

THE TEMPLE ISRAEL NEWS

ATHOL, MASSACHUSETTS VOL. 4 TEVET-SHEVAT 5763 JANUARY, 2003

RABBI'S MESSAGE

We are a wandering people. Surely a wandering people would face extinction, the ancient rabbis reasoned, without God's mountaintop, without a piece of property to call its own. Without a home, this tribe would disappear into the fabric of other worlds and other cultures.. And so the rabbis made Judaism portable. You could worship God anywhere, as long as you had the basic setup: a table, a Torah scroll, a prayerbook, maybe even a prayer shawl. Once you settled in one place - no matter how far out in the hinterland-- you were instructed to build the bricks and mortar of your culture: a synagogue, a study hall, and a mikveh. The synagogue was simply a "gathering place," a beit kneset as it is termed in the Mishna, not a religious shrine but an ordinary town hall. In between prayer services, the elders of the place would govern each community and provide for the poor and wayfarer. The synagogue, as it is today, was an institution that made up in its modest way for the loss of God's mountaintop. True, remembrances from the ancient Temple still abound in the synagogue: a Menorah stands on the bima, an eternal light hangs from the ceiling, a curtain separates the congregation from the synagogue's holiest object as it did when it shielded the holy of holies from the public in ancient times. It was meant as an attempt to make wandering Jews feel at home.

But the institution of the synagogue became an anachronism for many. It was too cold, too sterile, too institutional. What is really needed in 21st century Judaism is a spiritual home. That is what I have found at Temple Israel.

Our community has welcomed my family with open arms and we are very grateful. Volunteers have turned the building into our home for each

of our visits. We in turn have contributed our portion from the potluck dinners, to Beth's homemade cholent on Saturday, to Myron's meditation sessions, to Torah discussions, to activities for the kids. In the coming months I hope to grow our home so that Temple Israel can become your spiritual home from sundown on Friday night to sundown on Saturday night. The earliest conception of the "temple" was called a mishkan, literally a place of dwelling. It was not merely a generic place of gathering; it was the home of the holy spirit. Let us recapture that dwelling place. Let all who seek a spiritual home find in Temple Israel, your home away from home.

Shalom,

Rabbi Perlman



SHABBAT SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES SET FOR JANUARY 3 AND 4

The fourth of our very special opportunities to enjoy Shabbat as a community comes on the evening of Friday, January 3 and on Saturday, January 4. On Friday evening, we will have a "dairy-vegetarian" potluck dinner at 6:00, followed by a Shabbat service at 7:00 and an Oneg (Try some great desserts and warm conversation!) after the service at 8:00. Please

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give a call to Peter and Gloria George, Dinner Coordinators, at 978-724-3277 to give us an idea of what you plan to bring for the potluck dinner.

Then, on Saturday morning, those who want to meditate with Dr. Maron prior to the start of services will arrive at 9:20 for settling in and questions prior to beginning meditation at 9:30. If you haven't tried meditation before, it's a terrific way to prepare to celebrate the Sabbath. The Shabbat service itself will be from 10:00 to 12:00 with a special lunch at noon.

NOTE: Child care for the little ones will be

available from 9:15 through lunchtime.

The afternoon will be filled with learning and fellowship. You may join us in singing or learning some traditional Shabbat songs, if you like. We will conclude with a lovely Ma'ariv/Havdalah service, beginning at approximately 5:00 P.M. Please accept our warm invitation to attend any or all of the components of this wonderful Shabbat.

For more information, please call Temple Israel in Athol at 978-249-9481 or contact Co-presidents Dr. Myron Maron at 978-724-0238 or Mitchell Grosky at 978-249-9090.