



Vassar Temple

Where You Belong

Congregation Brethren of Israel, Founded 1848—Bulletin Volume 170 No. 5 December 2021

For Families with Children of all ages!

Hanukkah Story Walk—Sunday, December 5 at 3pm

Outside Temple Beth-El

(in their social hall, socially distanced, if inclement weather)

Families will follow the path of a Hanukkah story with activities at each station

Hot chocolate and *sufganiyot* (donuts) will be served



Concludes at 4pm with singing and lighting of Hanukkiah

Co-sponsored by local synagogues, JFedDC, and PJ library



From the Rabbi's Desk:

As December begins, the fate of reproductive rights in this country hangs in the balance. On December 1, the Court will hear arguments in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's*

Health Organization, the challenge to a Missouri law banning abortion at 15 weeks. If the Court overturns *Roe*, nearly 50 years of women's ability to make one of the most complex, personal and painful decisions about their own reproductive health will be taken away, certainly in the 22 states that stand ready to outlaw abortion immediately. Nearly 40 million American women of reproductive age live in states that have demonstrated hostility to abortion rights.

On December 1, Jews will light the fourth Hanukkah candle. Hanukkah celebrates the victory of the Maccabees for religious freedom. In the emotional debate about abortion, religious freedom is a principle that often gets lost. Laws prohibiting and restricting access to abortion are in fact imposing a particular religious view—that life begins at conception—upon this nation. That is not the Jewish view. Therefore, such laws violate my religious freedom as protected under the First Amendment.

Given all that is at stake, it is important to understand the Jewish view on abortion: not only does Judaism permit abortion; at times, Judaism demands abortion as the mother's life takes precedence over that of the fetus.

Judaism teaches that life begins at birth. We learn this in Exodus 21:22 which describes the case for damages when a pregnant woman miscarries as a result of being pushed. The responsible party must pay damages. If that pregnancy loss would have been considered murder, the penalty would have been life for life.

The Mishnah, codified in 200 CE, clarifies that life begins when the largest part of the fetus emerges in birth. Up until that point, if the mother's life is in danger, one must abort. As Jewish law develops, opinions vary on situations when abortion is permitted,

primarily based on the mother's physical, psychological and emotional well-being. Even as the rabbis recognized stages in fetal development, they also understood the fetus as a life in development. Thus, a Talmudic ruling approves of violating Shabbat to save a fetus on the principle of *pikuah nefesh* (saving a life) though it is not yet a life.

A fetus in not a separate entity. In Jewish law, a fetus is considered part of the woman, so that if a pregnant woman converts to Judaism, the baby is Jewish. A fetus has no rights or separate status.

Our Reform movement has consistently taken strong stands in support of reproductive choice and access to reproductive health care. Reproductive rights are also a matter of economic and racial justice. Those with financial means will always have access to abortion. It is the poor whose health and lives are most at risk and black women comprise the highest percentage of those obtaining abortions.

While we are fortunate to live in one of fifteen states that have passed legislation protecting reproductive health, we cannot "stand idly by the blood our neighbor." Pro-choice organizations are turning their energies towards advocacy for legislation that will codify these rights into law throughout the nation. Two bills have already been introduced in Congress: *The Women's Health Protection Act*, which passed in the House, would protect access to abortion care and *The Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance Act* would permanently end insurance coverage bans.

As we light our Hanukkiot for the final nights of Hanukkah, let us draw strength from the courage of the Maccabees to defend our rights—to follow the teachings of our faith, to have control over our bodies, to make our own choices about the most important decisions in our lives.

Rabbi Renni Altman

The National Council of Jewish Women is spearheading efforts of the Jewish community to advance reproductive justice for all in this country through their *73Forward* campaign. You can learn more about it and how you can participate at <https://www.73forward.org/>.



President's Message: Selected Updates

When my term began, I enumerated objectives to help prepare Vassar Temple for its next 175 years. Admittedly, especially in light of the pandemic, my goal has been downsized from finishing these to at least getting each of them

started. Empowered by my experience at the URJ's Scheidt Seminar, and buoyed by my small Presidents' Network group, I continue to endeavor to be a "change agent" in our community.



