



Beth Am COMMENTATOR

MIAMI, FLORIDA

JANUARY 17, 1975

Temple Adopts Soviet Family

In addition to the Varnovitsky family adopted by our Temple Sisterhood, the Temple has now officially adopted a second family. They are Grigori and Larissa Goman of Leningrad. He is a 29 year old meteorologist who first applied for his exit visa in 1972 and has been refused.

This is our opportunity to work person to person in a truly human endeavor. This young couple needs our support. Just a letter or a book or a gift are often enough to give them the moral and physical support which they so desperately need. The time is now!

For further information, please call Dr. William Silver, 666-2526, or the Temple office, 667-5587.

Ethnic Identity Topic For Breakfast Forum Jan. 19

A matter of ethnic identity, a far ranging panel discussion with four Jewish students from the U. of M. and Rabbi Stanley Ringler, director of the Hillel Center at the U. of M., about problems of identity for a minority group in this country will take place at the next Brotherhood Breakfast Forum on Sunday morn, January 19, at 9:30 a.m., in the Youth Lounge. Admission is \$1.00 for Brotherhood members and \$1.50 for non-members.

The problems of Jewish identity are manifold. Can Israel be the only place one can practice Judaism? Are there conflicts between our Jewish culture and our American culture? These are just two of many questions involved in this important discussion.

This is an outstanding topic and an outstanding group. They have discussed this problem on two occasions on Channel 4.

Guardians Of Our Youth

**Drs. Melvin and Nancy Greenfield
Gordon Jones**

The families listed above have made their commitment to Temple Beth Am by joining the growing list of Guardians of Our Youth.

Beth Am Youth Group Wins Convention Awards



It was a most successful regional convention in Savannah for BAFTY (Senior Youth Group). Not only did we have the largest contingent present, but we swept all the contest awards. Our own David Schwartz was elected vice president of the region. Natalie Siegel and Elliot Katz won the song contest with an original Hebrew melody and words. David Schwartz was runner-up. Elliot was the song leader at the convention and did an excellent job. Ross Goodman delivered the prize winning sermonette and Ricky Udell was runner-up. Ricky won the photo contest with a magnificent entry based on the theme "Mitzvot--two fold Commandment." This coming Friday evening, all these young people will be featured. We congratulate their tremendous efforts.

YOUTH GROUP TO PRODUCE 'THE ENCOUNTER'

Cindy Gold, member of BAFTY (Beth Am Federation of Temple Youth) and an outstanding actress, will direct "The Encounter," a touching play set in Nazi Germany.

There are several spots available for male actors. The play is being produced via "New School" in cooperation with BAFTY and the Central Agency for Jewish Education.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 17
8:30 p.m.

RABBI HERBERT M. BAUMGARD

'Salute To Youth'

**RELIGIOUS
SERVICES**

Henry Le Clair
Cantorial Soloist



SATURDAY, JANUARY 18
11:15 a.m.

TORAH SERVICE

Sisterhood Vizcaya Tour Jan. 15



Let's Study Torah

Parasha "Bo," Book of Exodus. Read Chapter 10:1-13:16.

This reading continues the tale of the contest between Pharaoh and Moses. Already, there are signs that many of Pharaoh's advisers want to end the conflict which has cost Egypt a great deal because of the plagues. They advise the monarch to let the slaves go (10:7). Pharaoh heeds their advice, but he is not willing to surrender completely. Cautiously, he asks Moses, "If I let your people go, what will you take with you?" (v. 8). In other words, the negotiation for a settlement is on. Moses replies, "We will go with our young and with our old . . . with our flocks and herds . . ." (v. 9). Pharaoh's answer is stylized, but, apparently, he agrees only to let the men go (not the women, nor the young ones, nor the flocks), and he drives Moses from his presence, as if his request is ridiculous and insulting (v. 10, 11).

God tells Moses to respond with the plague of locusts (v. 12-15). This is sufficient to bring Pharaoh to his knees (momentarily), and the king pleaded with Moses to withdraw the plague (v. 16-21). Once again, the Pharaoh's "heart is hardened," however, and he refused to let the people go (v. 20). The plague of darkness follows and Pharaoh says, "All right, take your little ones and your flocks with you." (v. 21-24).

