

Beth Am commentator

December 31, 1976

Miami, Florida

RELIGIOUS SERVICE

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31, 8:30 p.m., RABBI BAUMGARD

"On The Eve Of What?"

SATURDAY, JANUARY 1, 11:15 a.m., TORAH SERVICE

High School In Israel



Four students of Temple Beth Am are presently attending the High School in Israel at Beit Berl, K'far Saba, Israel, where they are taking part in the November session of the year-round program. They are Janet Segal and Joel Benjamin in front and Elisa Slater and Caroline Kram in the rear.

The students, who departed November 22, will return to the United States January 13 after completing an intensive study course of the history of the Jewish People and Israel through a combination of tiyulis (field trips) to historical sites and background study of the important literary, archaeological, geographical and intellectual sources related to the site. Each participant will earn high school credits equivalent to one quinmester's credits.

The next session begins February 6. Applications are being accepted for that session as well as for April 24 and July 3. Information can be obtained by calling 576-4000 (ext. 305), or by writing the High School in Israel, 4200 Biscayne Blvd., Miami, Florida 33137.

SISTERHOOD CALENDAR, JANUARY, 1977

January 5 Board and Committee Meeting
9:30 a.m., Room 28
January 19 General Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
Temple Social Hall. Julia Busch talk and slide presentation
on "The American Jewish Artist"

BROTHERHOOD MEMBERSHIP NIGHT JAN. 5

Temple Beth Am Brotherhood will hold a wine and cheese tasting party on January 5, 1977. Monsieur Leon will present a program on wine tasting. This informal meeting--with ladies invited, no charge to anyone--should provide an opportunity for new and old Brotherhood members to meet one another.

Adult Ed For The Winter

Morning, Afternoon And Night

Adult Ed is alive and well at Beth Am even during the month of January. For those who desire to study mornings, we offer two courses:

Bible and Commentaries, every Tuesday morning in the library, from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m., resuming January 4. Now well into its second year, this continuing course requires no knowledge of Hebrew, and you can enter it at any time. No registration is necessary. Rabbi Chefitz teaches.

Hebrew From Scratch In Only Four Weeks, Lenore Kipper's popular course for those who know no Hebrew and want to learn enough to participate in the service, will be taught on four Thursday mornings beginning January 20, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., in Room 24. No fee. Call the Temple office to register.

COMPREHENSIVE HEBREW TAUGHT AFTERNOONS

If you want to learn conversational Hebrew, a comprehensive class begins Tuesday afternoon, January 4. Classes will continue until April 19, six hours of instruction a week, 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays, in Room 24. You must be 16 or over to register. The \$5 registration fee is waived for senior citizens. High school foreign language credit is available. There are two tracks of study, one for beginners and one for intermediates. Sarah Cohen is the instructor. Register through the Temple office.

THREE COURSES OFFERED EVENINGS

Basic Judaism, a continuing course offered every Friday evening, throughout the year, covering all aspects of Jewish life, meets in Room 28, at 7:30 (8:30 when there is a family service). This course is a requirement for candidates for conversion, and a blessing for Jews who want to build a substantial foundation in Jewish studies. No registration is necessary. Rabbis Baumgard and Chefitz teach.

Sex Ethics and the Jewish Framework. Rabbi Chefitz will repeat his fall offering on the four Wednesday evenings of January, beginning January 5, 8:00 to 10:00 p.m., in Room 28. All aspects of human sexuality will be treated in the light of Biblical and Rabbinic teaching, and that light leaves nothing uncovered. Registration limited. Reserve a place by calling the Temple office. Seats will be available for guests who might like to attend individual lectures.

Jeremiah, Super Superstar, will be presented on four Monday evenings, beginning January 17, 7:15 to 9:15. Rabbi Baumgard will be offering this as part of the Parent Confirmation course, but all are welcome to attend. Register at the first class session.

ANOTHER FIRST FOR BETH AM

Sisterhood and Brotherhood jointly present a

Covered Dish Dinner

FREE for the whole family

Mark your calendar -- Hold the date
SUNDAY, JANUARY 9, 1977, 6 P.M.

Beth Am Youth Lounge

Prepare your favorite recipe. Let us know what you'll be bringing and how many in your family will attend

R.S.V.P. before Jan. 2, 1977

Temple Office: 667-5587 Florence Birchansky: 226-4299



FROM THE RABBI'S STUDY

The Messiah

The Christian conception of Jesus as the Messiah is rooted in the Old Testament. The word "Messiah" is a Hebrew word which means "the anointed one." As used by the literary prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc), the Messiah was to be a king of Israel who would overthrow the foreign power, usher in an independent Hebrew nation, and establish justice and peace. The prophets looked for his imminent coming. This would place the anticipated time at from 700 to 500 B.C.E. This is about 500 to 700 years before the birth of Jesus.

