: Meet the Author  
January 13: Men’s Discussion Group  
January 14: Shaare Tefila Social – Happy Hour  
January 19: Sister Event – “Let’s Talk”  
January 23: Sisterhood Event - Bingo  
January 24: Women’s Rosh Chodesh Circle - Chodesh Shevat  
January 24: Makers & Bakers  
January 28: Tu B’Shevat

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**FEBRUARY**

February 4: First Thursday Coffee Hour  
February 7: Meet the Author  
February 10: Men’s Discussion Group  
February 11: Shaare Tefila Social - Happy Hour  
February 21: Women’s Rosh Chodesh Circle - Chodesh Adar  
February 25: Erev Purim (Megillah Reading)  
February 26: Purim
The Shofar

New Class With Rabbi Layman
"A Journey Through the Jewish Year"
Meeting weekly beginning on
Monday, January 11, 2021 1:00 pm-2:00 pm

Join Rabbi Jonah on a spiritual and educational trip through the Jewish calendar. Explore and learn about Shabbat, the holidays, prayer, Jewish concepts and Jewish law as the year progresses. Gain better insight into what it means to be Jewish.

Upcoming Event in the Greater Washington D.C. Community

B’nai Israel of Rockville, Maryland, has partnered with Director, Peter Hutchison, to help publicize his important movie called, Healing from Hate, which examines the root causes of hate group activity through the bold work of those battling intolerance on the front lines, including “Life After Hate,” an organization founded by former Skinheads and neo-Nazis. Documenting hatred in America, Healing From Hate follows these reformers in their work to de-radicalize white nationalists, and heal communities torn apart by racism.

B’nai Israel is graciously sharing this opportunity with the greater Jewish community and has arranged for week-long screening opportunity, from January 4-11, culminating with a discussion on January 12 by Meredith Weisel of the Anti-Defamation League. There is a nominal charge of $6 per household to screen the film.

Information about the film and discussion can be found HERE
Please direct any questions to Jill Gendelman

HARMONY HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Contributor: Cathy Plotkin

Thanks to the generosity of Sisterhood members we were able to buy toys for 16 children at Harmony Hills Elementary School. These are some of the gifts that were bought to help bring holiday cheer to 8 families from one of the poorest schools in our county. Thank you so much for your support!

ENVIRONMENTALISM AND TU B’SHEVAT

For environmentalists, Tu B’Shevat is an ancient and authentic Jewish connection to contemporary ecological issues. The holiday is viewed as an appropriate occasion to educate Jews about their tradition’s advocacy of responsible stewardship of God’s creation, manifested in ecological activism. Tu B’Shevat is an opportunity to raise awareness about and to care for the environment through the teaching of Jewish sources celebrating nature. It is also a day to focus on the environmental sensitivity of the Jewish tradition by planting trees wherever Jews may live.

Learn more about planting trees on Tu B’shevat. Click HERE

(myjewishlearning.com)
Shaare Tefila Cemetery Plots for Sale at Mount Lebanon Cemetery

Shaare Tefila offers an option for Jewish burial with two sections of available plots at Mount Lebanon Cemetery in Adelphi, MD which are owned by our congregation. Whether you opt for a marker or monument, our cemetery’s prices are highly competitive with plots starting as low as $940. In addition, 100% of all proceeds from the sale will go to Shaare Tefila Congregation. Please contact, Jonathan Cohen, Executive Director, for more details.

Scenes From Some of our “Zoomed” activities this past month
Shaare Tefila Friends,
The Social Action Committee has been involved in numerous projects throughout this pandemic plagued year and there are always additional ways that members can add their voice and become involved in our work.

Some of you may have seen this story in the paper about another local immigrant family torn apart through deportation. In this case, the deportation involved a father who has been in this country for two decades, ran a business, and supported his family. That family now has no means of support and will no doubt need help to pay for rent, groceries, and medical care.


Our Jewish faith is built on many things and one of those foundations is welcoming the stranger. In addition, many of us hold memories of family members who were not allowed into our country when they were trying to escape death and violence in Europe before and during World War II. The way our country has treated refugees and immigrants in recent years is one that has left a lasting stain that will be hard to erase.

After reading this story, one of our committee members contacted our Maryland Congressional Representative, the Congressman who represents the neighboring district where this family lives, local State Senators and Representatives, and both of Maryland’s two US Senators, registering disagreement with our government’s policy and inquiring about what Maryland residents could do to help this family and work to get the children’s father back home.

The authors of the news article were also contacted and they suggested contacting CASA of Maryland, one of many immigrant groups who work with immigrant families in need of financial and legal help (such as HIAS, IRC, KIND, etc). CASA has established a fund for this family.

We know this is the season when we are all bombarded with requests for donations and financial help, but we wanted to share the article with our faith community to see if anyone else may be inclined to help and/or contact their elected officials about changing a policy that divides families and still separates children from their parents. If you have specific questions, you can email Barry Polisar, one of our Social Action Committee members, at Barrylou@Barrylou.com

The Social Action Committee
Tu B’Shevat (New Year of the Trees) Crossword Puzzle

Across
6. The (English name of the) month that Tu B’Shevat usually falls in.
7. One of the seven species; lots of us enjoy them in their newton form.
8. Tu B’Shevat reminds us of our responsibility to help protect this.
9. Another one of the seven species. They are salty. Some people like them on their pizzas or salads.
10. This is a nut - it grows on pretty trees in Israel.

Down
1. One of the seven species; it’s a grain you might find in your cereal.
2. There are ___ new years in the Jewish calendar.
3. Another one of the seven species. These are a fruit and the rumor is that they have 613 seeds. But, I’ve never counted.
4. One of the seven species. These are a fruit and the ingredient in wine.
5. One of the seven species; this fruit is often eaten in its dried form.
6. Tu B’Shevat falls on the ____ day of the month of Shevat.

Answers Down: (1) Barley; (2) Fours; (3) Pomegranates; (4) Dates; (5) Grapes; (6) Almond
Answers Across: (6) February; (7) Blueberries; (8) Environment; (9) Olives; (10) Almond