As a typical negotiator, however, Moses now raises his demands. Pharaoh has held out too long. The old offer had been withdrawn. Moses now wants the king to give the people the necessary sacrificing animals for their festival to be celebrated at that season (the Spring festival), see verses 24-25. Pharaoh is too much the monarch, too accustomed to giving orders, to let Moses tell him anything, so, in spite of the continuing punishment of his people, he refuses this little extra request (v. 27-29). In fact, he tells Moses that if he ever enters the royal court again, he will be killed (v. 28). Moses is not afraid. He knows he has the upper hand (v. 29).

The last plague describes an ancient belief that goes far beyond the Egyptian-Hebrew encounter. The ancient Semites believed that the first fruits of field and man belonged to the gods. This was translated pragmatically in that the harvesters brought the first fruits of the trees and harvest to the temple for the use of the "gods" (or for those who represented them). Also, the first born male was given to the Temple as a worker, or in some societies, actually sacrificed to the god. The Hebrews outgrew this latter custom relative to the first born male. We have evidence of this in the story of Abraham and Isaac (who was not sacrificed) and in the present story whereby the first born of the Hebrews are spared while the first born of the Egyptians are taken in the final plague (Ch. 11). Modern traditional Jews observe the ceremony of Pidyon Ha-ben, or redemption of the first born son, which is a legal fiction whereby the son is given to God, but he really isn't. Reform Jews do not observe this practice. We say even the legal fiction is not necessary. See further Chapter 13:1, which is the ancient law restated.

Chapter 12 describes the way in which the first Passover was observed and the way in which the Hebrews escaped from Egypt, finally.

Is There Still Anti-Semitism?

By Rabbi JULIAN COOK

Is there still anti-semitism? Can the oppression of previous generations occur once again in this land of liberty, justice and prosperity? Are Jews still thought of as the pariah people, oddities of creation? These questions may seem strange to many who have come to regard a once-common phenomenon as strictly passe. Children have grown up never knowing the meaning of anti-semitism, believing that the holocaust was part of ancient history, and thinking that Jews are the most respected group of people in our society.

We certainly don't want to frighten people into thinking that a great catastrophe is upon us, but we need to realize that life as a Jew entails guarding against complacency. It is important to take notice every once in a while of what other people are saying. Take, for example, the following excerpt from a letter recently received by the Temple:

"You conspired with the Gentiles and killed god in his own city 2000 years ago, didn't you? Then you were dispersed around the world to be mistreated and killed by Gentiles for 2000 years, didn't you? Why? You know why. You killed God's son by turning him over to the Gentiles. . . . Now the Arabs want your land. Who do they turn to? America. America ha ha ha. . . . Can't depend on America. She buys her life by giving Russia wheat and Arabs reactors. . . . Your enemies want one thing - to exterminate you and all Jews. . . . The U.N. said the land was yours. Do they back your claim? No. Why? America needs oil. People are afraid of nuclear war. . . ."

"The only person to help you is God, but obviously you're out of favor or else you wouldn't have Arabs at you. . . . Now 2000 years of exile you are back in your land. But you never confessed your sins of 2000 years ago. . . . Convert. . . . Tell my people down below, convert the Jews to Jesus Christ, and woe unto any man who interferes, Jew or Gentile - Christmas Eve brings the fall of judgement."

Some may dismiss such letters as the work of crazy men, ridiculous nonsense that nobody could possibly take seriously. A few moments reflection will call to mind that "ridiculous nonsense" has often been taken quite seriously. Can you afford to let that happen once again? Can you afford not to let your children know the potential consequences of these sentiments and how they can deal with them? We suggest that how Jews react to such hate propaganda is a serious matter for family discussion. Won't you help your children understand the need to prevent history from repeating itself?

Joan's Gems

By JOAN SCHWARTZMAN

Mazel tov to Joy and Harold Goldstein, who have become grandparents for the first time. Born to their son, Sam, and daughter-in-law, Sandy, was Brian Richard, weighing in at 7 pounds, 12 ounces.

*Bnai
Mitzvah*



Saturday
January 18
11:15 a.m.

Daniel, son of
Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Goldstein
Eric, son of
Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Lieberman