



Congregation Ahavath Sholom

The Creative Spirit Dwells Here

THE CAS NEWSLETTER February 2020

Upcoming services and events

Saturday, February 8, 10:00 am: Shabbat Morning Service led by Rabbi Cohen followed by coffee, tea, sweets and conversation.

Sunday, February 16, 10:00 am: Study Group at the home of Rabbi Cohen. Bagels and coffee included, so a commitment is needed for planning. Please send a firm RSVP as soon as possible to barbaracohen14@gmail.com. Members free; Non-members \$10 at the door.

Saturday, February 22, 10:00 am: Shabbat Morning Service led by Rabbi Cohen followed by coffee, tea, sweets and conversation.

This month's newsletter features:

- In Memory of Sheldon Rothberg
- *Start Close In, Coming Together*
- Milchidika with Marty: *Synagogue Newsletters*
- *Believers: Faith in Human Nature* – a discussion of the book (coming next month)
- February Yahrzeits
- February Donations
- CAS Advertisers and Sponsors

In Memory of Sheldon Rothberg

We are sorry to announce the death of Sheldon Rothberg, z'l, who served as the spiritual leader of our congregation for seven years in the 1980-1990s. Rabbi Cohen officiated his funeral at our synagogue on Friday morning, January 24th. The sanctuary was filled with family members, current and former members of the congregation, and many colleagues and friends. Burial took place in Woburn, MA following the funeral. Our heartfelt condolences to Sheldon's family. May his memory be for a blessing...

Sheldon's obituary as it appeared in the Berkshire Eagle and the Berkshire Edge:

Sheldon Ira Rothberg, 81, a longtime resident of Sheffield, MA passed away peacefully on January 22, 2020 surrounded by his loving family. In 2015, he became a resident of Fairview Commons Nursing Home in Great Barrington

Sheldon was born in Boston, MA on August 8, 1938, the son of Morris and Helen Rothberg. He graduated from The University of Vermont in 1962 where he returned to earn his Masters in 1967. He and his wife, Linda moved to Pittsfield, MA in 1970 with their two children, Adam and Jude.



Sheldon with members of Congregation Ahavath Sholom c.1991



Photographs by Don Victor

He married his second wife, Heidi in 1982 and they lived with their daughter Natana in Sheffield, MA.

Sheldon was Professor of English and Humanities at Berkshire Community College from 1970 - 2002 and founded and led Project Outreach Seniors beginning in 1978. He loved the poetry of Emily Dickinson, the plays of William Shakespeare, airplanes, and teaching, and he was beloved by his students. His love for Judaism led him to serve for seven years as spiritual leader at Temple Ahavath Sholom in Great Barrington, MA.

He is survived by his brother Warren, his ex-wives Linda and Heidi, his children Natana and her partner Ben, Adam and his wife Lisa, and Jude and her husband Rob.

SERVICE - *The funeral will be held at on Friday, January 24, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. at Congregation Ahavath Sholom, Great Barrington, MA 01230.*

*In lieu of flowers, please send donations to the Sheldon I. Rothberg Memorial Fund c/o **Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home**, 426 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA 01230. To leave remembrances for the family, go to facebook.com/shelrothberg.*

Coming Together, Start Close In

On January 19th, Sunday morning, members of the congregation met to discuss their thoughts and feelings about the rising anti-Semitism in our community and the world. As might be expected, our reactions were wide-ranging, but the opportunity to speak, listen, and share our experiences was invaluable. Barbara began the session by reading a poem by David Whyte that spoke to taking a first step, and many of the congregants had already given some thought to positive actions in this dark time. Some suggested an increase of political activism; some to the larger issue of “othering” many people, not only Jews, at this time and speaking out against bigotry, no matter whom it targets (only in a safe environment). There were many other threads of discussion, and I invite those who attended to add their thoughts and observations to subsequent newsletter articles and letters.

As for myself, I had been brooding for some time about my reluctance to speak up when thoughtless and cruel remarks were spoken by casual acquaintances in my presence. Fear and habitual avoidance of confrontations have kept me quiet too many times in the past. So I decided to do some research to find some responses to have at the ready. I have no way of knowing if I can change even one mind, but I do know that speaking my truth, saying out loud what I believe is right and good, will make me stronger.

I googled *what to say to a bigot*, and the first two links were from University of Massachusetts and The Southern Poverty Law Center. Both have extensive articles on speaking up. I recommend them both. In “Speak Up: Responding to Everyday Bigotry” SPLC addresses many different scenarios, but I will just quote from the “Six Steps to Speaking Up

Against Everyday Bigotry” that concludes the article. It should be said that these suggestions are for speaking to people we know. No one is advocating putting ourselves in physical danger.

What follows quotes directly from SPLC's webpage.