Following are three important updates.

Social Media initiative. I am thrilled to announce that, through the generosity and vision of the new Gluck Fund, we have engaged a professional consultant who will develop a robust presence on social media and support us with various other means to increase our outreach. You can help! If you are on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter please stay up to date with Temple and Reform movement news by liking and following our pages and sharing our posts with the community. Please refer to the weekly email

for direct links to these pages as well as the Vassar Temple blog, which we will use more regularly.

The Jewish-Adjacent Task Force was created by the Board in accordance with the authority given in our Bylaws to form a group to address an identified need. In response to significant changes in demographics and our movement's interest in increasing inclusivity, the goal of this project is to recommend to the Board policies that reflect the Reform vision along with Vassar Temple history and practice, through a process of learning and discussion. With the guidance of our Rabbi, the Task Force will use URJ and other materials for thoughtful discussion and clarification of membership, ritual, and governance questions. The group will engage in honest, open dialog in a safe environment where different points of view are respected and explored without preconceived outcomes. Participation will include representation from the spectrum of Temple membership.

A new Cemetery Committee is comprised of several highly motivated members who stepped up for this important work. A great deal is already being accomplished. A substantial cleanup of both sides on Lagrange Avenue was completed by a professional firm. If you have visited periodically, you will notice the significant improvement. We anticipate further enhancements. A broken fence in the oldest section, dividing our property from that of Congregation Schomre Israel, was removed (and the cost shared), allowing us to give needed respect to that historic section and repair old monuments that were knocked over. Individuals are working on updating maps, exploring software for cemetery records, and gathering information on remaining members of the Hebrew Fraternal Benevolent Society in order to determine available space. With the support of Rabbi Altman, we are tackling a complete review of cemetery policies. And much more. Additional participants are welcome.

Change is very hard. I am so grateful to our trustees, clergy, staff, chairs, volunteers and all of you for coming along on this journey.

Susan Karnes Hecht

Bimah Flowers Donations

Just as Shabbat Services help brighten our weeks, so do the Bimah flowers which brighten our Sanctuary. If anyone would like to make a donation to sponsor our flower arrangements, please let the office know.

December 2021 Bimah Flowers Sponsors:

- December 3: Donated by Ken and Amy Horn Oclatis in honor of their grandchildren, and Marilyn McCaulley Lampell in memory of John McCaulley
- December 10: Donated by Vassar Temple Sisterhood Bimah Flower Fund (silk flowers)
- December 17: Donated by Vassar Temple Sisterhood Bimah Flower Fund (silk flowers)
- December 24: Donated by Vassar Temple Sisterhood Bimah Flower Fund (silk flowers)
- December 31: Donated by Vassar Temple Sisterhood Bimah Flower Fund (silk flowers)



Religious School Update

We begin this month in the midst of Hanukkah and we look forward to welcoming parents to join with their children for some fun Hanukkah activities on Sunday, December 5. Appropriately, we are in Unit 3 of the ShalomLearning curriculum that focuses on the value of *gevurah*, strength. When thinking about *gevurah*, we generally think of physical strength and courage, like that of the Maccabees and how they dared to stand up and fight back against the Assyrians. Our curriculum takes students in a different direction, that of spiritual courage: standing up for what is right, daring to go against the tide of peer pressure, taking risks to defend others, especially those who are different from you. Building on the prior unit of *b'tzelem Elohim*, the Jewish belief that everyone is created in the image of God, the students explore teachings such as "love your neighbor as yourselves."

All families with children are also invited to join a Community Hanukkah Celebration—A Hanukkah Story Walk on Sunday, December 5 at 4pm. Vassar Temple will join with the other area synagogues, PJ Library and Federation in this fun-filled afternoon. Weather permitting, it will take place in front of Temple Beth-El on S. Grand Avenue; in case of inclement weather, we will be in their social hall (masked and maintaining social distance). We will conclude at 5pm with songs and lighting the Hanukkiah.

