



# Beth Am COMMENTATOR

MIAMI, FLORIDA

JANUARY 12, 1973

## Taking On A New Soul

### *A Recipe For Young Lovers*

By Rabbi HERBERT M. BAUMGARD

I ask every couple which visits me as part of my pre-marriage counseling to pledge themselves to the observance of at least one Jewish ritual on a regular basis. When I have finished discussing the particular ritual which I think is part of the irreducible minimum of Jewish observance, I invariably find that the young people have tears in their eyes, and they eagerly adopt this ritual for their very own. You see, young people are searching for symbols that can help them share profound experiences. Judaism is rich in such symbols, but I ask the couple to pledge themselves only to the constant observance of the lighting of the Friday night candles, instituting the Sabbath. Of course, I would be delighted if they observed many more customs, but this is a pivotal point of beginning. My discussion concerning the significance of this ritual goes something like this.

No idea or institution which Judaism has given the world is greater than the institution of the Sabbath. When the Bible records that God "rested" on the Sabbath, the Hebrew word which is used is also translatable "and He took on a new soul."

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## Calling All Nature Lovers

Judaism is a religion born in deep involvement with nature. All of its major holidays are agricultural festivals in origin. Even its minor holidays, like "Tu B'Shvat," "The New Year of the Trees," pay homage to the beauty of nature.

"Tu B'Shvat" means the fifteenth day of the month of Shvat, which comes Thursday, January 18. Its theme is the miracle of the tree, as evidence of the divine creative spirit flowing through the world. In Israel, this is a time for the mass planting of trees, and each year, Beth Am's children raise funds to plant hundreds of trees.

Our Religious School has developed a special program around this holiday. Older children will hold their classes under the trees instead of in classrooms, and younger classes will plant seedlings. Take your family on a picnic in honor of this occasion and talk to them about the miracles of creation.

## Protestants Begin Conversion Drive

A large group of Protestant churches have undertaken a new conversion program on a mass scale. The program is entitled Key 73. Responsible and liberal Protestant groups hope through this program, which may include house to house visits, to get more Christians into the church. More extreme Protestant groups, including some unofficial groups, are gearing their program to any and all, including Jews.

As this program intensifies, it will become increasingly important for Jews, especially for Jewish children, to be able to deal with the pressures that will be brought upon them. Parents should not be indifferent to the campaign, because most Jewish children are woefully ignorant of what their own faith teaches, and a person who presents himself as a student of the Bible can possibly convince your child of what is neither a correct nor scholarly reading of the Bible.

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### Come to Sisterhood's Fabulous Fun-Raising *Las Vegas Night*

Saturday, January 20, 1973

Crooked Creek Country Club 8:00 p. m.

**\$6.00 per person includes chips and refreshments**

Ticket Chairman: Arlene Root, 665-3233 — Tickets also in Temple office

Las Vegas Chairman: Marlene Housman, 665-4052

Join us for an evening of fun and games--all kinds of prizes!

**VIVA LAS VEGAS!**

## RELIGIOUS SERVICES

FRIDAY, JANUARY 12, 8:30 p.m.

Rabbi Baumgard

**"Are Colleges Really A  
Disaster Area For  
Jewish Students?"**

The Adult Choir will sing.



SATURDAY, JANUARY 13, 11:15 a.m.

TORAH SERVICE



FROM THE RABBI'S DESK

## Taking On A New Soul

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The commandment to rest on the Sabbath was a revolutionary idea in a time when men, women, and children worked seven days a week from dawn to dusk. A day of rest for them meant a time when they could be human beings instead of beasts of burden. The commandment, incidentally, refers also to the animals which are used for work. They, too, must have a day of rest. The Sabbath, then, is a time for all creation "to take on a new soul." It is a call against excessive materialism. It is an attack on the preoccupation with the amassing of wealth as against a concern for the greater spiritual potential that resides in living creatures.