Be ready. You know another moment like this will come up again, so prepare yourself for it. Think of yourself as the one who will speak up. Promise yourself not to remain silent.... have something to say in mind before an incident happens. Open-ended questions often are a good response. "Why do you say that?" "How did you develop that belief?"

1. *Identify the behavior. In other words, give that person neutral feedback on what you observe.*
2. *Appeal to principles.*
3. *Set limits.*
4. *Find an ally/be an ally.*
5. *Be vigilant. Stay prepared, and keep speaking up. Don't risk silence. If you don't speak up, you're surrendering part of yourself. You're letting bigotry win.*

I hope we have more meetings of this kind, and I hope to see you there.

Barbara Janoff

Start Close In
by David Whyte

Start close in,
don't take the second step
or the third,
start with the first
thing
close in,
the step
you don't want to take.
Start with
the ground
you know,
the pale ground
beneath your feet,
your own
way to begin
the conversation.
Start with your own
question,
give up on other
people's questions,
don't let them
smother something
simple.
To hear
another's voice,
follow
your own voice,
wait until
that voice
becomes an
intimate
private ear
that can
really listen
to another.
Start right now
take a small step
you can call your own
don't follow
someone else's
heroics, be humble

and focused,
start close in,
don't mistake
that other
for your own.
Start close in,
don't take
the second step
or the third,
start with the first
thing
close in,
the step
you don't want to take.

*A David Whyte poem from
River Flow: New & Selected Poems
Many Rivers Press*

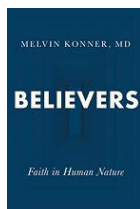
Milchidika with Marty: Synagogue Newsletters

These announcements with typos and phrasing blunders were reportedly found in various synagogue newsletters and bulletins around the country.

1. Don't let worry kill you. Let your synagogue help. Join us in our Oneg after services. Prayer and medication to follow. Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our congregation.
2. For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.
3. Thursday at 9, there will be a meeting of the Little Mothers Club. All women wishing to become Little Mothers, please see the rabbi in his private study.
4. The ladies of Hadassah have cast off clothing of every kind and they may be seen in the basement on Tuesdays.
5. A bean supper will be held on Wednesday evening in the community center. Music will follow.
6. Weight Watchers will meet at 7PM at the JCC. Please use the large double doors at the side entrance.
7. We are taking up a collection to defray the cost of the new carpet in the sanctuary. All those wishing to do something on the carpet will come forward and get a piece of paper.
8. If you enjoy sinning the choir is looking for you.
9. Let us join David and Lisa in celebration of their wedding and bring their happiness to a conclusion.
10. Low Self Esteem Group will meet Thursday at 7 to 8:30 . Please use the back door.
11. The rabbi spoke briefly, much to the delight of the audience.
12. Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the synagogue. So ends a friendship that began on a school bus.
13. Ladies don't forget the rummage sale. It is a good chance to get rid of those things that are not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands.
14. The peace-making meeting scheduled for today has been canceled due to a conflict.
15. The Ladies Bible Study Group will be held on Thursday morning at 10. All ladies are invited to luncheon after the B.S. is done.

Believers: Faith in Human Nature – discussion of the book (coming next month)

Don't forget to begin reading the book "Believers: Faith in Human Nature" by Melvin Konner, MD and anthropologist. The author explores the basis of faith in the human family, across religious traditions, cultures and across the globe. Born into an orthodox family and an atheist by 17 years old, Dr. Konner evenhandedly explores the question of the organic, social and cultural origins of belief and the use of substances and the way they contribute to spiritual rituals and other-worldly experiences. Rabbi Cohen will facilitate a group discussion on Sunday, March 15th at 10am at the synagogue (bagels and coffee, of course!). Please mark your calendar now and ask your friends to join you in reading the book and bring them along. RSVPs closer to the date. This is a conversation we should be having!



February Yahrzeits

“Much of our experience of divine goodness, grace and love has come to us through those whose lives have touched our own.”
Kol Haneshamah

Frances Letofsky	Shevat 07 5769	2/2
Larry Hillman	Shevat 09 5722	2/4
Diane Rausch	Shevat 10 5752	2/5
Dan Bongini	Shevat 12 5765	2/7
Jeff Axelrod	Shevat 19 5775	2/14
Irving Krantz	Shevat 21 5765	2/16
Louis Radin	Shevat 23 5703	2/18
Meyer Osterweil	Shevat 23 5719	2/18
Seymour Schwartz	Shevat 27 5777	2/22
Sherwin Fink	Adar1 3 5776	2/28
Helen Weiner	Adar1 04 5766	2/29

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In memory of Sheldon Rothberg

In memory of Larry Hillman

Arthur and Louise Hillman

In loving memory of Helen Weiner

Keren Weiner

In loving memory of my mother, Frances Letofsky

Barbara Janoff

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Robert Rausch

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