Rabbi Renni Altman

Hanukkah Candle Lighting Shabbat Service, Friday, December 3, 6pm

Come join our family-friendly Hanukkah Shabbat Service led by Rabbi Altman and Cantor Goldmann, with participation by our Temple teens. It will be a hybrid service; in-person and on Zoom. Bring your Hanukkah menorah and candles, or if you're attending on Zoom, be ready to light your menorah along with us at home. We'll carry on our tradition of adding hilarious verses to the "I Have a Little Dreidel" song, so if you have a new verse to contribute, please contact vtritchair@gmail.com ASAP! Holiday To-Go-Neg goodies will be distributed to those attending in person. If participating from home, watch Temple e-mails or contact office@vassartemple.org for the Zoom link. *Chag Sameach!* Happy Hanukkah!

Scriptural Readings

December 4

Hanukkah Mikeitz

Gen. 41:1-44:17; Zechariah 4:1-7

December 11

Vayigash

Gen. 44:18-47:27; Ezekiel 37:15-28

December 18

Va-y'chi

Gen. 47:28-50:26; I Kings 2:1-12

December 25

Sh'mot

Ex. 1:1-6:1;

Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23

New Paths Services

December 4 & 18, 10:15am

Join us for New Paths Sabbath morning services on Zoom, Saturdays December 4 and 18 at 10:15am. The moving liturgy includes both traditional and contemporary writings, mostly in English, and participants may bring supplemental materials to share. "We take the time to let the service get through us, rather than getting through the service." Each New Paths service, whether lay-led or rabbi-led, provides a unique and thoughtful Shabbat morning experience. When possible, we will start an in-person option to attend the service. For updates and more information, please contact office@vassartemple.org or 845-454-2570.

Study Groups at Vassar Temple

"**Torah Study**" examines passages from the week's torah portion or haftorah. Led by the Temple's Rabbi Renni S. Altman, DD on Saturdays from 9-10am. Plan is to continue on Zoom. New attendees should contact office@vassartemple.org to be placed on the class email list.

"**The Talmud: Modern Ideas from an Ancient Text**" taught twice monthly by Senior Scholar Rabbi Paul Golomb, Thursdays December 2 and 16 from 12-1:30pm. May be hybrid, or Zoom only—information and study sheets: piqolomb@verizon.net.

All are welcome—no previous training required—no charge to attend



To: Lisa Rubenstein on being elected
Town Justice in Rhinebeck

RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Oliver Mackson

MUSIC FUND

In Memory of: William Robinowitz

Jim Robinowitz

Contributions

SUSTAINING FUND

In Memory of:

- Joseph LaLone
- Forrest Graves
- Brian Matson
- Esther Mardon Bernstein
- Louis Rosen
- Henry Solomonson
- Philip Browner
- Rose Slate
- Ruth Stein
- Rose Brond
- James Connelly
- Dotty Steinberg

- Jane LaLone
- Jane LaLone
- Jane LaLone
- Kathy & Kent Mardon
- Ron Rosen
- Ron Rosen
- Miriam Lacher
- Jerold Slate
- Charles & Roni Stein
- Joan Reifler
- Jayne Baumbach
- Gloria Mayer



HIGH HOLD DAY APPEAL

- Daniel & Susan Albinder
- Linda Babas
- William Barbash
- Jayne Baumbach
- Gabe & Cathy Bokor
- Thomas & Laura Brundage
- Martin & Ellie Charwat
- Paul & Andi Ciminello
- Doi Cohen
- Paul Colbert & Kathryn Both
- Gail D'Alessio
- Susan Fink
- Sam & Adriaan Finnerman
- Howard & Rochelle Friedman
- Ed & Vivian Garber
- Arthur Gellert
- Eric & Barbara Gillman
- Sara Jane Goldberg
- Dr. Arthur & Margery Groten
- David Hecht & Susan Karnes Hecht
- Barbara Hulnick
- Leonard & Barbara Hyman
- Irma Jacobs
- Jeff & Kim Karitis
- Drs. Maury & Miriam Lacher
- David and Marilyn Lampell
- Anne Lescher
- Lou & Candace Lewis
- Sandra Mamis
- Kent & Kathy Mardon
- Gloria Mayer
- Dr. Arthur & Carol Menken
- Danah Moore
- Dr. Kenneth Oclatis & Amy Horn Oclatis
- Beth Plotsky
- Kurt & Lisa-Sue Quackenbush
- Betty Renner
- Martin & Marilyn Revitz
- Gilbert & Arlene Seligman
- Brian & Helen Silverman

