

SACRED SOUNDS

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Winter/Chanukah 2018



Doubling Down on Dedication **By Cantor David Lipp**

Shocked, offended and sad.

Shocked by what I'm told may have been the worst attack on the Jewish people in this country's history. In half a century of living in the US, I've never suffered so much as an anti-Semitic slight, much less a massacre of my people because they were Jews in synagogue, a sanctuary.

Offended because houses of God should be sanctuaries without the benefit of armed guards.

And yet, this event has reminded us in so many ways how lucky we are to be Jewish at this juncture in history, in this country.

Just 80 years ago on *Kristallnacht*, a coordinated pogrom against the Jewish people in Nazi Germany led to the destruction of hundreds of synagogues, the deaths of hundreds, the upheaval of thousands and tens of thousands of lives. The German government was an active cheerleader for the attacks, only restraining their citizens from their arson when the flames spread to Aryan interests.

Here righteous gentiles galore *Showed up for Shul* to demonstrate solidarity with us. In our synagogue, they outnumbered Jewish attendance two to one, maybe more.

So what do we do? We double down.

Even in the midst of the Holocaust, Jews celebrated Chanukah. At the Jewish Museum in New York, in the midst of a modernist Chanukah exhibit, there's one made of wood, built by the slaves of Terezin, the 'model' concentration camp built to convince the Red Cross how well the Jews were being treated. Even when barely able to survive, Jews found the ingenuity and courage to raise themselves up in holiness and create light where all, literally and metaphorically, was darkness.

A loser-confirmation-bias-hate-crime-white-nationalist does not decide for us whether or how intensely we celebrate the festival of lights, the calendar does.

Jews around the world will celebrate Chanukah by making candles, enjoying latkes, spinning gimmels (only gimmels!), performing concerts for children of all ages, making light where there is darkness, music where there is noise.

As the solar year leans toward solstice and the lunar month darkens the night sky, we fight the entropy of the Second Law of Thermodynamics (the tendency of the universe to degrade over time) by increasing the light as it gets darker rather than mimicking nature by counting down as though we're about to launch a capsule into outer space.

For we will endeavor to launch light, love and melody into the inner spaces, the very souls of our people.

But I'm still sad.

I'm sad because for so many of my colleagues' congregants, it took an attack of this magnitude to get our own people to come back to shul on a garden variety Shabbat.

The historical tale of Chanukah as told in the book of Maccabees begins as a civil conflict between different factions of Jews, Hellenistic and Judean.

I pray that this Chanukah the Jewish people begin to see, hear and feel the value of *davvening* together in community without the need for an external impetus of the enemy but from the internal yearning and inspiration of the soul.

May we translate Shock to Sure, Offense to Bliss and Sad to Glad.

Happy Chanukah.

*Cantor David Lipp serves Congregation Adath Jeshurun in Louisville, Kentucky.
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“Jews around the world will celebrate Chanukah ... making light where there is darkness, music where there is noise.”

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Lighting the Light of Dedication in Africa **By Cantor Jack Chomsky**

A delegation of members of the Cantors Assembly will travel to Africa in late January to make special connections with the Abayudaya, one of the world's most unique Jewish communities. The community was founded by Semei Kagungulu in 1919 as the culmination of a generation-long process of emerging Ugandan tribal leaders and their increasingly complicated relationships with British rule and Christianity. At the time, a little reminiscent of the story of Abraham, he saw to the circumcision of himself and his sons.

The Abayudaya practiced their own understanding of Judaism for many years, but especially since the early 1990s, have sought to connect with Jewish practice around the world – notably through connections to Masorti and Reform Judaism.

As we are celebrating the Festival of Lights around the Jewish world in December, a number of us have been preparing to connect with this amazing community and celebrate their remarkable journey.



Cantors Assembly members Jerome Berkowitz, Jack Chomsky, Jesse Holzer, David Lipp, Pamela Schiffer, Jeremy Stein, Mike Stein, Steve Stoehr, and Mike Weis are conferring weekly to plan their 10-day sojourn in rural Uganda. The outcome of this time and collaboration will be a new recording that helps to tell their unique story. The Abayudaya were founded exactly 100 years ago and will celebrate next June.