The lighting of the candles is the symbolic introduction of this thought into our humdrum week. Husband and wife should be together when they light the Sabbath candles on Friday night. They should bring to the symbolic act this mood, "We are lighting these candles as an act of identification with the Jewish people and with its search for a world of justice and peace. Let this remind us that, as Jews, we must be in the vanguard of those who help mankind take on a new soul."

It is important to recite the traditional blessing at this time, but it is more important to light the candles in a proper mood. It must not be done as a perfunctory act. What you are thinking as you light the candles is even more important than what you are saying. Do you really want to transform the world? Do you really understand that to be a Jew means to strive for this transformation? You must both be present at the lighting of the candles. The husband or wife must come home from work as soon as he can. The wife must wait for him. Let the candles be lit as near as possible to sundown, and let it be a moment of renewed love for the two of you. This should be a moment of touching, or embracing, or kissing, a moment for the silent renewal of marriage vows. If you have argued, let the problems melt in the flame of the candles. Your love is greater than your problems. In this fashion, did our fathers use this ritual, for the husband would come home from the synagogue and sing a love song to his wife, "Ashes Chayil," from the Book of Proverbs. It would be nice for the husband to sing such a love song, but even if he doesn't, let him communicate his affection to his wife, in his own way, however quietly, at the moment of candle lighting, and let her respond in her way.

When you have children, bring them into this moment of renewal. In the tradition (as in Fiddler on the Roof), the father drew the children near to him, held his hand on the head of each child, and blessed them. It would be nice if either of you could say the traditional blessing of the children, but it is more important that you understand this as an opportunity to let your children know that you love them. Let the scolding melt away in the flame of the candles. Bring them near to you, hug them, kiss them. In this way will this moment, and incidentally this ritual, become dear to them. In the tradition, the Jewish family was united over the Sabbath candles. The regular observance of this ritual will enrich your marriage.

I have prepared an abbreviated Sabbath procedure with which to institute Friday night dinner. It would be helpful if you performed all of it, but I am only asking you to pledge yourselves to the lighting of the candles, provided you bring to it the mood I have described. The real meaning of a ritual depends on the people performing it. The ritual has no saving grace in itself. It is we who must supply the mood and the inspiration. Properly understood and presented, this ritual will help you and your family to take on a new soul each Sabbath.

The prepared procedure will appear in next week's issue of the COMMENTATOR. Needless to say, all Jewish families should light the candles. Begin now, if you haven't done it before.

## Brotherhood Breakfast

Sunday, January 21 Social Hall, 9:30 a. m.

Featuring FRED SHOCKET

Publisher of The Jewish Floridian

## Joan's Gems

By JOAN SCHWARTZMAN

Hear tell that Harry and Ethelle Gunther, along with their sons, Jack and Andy, spent the winter holiday in Europe. I'm sure they had a marvelous time. . . . Congratulations to the following Beth Am families upon the marriage of their children. Joe and Virginia Altschuller, upon the marriage of their daughter, Martha, to Howard Zaritsky, and to Carl and Gloria Kaplan upon the marriage of their daughter, Diane, to Raul Gonzalez. . . . This reporter, Joan the Gem, has just returned from a fabulous trip to New York City with sons, Steven and Barry. Gee, it's great to be back in Miami.

Best wishes for a speedy recovery to the following members who were recently hospitalized: Howard Halberg, Mark Silverman, Leonard Mindlin, Beverly Hacker, Wilma Rosen, Steven Kline, Irene Nicholas, Carolyn Bellin, and Cyril Light.

## Protestants Begin Conversion Drive

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In the near future, special programs will be presented at the Temple under the general heading "Know How to Answer." Parents, especially, should attend these sessions in order to be able to help their children.

## B'nai Mitzvah

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13  
11:15 a. m.



Richard Allan, son of  
Mr. and Mrs. Walter Kaye  
Robert, son of  
Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Trilling