- Carol Strauss
- Drs. Howard Susser & Shirl Davis-Susser
- Glenn & Marcia Tanzman
- Martin & Mindy Teich
- Lewis & Hilary Wrobel
- Ron Rosen
- Melissa Erlebacher

We would like to thank all of the Vassar Temple members who contributed generously to the HHD appeal. The total raised to date from this appeal is \$14,983. It isn't always comfortable to ask for support, but this was easy for us because we love and cherish our Vassar Temple family.

With deepest gratitude for
your generosity,

Andi & Paul Ciminello

December 3

Mildred Tauber
 Elaine Hendricks
 Cynthia Rosenblum
 Leah Michel
 Maurice L. Troeger
 Michael Goldfinger
 Lee Bronfeld
 Claire M. Trivers
 David F. Schor
 Sidney Horn
 May Kaufman Ettenson
 Ida Finnerman
 Edward Roth
 Solomon Berger
 Bea Russotto
 Marion Himmelstein
 Susan Baker
 Sydell Alpers Pannor
 Larry Adler
 Miriam Feitelson
 Sadie Breit
 Sandra Lipschitz
 Martin Markowitz

December 10

Rabbi Sigmund Israel
 Ida Krevolin
 Herman R. Gross
 Julius Klein
 Leo Loeb
 Carl Gross
 Minnie Shapiro
 Ruth Bagun
 Elsa Cohen
 Shirley Ernest
 Wilford Wittenberg
 Thomas Nolan
 Richard Saul Fein
 Herbert Jacobson
 Philip D'Angelo
 Clara Lewin
 Allan E. Dampf
 Jordan Taylor
 Lillian Friedman
 Helen Wrobel
 Gladys Steinberg

December 17

Ruth Stein
 Yetta Horn
 Joan Plotsky
 Esther Yelsky
 Abe Barnett
 Anna Cairo
 Erna Konheim
 Eileen Dermody
 Aaron Slote
 Ruth Seegal Cohen
 Marilyn Sirkus
 Charles Kovacs, DDS
 Ilse B. Dreyfuss
 Anne Kesselman
 Beatrice Snyder
 Nathaniel Rubin
 Belle G. Adler
 Evelyn Lesser
 Joseph Weber
 Evelyn Luttinger

December 24

Clara Dorn
 William Robinowitz
 Stella W. Renick
 Goldie Bleich
 Dr. Doris Berlin-Acker
 Philip Wolfson
 Louis Rosen
 Selma Kahn
 Leah W. Cohen
 Deborah H. Jacobs
 Celia Kraut
 Joseph L. Kahn
 Barnard Cohen
 Reine Reinhart
 Dr. Joseph R. Levy
 Joseph Fa'gut
 Henry Solomonson

December 31

Leo Dorn
 Samuel Grand
 Carl Tobias
 Barnet B. Shelton
 Jean Ciminello
 Frances Rosen
 Morris Effron
 Meyer Miller
 Faye Seif
 Rose Brond
 Jean Citron
 Harry Fogle
 Keith Warner Landau
 DeWitt Fischman
 Donald DeWitt
 Dotty Sternberg
 Harris Harold Groten
 Alma Barbash
 Dr. Bertram Katz

**Yahrzeits**

Thank you to Shira Teich for all of the time she put into the very important volunteer work of mailing out the yahrzeit reminders. In our continuing efforts to centralize and streamline administrative tasks, this mailing will now be automated out of the office.

Sisterhood News

And in the blink of an eye it is December and 2021 is drawing to a close.

