

# The Shofar -

שוֹפָר

Official Newsletter of Congregation Shaar Hashalom

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## Rabbi's Message

[rabbistuart@hotmail.com](mailto:rabbistuart@hotmail.com)

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This year, Wednesday, February 8th, 2012, is T'U B'Shvat, the 15th day of the Jewish month of Shvat, the Jewish birthday for trees. Now, you might be wondering why I am writing about a February holiday for the Shofar of January, and why I am writing this in December, just a few weeks before the New Year of the secular calendar? The reason is because although everyone thinks about the secular New Year of December 31st - January 1st, and we Jews think about the New Year of Rosh Hashana as well, there really are more 'new years' in the secular calendar than we realize. So, for example, there is the beginning of school in August, which is the New Year for school. There is the 'new year' for every sport, as the season for them comes along through the year. So, it should not surprise us that Judaism also has more than one New Year.

T'U B'Shvat is the New Year for trees. A Happy Holiday, one that has reminded the Jews of our obligation to take care of the Environment for millenia, it was also a necessity to be able to mark the birthday or the New Year for trees. This necessity stems (no pun intended) from the Biblical command that a tree's fruit is not to be eaten for the first three years, in Leviticus 19:23, and in the next verse we are commanded to give the fruit of the fourth year to the Temple. Only then, in the fifth year, was the fruit to be eaten.

But how can one know the birthday of a tree? One cannot, so T'U B'Shvat is the day where fruit ripening before it are the fruit of one year, but the fruit that ripens after T'U B'Shvat is considered the fruit of the next year. T'U B'Shvat is the birthday, the line that separates one year of a tree from the next.

So, happy T'U B'Shvat! On February 8th, 2012, plant a tree! Or, if you cannot plant a tree, then at least go hug one! Okay, maybe that is taking T'U B'Shvat a little far, but at least take a few moments to appreciate trees and all they do for us!

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## Membership News

[stein2107@earthlink.net](mailto:stein2107@earthlink.net)

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CSH is very happy to welcome Andy & Brandie Kessler to our congregation family. Their children, Samara. Jakxson, and Ruth have been enrolled in our school and seem to fit in quite well.

We also had a wonderful turnout of about 100 of our family members for the Sisterhood Chanukah Family Social. One lucky person went home with a Chanukah cookie basket filled with delicious cookies donated by Bertha Woinsky. The raffle ticket money collected was donated to the Religious school. With the candle blessings done by all who brought their menorahs and the Chanukah singalong, everyone had a fabulous evening. The chairperson, Kari Sokolow, also had an arts & crafts activity table for all the children. A special

thank you to Lori Pizzuti, Helene Ringer, Nurit Mittlefehldt, Cathy Leonard and Risa for all the help with food & clean up.

Also, many thanks to everyone who shared in preparations, cooking & baking for all of us to enjoy.

This wonderful Thursday evening program was followed the next night by our Friday night Musical Chanukah Shabbat. We loved singing along with our service as well as the Chanukah songs and the special musical expertise of Lori Laird and Craig Schweitzer.

Now, plan to join us in the fun and hard work for another special event:

'The Biggest Loser Contest'. Begin the New Year as we all get fit and in shape with the support of our CSH friends. Plans are in the works; watch for more details.

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## Sisterhood News

[celeonard@verizon.net](mailto:celeonard@verizon.net)

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I hope you all had a wonderful Hanukkah and a happy secular New Year; with lots of family, friends, fun, and food. (Oh my goodness, the food. I don't know about all of you, but *I'm* paying for it now!) Thank you, thank you, and thank you for the amazing turn-out at the Hanukkah Family Evening. The feedback has been great and everyone seemed to have a wonderful time! I can see us doing it again next year!

January is going to be a busy and a very special month for Sisterhood, and I look forward to how great this will be for us.

Sisterhood Shabbat will be observed on the weekend of January 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>. We are very excited that Judy

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Goldstein, the President of the IntraContinental Region (our region) of the Women's League for Conservative Judaism, will be visiting Houston that weekend. Friday evening she will be observing Shabbat with the Sisterhood of Congregation Or Ami in West Houston. She will observe Shabbat with us on Saturday, and will also be speaking at a special brunch on Sunday, the 22<sup>nd</sup> here at CSH (which we are also planning to invite the Sisterhood of Or Ami to attend as well).