There was nothing supernatural in the prophetic understanding of the Messiah. He was to be a flesh and blood king, and he would do the things that a human king would do--no more, no less. The Romans understood the popular hope for the Messiah in just this sense. Therefore, when, in the time of Jesus, a small group of Jews believed him to be the Messiah, the Romans considered him a potential threat to their rule over the Jewish kingdom. Accordingly, they crucified him (they treated many Jews in just this fashion), and over his cross they wrote the mocking words, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of Judea" (so the New Testament informs us). To make the mocking complete, the Romans clothed Jesus in a purple robe (the color of the kings) and placed a "crown" on his head--a crown of thorns. In this fashion, the Roman overlord thoroughly squelched the hope of the followers of Jesus that he might overthrow the foreign power and become "The king of Israel." Apparently, this hope was not shared by many Jews because the basic Jewish sources of this period do not mention this event as being of any major significance.

The New Testament speaks of Jesus as not merely "the messiah," but also as "the son of man." In one of the apocalyptic books written by Jews outside the pale of normative Judaism, Esdras, there is talk of a semi-divine being coming in the clouds at "the end of days" to judge between the righteous and the wicked. This book was outlawed by the Jewish authorities as being not consistent with the mainstream of Judaism (this was, in fact, a Persian doctrine). The followers of Jesus picked up this concept and taught that Jesus was "the son of man." This is why Michelangelo depicts Jesus as "the judge" dividing the lucky and unlucky men, and assigning one group to paradise, the other group to hell (in his painting in the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel). So much identified with the "Judge" did Jesus become in Medieval Europe that more Catholic Churches were dedicated to Mary than to her son during this period. Mary became the hope of the people for mercy.

While Christian theology gradually removed the human qualities from Jesus (a process that is being reversed today) and progressively made him into "the son of man," and then "the son of god" (a part of the godhead), Jewish teaching gradually took the qualities identified with the messiah and gave them over to the people themselves! When the messiah delayed in coming, Jewish folklore developed in such a way as to teach that he was delayed only because the people did not prepare for his coming. That is, instead of ushering in the era of righteousness, the messiah was to come at its culmination. He would come only when the good society had already been achieved by the people (remember, he was still a flesh and blood person in Jewish eyes).

Reform Judaism took this gradually developing viewpoint and crystallized it. While Orthodox Jews still look for the coming of an individual Messiah, in the above sense, Reform Jews do not. We say that one man cannot save us. We look (Continued at bottom of adjacent column)

WITH OUR RABBIS . . .

RABBI BAUMGARD has been appointed by the National Commission on Jewish Education to lead a special task force in developing new criteria for the Reform observance of religious holidays and rituals. . . . He recently led the Sabbath Service conducted in Jerusalem as part of the World Union for Progressive Judaism Conference, at which he represented Beth Am. . . . He has been asked to serve as a delegate of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations at the forthcoming convention of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

RABBI CHEFITZ has been devoting most of his time to teaching and related activities. He is offering courses in prayer to the seventh grade, adjusting to teenage life to the Bar Mitzvah class, Jewish source materials to the ninth grade, and essential Judaism to the confirmation class. For adults this year, he has been presenting courses in Basic Judaism, Ethics and the Jewish Framework, Bible and Commentaries, and Sex Ethics. He is also actively involved in the development of the Havurah program. This leaves him ample time for hospital visitations, and counseling. He is presently studying some aspects of Kabbalah and hopes to have a follow-up to his first mysticism course ready for next fall.

RABBI COOK recently had his course syllabus "Jeremiah Was A Prophet" for Junior High published experimentally by the UAHC. He will be attending the forthcoming annual conference of the National Association of Temple Educators in West Palm Beach this winter and is on the program committee for that conference.

JOAN'S GEMS


By JOAN SCHWARTZMAN

We are pleased to report that Dr. Theodore M. Wolff and Ellen Mandler (Mrs. Bernard) were elected to the Board of Directors of the High School in Israel.


Bnai

Mitzvah

Saturday
January 1
11:15 a.m.



Stewart, son of
Mr. and Mrs. Sanford Shapiro



Mitchel, son of
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Young

instead for "a messianic age," a time when enough people, Jews and non-Jews, will co-operate sufficiently to create an age of peace and justice. We teach that we are all the messiah. Fragmented, we create war and injustice. Together, we are able to create the good society.

In order to understand the new "death of god" theology in Christian ranks, we must understand it as a revolt against the old supernaturalism which deprived man of all responsibility and power and gave it all over to "the son of man," to Jesus. The radical theologians amongst the Christians would make of Jesus, not the "son of god," or "the son of man" or even "the messiah." They would speak of him as a good man to be imitated. This is a complete reversal of Christian thinking, so we can understand why it is unpopular amongst fundamentalist Christians. On the other hand, the new process represents a judaizing of Christianity. For us, God has never been the sole actor while we are mere spectators. We do not have to "kill" God in order to give man responsibility, for we have always taught that man serves as God's agent.