Thank you to each of you who sent in your Sisterhood dues and to all who participated in our annual Sisterhood Friendship Calendar. It is not too late to send in your dues for this year. The calendar is set to print, but you can still purchase one for \$10. Contact Karen in the temple office.



Sisterhood has resumed baking and supplying treats for our Friday night onegs. Please contact Amy at oneg@vassartemple.org if you can help by baking or buying a treat. Maria is there to put out the food and to clean up, so you only have to drop off your item to the temple kitchen. Please make sure to label it with the date and what you have brought.

Wishing a *Chag Hanukkah Sameach* (Happy Hanukkah) to all. May your Hanukkiah burn brightly.

Without you we are one woman short!

Marcia Tanzman



Brotherhood News

This past month we gathered together for our annual Brotherhood Shabbat. In these times, it was an opportunity to renew old friendships and make new ones. I want to thank all the men who participated and congratulate them for the Aliyah they received.

As you may know, we are affiliated with the Men of Reformed Judaism (MRJ). You can find out more about them by visiting their website at www.menrj.org. There you will find articles and webinars that might be of interest to you. For example, the MRJ has joined the Reform Movement in condemning the new Texas anti-abortion law. You will also find a link to the URJ there. Both sites provide articles of interest and links to webinars on contemporary issues.

We will be in the midst of celebrating Hanukkah when you receive this bulletin. I hope that you will enjoy the "Festival of Lights" with your family and look forward to seeing you at Temple.

Together we are stronger. Be safe and be well.

Glenn Tanzman



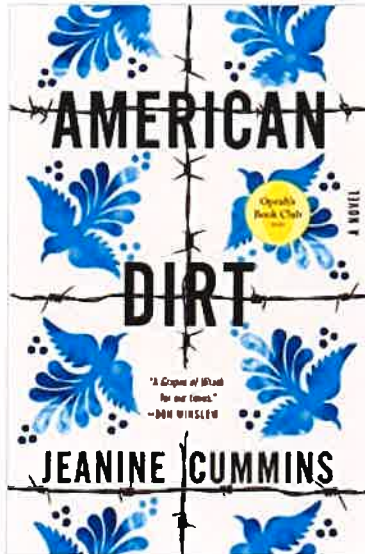
Jewish War Veterans

The December meeting of the Pvt. Herman Siegel Post 625 of Jewish War Veterans of the United States will be Sunday, December 12 on Zoom.

9am "Schmooze"—9:30am Business Meeting

Please contact rschwa9881@aol.com for updates and Zoom link.

Book Club to Discuss *American Dirt* on December 15



Vassar Temple's Sisterhood Book Club will discuss *American Dirt*, by Jeanine Cummins. Already being described by critics as a *Grapes of Wrath* for our time, and a new American classic, *American Dirt* is a moving exploration into the inner hearts of people willing to sacrifice everything for the chance of hope.

Lydia lives in Acapulco. She has an eight-year-old son, Luca, and a wonderful husband, who is a journalist. But after her husband's tell-all profile of the newest drug lord is published, none of their lives will ever be the same. Forced to flee, Lydia and Luca find themselves miles and worlds away from their comfortable middle-class existence.

This timely and poignant story, reflective of what is going on in our world now, is available in paperback, through Amazon and local book stores, with multiple copies available in the Mid-Hudson Library System. The meeting will take place through Zoom on Wednesday, December 15, at 2:00pm. Marian Schwartz will lead the discussion, to which everyone is welcome. To RSVP or get more information, please contact Linda Babas at bookclub@vassartemple.org.

Volunteer at Morse School!



If you have even just a few hours a month to give, you can change the life of a child. Morse Elementary School, Poughkeepsie, is in receivership because of the low achievement level of its student population.

While the children there are excited to learn, they need extra help. Opportunities abound for volunteers to read to classes in the library, as well as to do 1:1 or small group tutoring in the classroom. Subject areas of most urgent need are math and reading. You can select the grade level(s) you want to work with, and, in many cases, the days and hours. There will also be openings for volunteers to help children check out books in the library (training provided). However you choose to help, it will make a difference.