While in Uganda, our delegation will visit several enclaves of the Ugandan Jewish community, teach in its Yeshiva and make other connections with its residents. Our team will also work together with musicians within the Abayudaya community to produce new recordings of their unique African gospel-style approach to Jewish sacred texts. We will also work with them to create new musical pieces – respecting their unique musical and spiritual voice and also endeavoring to raise our voices together in songs that we create together. It promises to be an unforgettable experience.



Their spiritual leader, Rabbi Gershom Sizomu, is a graduate of the Ziegler Rabbinical School of JTS. It was while studying there that he became close to CA member Mike Stein, who has made numerous trips to Uganda.



This past summer, when there were some issues about fair treatment of the Abayudaya in relation to the State of Israel, CA members hatched the idea of a solidarity trip – and it comes to fruition this January. Steve Stoehr, David Lipp and Alberto Mizrahi were critical in finding donors to underwrite the \$20,000 needed for the recording project. The members traveling are each paying their own way.



Of course, travel to such a remote place involves a lot of arrangements – visas, shots and more. Mike Weis has also been instrumental in making many connections, and those traveling will come bearing computers donated by the Heschel School in New York.

If you're interested in being of further assistance in some way, contact Mike Weis of the Cantors Assembly: cantorweis@gmail.com.

Everyone can “stay tuned” for pictures, descriptions and video and audio of our trip.

Cantor Jack Chomsky serves Congregation Tifereth Israel in Columbus, Ohio.





Please consider joining the Cantors Assembly on the sacred journey of tradition and innovation.

Through your tax deductible contribution to the Cantors Assembly, you will help to build bridges between the past and future through the heritage of Jewish music, assuring the continuation of our traditions and legacy.

Visit our website www.cantors.org

Click on "Support the CA" to make a donation online.

Keep and Remember By Cantor Sharon Citrin Goldstein

Chanukah is coming and with it comes the annual tradition of lighting the menorah. Who doesn't love the wonderful ritual of lighting the Chanukah lights? Each step involved in kindling the *chanukiyah* has its own special significance. We count the number of nights, choose the colored candles, light the *shamash*, spread the flame to the other candles, recite the blessing, and sing Chanukah songs while watching the flickering candles dance gaily in a darkened room.



There is comfort in repeating this holiday ritual year after year. It allows us to remember with fondness Chanukahs of the past. We can summon up the faces and voices of past generations gathering around the menorah and recall the people we loved who have passed.

I do not light the sixth Chanukah candle. In its place is a *yahrzeit* candle for my mother who died ten years ago on the sixth night of Chanukah. You could say that Chanukah, for me, is bittersweet.

This Chanukah, in particular, will release a flood of memories as my brother and I continue going through boxes of family memorabilia that were recently removed from storage. We are the beneficiaries of both our father's collectibles and remnants of our mother's things that he had packed away and stored after her death.

It's a difficult procedure that we try to accomplish lovingly and respectfully. As we examine each item, we remember its purpose and remark on its significance in our parents' lives. The process evokes so many memories, but also teaches us so many things about them we never knew. We find diplomas and certificates for honors and achievements that fill us with admiration. We read with curious delight yearbook inscriptions that expose high school secrets. We're awed by my mother's art portfolios that reveal the promise of an exceptional artist and are dismayed upon discovering cartons of light bulbs of every description from my father's electrical engineering career. We're overwhelmed by countless slides of European travels and collections of postcards. We peer at photo albums, pictures of unnamed people, newspaper clippings, journals of vacations, and original poetry and writings.

How much we can learn about people from the things they keep! Keepsakes capture for posterity life's defining moments. Our parents' treasured mementos survived moves from house to house where they were stored and preserved for future generations. Now, the fate of these once-precious relics of our loved ones' lives is in our hands. My brother and I must decide which stuff to keep and which to discard. After all, we each have our own memorabilia stored away in boxes!