Continuing on the topic of Sisterhood Shabbat, Sharon Rosenthal our Vice President for Torah Fund, as well as, the chairperson for Sisterhood Shabbat has asked that I forward to you the following information. Sharon asks that you review the two attachments (you received via email) from the last two Sisterhood Shabbats and contact her to advise her of the following information:

- ✧ **If you will be attending Friday night or Saturday services.**
- ✧ **If you'd like an English or Hebrew part.**
- ✧ **If you'd like to do the part you did last year. (See attachments from January and July of last year).**
- ✧ **If you can bring a dessert item for Friday or a food item for Saturday.**
- ✧ **Other special parts: Torah, Haftarah, Gabbai, Friday Night sermon.**

We will also be providing the oneg and kiddush luncheon, as well as, items for the Sunday brunch. **Risa Stein** has graciously volunteered to coordinate the food/hospitality for the weekend. **Please** contact Risa about what food(s) you will be able to provide for the hospitality portions.

Dear friends, I ask from the bottom of my heart that you contact **Sharon** ([sharonl.rosenthal@prodigy.net](mailto:sharonl.rosenthal@prodigy.net)) to volunteer for parts in the services; and contact **Risa** ([stein2107@earthlink.net](mailto:stein2107@earthlink.net)) to offer to bring foods. They are working very hard to make this a special Sisterhood Shabbat.

If I'm not mistaken, this is the first time we have been privy to co-hosting the Region President and, believe me, THIS IS HUGE! National offers us so much in the way of support; it would be nice to be able to reciprocate in this manner. Sometime during her visit, I will be meeting with Judy to see what programs can be brought to Shaar Hashalom. National WLCJ is very generous about offering Sisterhoods free on-site training and programs, and I would like for us to be able to avail ourselves of these opportunities.

This is also Judy's first visit to Houston, so it is nice to be able to show our best Texas hospitality.

I know we will all rise to the occasion. We always do. You are such an amazing group of friends, and strong, talented women. It will be terrific knowing that Judy will return to Minnesota knowing what a strong and wonderful group of women help to lead at Congregation Shaar Hashalom.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any general questions, and of course, Sharon or Risa (as noted above).

More and more.

Coming up in February we will launch our Dress for Success program, masterfully chaired again by Hedy Wolpa. Start thinking now about what lightly used or new professional wear you can contribute.

We will probably begin preparation soon for planning our Purim Bag campaign this year. On that topic, we are in great need of someone who would be willing to coordinate our members donating hamentaschen. As we get closer we will know how many dozen we will need. PLEASE consider coordinating this. Most of the work to get commitments of baking could be done by phone or email. Please consider taking on this job. If you have an interest or any questions, feel free to contact Sheilla Goldberg ([sheilla.o.goldberg@nasa.gov](mailto:sheilla.o.goldberg@nasa.gov))

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I know I do this often, but it can't be done enough – reminding you of how important you are to our group and to our synagogue. You're talented, generous, and our community is so blessed to have you here.

Until next time, big hugs!!!  
Cathy

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## Men's Club News

[fkitmach@hotmail.com](mailto:fkitmach@hotmail.com)

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As we head in to 2012, I want to acknowledge those who have made our Men's Club activities so successful so far this year. Since our 9/11 kick-off we've managed to hold one or two big activities each month. Some of our activities have been focused mainly on fund-raising. Our biggest and most successful fund-raiser of the year started during the Houston Kosher Chili Cook-off and continued until the drawing which occurred at the Shaar HaShalom Religious School Chanukah show and party on December 11. Some two thousand tickets were sold; several thousand dollars were raised and most families in the synagogue sold tickets or directly contributed. Top contributor with \$400 in ticket sales, were the Berezins. They received a laptop computer in appreciation for their efforts. Winners of the raffle drawings: large flat panel TV: Bergman, Netbook computer: Kotowy, X-Box video game: Schweitzer, blue ray player and videos: Kitmacher, and digital camera/printer package: Patterson. The Chili Cook-off and raffle all took a great deal of coordination. The next time you see them, say thanks to Ron Zaguli and Ronnie Weiss for all of their hard work and efforts to make the cook-off and the raffle the great success that it was. Recently Men's Club has been privileged to award some scholarships to several of our USY teenagers to help send them to regional and national conventions. We've also been able to contribute to the synagogue funds. In the coming year we hope to do even more.

Our next Men's Club breakfast and program will be January 15 at 9:30 AM. There will be two speakers: Richard Lehman will speak on family financial planning. Mark Sokolow will speak on getting involved in government. Howard Hoffman will host the breakfast.

We continue to seek assistance with a number of our upcoming activities. We hope to expand the variety of activities we have to offer in the coming year, and we are always looking for new members and participants. And remember, membership is free during your first year.

Happy Chanukah and we look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

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## Library News

[Hedy Wolpa](#)

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Thank you to several families for their recent donations of Jewish books for our library: the Zaguli's, Sharon Polt, and Phyllis Miller.

Our children's book section has REALLY expanded. You'll find old favorites and some new titles for toddlers to pre teen, young adult. Please stop by and take a look with your children.