For further information, please contact temple member Chris Baltus, himself a volunteer math tutor, at schoolvolunteer@vassar temple.org. To reach Chris by phone, please call the office for his number.








Happy Holidays for Morse Families

The staff at Morse Elementary School has asked the Jewish Social Action Coalition, of which our Temple is a member, to help the Morse families have happy holidays. This involves making financial donations to be used to purchase gift cards, with which the parents can get the children holiday gifts and warm winter clothing. To donate to this fund, please bring or send a check made out to Vassar Temple with "Morse Holidays" on the memo line. Thank you for helping bring holiday joy and hope into the lives of these families.

Calendar of Events—December 2021

Please see weekly emails for the most up-to-date information

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Fourth Candle Hanukkah Day 3  Hebrew School (on-line)	2 Fifth Candle Hanukkah Day 4  12pm Talmud Study 7pm Ritual CMTE	3 Sixth Candle Hanukkah Day 5  6pm Hanukkah Shabbat Service with Cantor Goldmann	4 Seventh Candle Hanukkah Day 6  9am Torah Study 10:15am New Paths
5 Eighth Candle Hanukkah Day 7  9am Religious School 10am / K-1 10:30am Lunch Box 3pm Community Hanukkah Story Walk	6 Hanukkah Day 8	7	8 Hebrew School (on-line)	9	10 7:30pm Shabbat Service	11 9am Torah Study
12 9am Religious School 10am / K-1	13	14	15 2pm <i>VTS Book Club</i> Hebrew School (on-line) 7:30pm Finance CMTE	16 12pm Talmud Study	17 7:30pm Shabbat Service with Cantor Goldmann	18 9am Torah Study 10:15am New Paths
19 9am Religious School 10am / K-1	20	21	22 NO Hebrew School	23 6:30pm Shelter Meal 7pm Board Meeting	24 OFFICE CLOSED 6pm Zoom only Shabbat Service	25 9am Torah Study
26 NO Religious School	27	28	29 NO Hebrew School	30 12pm Talmud Study	31 6pm Zoom only Shabbat Service	

Vassar Temple Bulletin
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Religious School Director: Renni S. Altman, DD
Cantor: Elizabeth Goldmann
Rabbi Emeritus: Stephen A. Arnold
Senior Scholar: Paul Golomb
Temple Musician: Joseph Bertolozzi
President: Susan Karnes Hecht
1st Vice President: Lisa-Sue Quackenbush
2nd Vice President: Shaari Roland
Secretary: Glenn Tanzman
Treasurer: Brett Colbert
Sisterhood President: Marcia Tanzman
Brotherhood President: Glenn Tanzman
Immediate Past President: Alan Kflowitz
Bulletin Editor: Jo Schaffel



Vassar Temple Bulletin is published monthly. Articles for the February Bulletin must be submitted by January 1 sent via email to publicity@vassartemple.org. The editors reserve the right to edit articles for style, accuracy and length.



Attendance at daily Lunch Box meals have increased over the past few months. They are serving approximately 100 guests daily and on Sundays. So... we need to increase our supply of chili. If you're already part of the chili team, please keep it up. If you have not yet made our Vassar Temple chili, please join the group. Our hungry neighbors need us now more than ever. Our partners at Mid-Hudson Islamic Association are providing the Sunday mid-day meals with Vassar Temple providing fruit to support that meal. Our chili is served on the third Thursday of each month. We collect the frozen chili from the temple the day before and deliver.

However, you can make chili whenever it's convenient for you and your family. You can even organize a chili-making party at Vassar Temple with your friends. All health and safety guidelines must be observed. Fruit donations must also be delivered to Vassar Temple by Sunday morning (first Sunday of the month). Preferred donations are bananas, oranges, or pre-bagged grapes.

If you need the chili recipe, let us know and we will forward it to you. Questions: lunchbox@vassartemple.org

Thank you for feeding our hungry neighbors.

Andi & Paul Ciminello