I'm touched that my parents kept my old Baby Ben alarm clock that I used to wind up every night before going to sleep. Perhaps it will come in handy during the next power outage. They even kept the Vidal Sassoon hair blower that I left in my bathroom cabinet when I went away to college. You never know when you may need a spare hair blower! And how can I possibly get rid of my mother's mirrored vanity that fascinated me as a little girl with its display of perfume bottles and lipsticks?

On this first Chanukah without my father and mother, perhaps I'll value these curious keepsakes as Chanukah gifts bequeathed from my parents. I can actually see them smile and nod approvingly of this idea.

May their memory be a source of blessing and comfort.

Cantor Sharon Citrin Goldstein serves Beth El Synagogue in Woodbury, Connecticut.

Rosh Chodesh



Women's Voices Celebrating Rosh Chodesh

By Cantor Ruth Katz Green

Rosh Chodesh, the first day of each Hebrew month, was traditionally a special holiday for women, a day on which they were freed from work. This came to women as a reward for their refusal to offer their jewelry for the making of the Golden Calf. Today many synagogues have instituted all-female prayer minyanim, study sessions, and discussion groups in honor of Rosh Chodesh.

Earlier this year, I was asked to reinvigorate a women's Rosh Chodesh study group at a nearby synagogue (Congregation B'nai Israel, Toms River, NJ). I accepted the assignment and decided that music, not text study, would be the best approach for me. Each month, on a weekday on or close to Rosh Chodesh, I present a program of songs to celebrate or observe events on the Hebrew calendar during the coming month. We begin with a light lunch provided by the congregation at no charge to the participants. The singing starts with *Birkat Hamazon*. Then I remind everyone of the significance of Rosh Chodesh as a women's holiday and we sing the names of the Hebrew months using a simple melody. We review the holidays in each month and I give a brief introduction to the coming month, including any holidays, customs and ritual observances.

Then we sing! We use a songsheet I prepare each month containing words transliterated into English so everyone can sing along. I introduce each song with the translation from Hebrew or Yiddish, the source of the text, and the composer. This is not a solo recital, but an opportunity for all to sing with me and with each other.

Attendance at the Rosh Chodesh programs has increased each month, mostly by word of mouth, but also as a result of publicity by the congregation. An attractive and colorful flyer is created by the office staff with my input, and it is posted in the lobby and included in the weekly online bulletin and the monthly newsletter. The coming program is also announced at Shabbat services every week. I choose a theme for each month, which is featured on the flyer and in the announcements. The themes for some months are obvious: Songs to Celebrate Israel's Independence (Iyar), Songs to Celebrate Shavuot (Sivan). Themes for other months require more creativity. Pictures and articles about the programs are also printed in the local Jewish newspaper, since all women in the community are welcome, whether or not they are synagogue members. Since the *hazzan* of the synagogue is male, he is not expected to participate in our Rosh Chodesh programs. But I do share ideas with him on content and melodies when appropriate.

These Rosh Chodesh programs have created a winning situation for everyone: the congregation is seen as warm and welcoming; the participants, many of whom are senior citizens, have a monthly opportunity to socialize, enjoy a healthful meal at no cost, learn a little Yiddishkeit and sing familiar and new songs in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino and English. And I am the biggest winner, because, even though I am retired, I once again have the privilege of sharing my love of Judaism and Jewish music with an appreciative group of women as I slip some learning in between the notes.

Cantor Ruth Katz Green became Cantor Emerita of Temple Beth Shalom in Manalapan, New Jersey in 2015 after serving the congregation for twenty years.

Please feel free to contact Cantor Green if you would like more information about this program: cantorrruthgreen@optonline.net

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CANTORS ASSEMBLY
Every Jewish Soul Has A Voice

The Cantors Assembly promotes the profession of the Cantorate, serving our members and their congregations by supporting our colleagues in their roles as vibrant, engaging, vital clergy and musical leaders.

Beyond offering our members opportunities for mentorship, professional development and personal growth, we also provide essential services such as placement, insurance and retirement planning.

Affiliated with the Conservative/Masorti movement, we serve congregations from across the denominational spectrum. We seek to ensure that our members are fully prepared to lead synagogues and the whole Jewish community through an ever-evolving musical and spiritual landscape.