



RELIGIOUS SERVICE, Friday, January 18, 1980, 8:30 p.m.  
 BAFTY CREATIVE SERVICE  
 "THE FUTURE, WILL THERE BE A LIGHT EVERLASTING?"  
 TORAH SERVICE Saturday, January 19, 1980, 11:15 a.m.

# Beth Am Commentator

January 18, 1980

Miami, Florida



**REMEMBER THIS DATE - FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1980**

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations will speak at Temple Beth Am at 8:30 P.M. in celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the founding of our Temple. Do not miss this dynamic man in one of his rare appearances in South Florida.

Rabbi Schindler is a forceful speaker and is not afraid to speak out on controversial subjects concerning Israel, Judaism, and American foreign policy. Those of you who will come to hear Rabbi Schindler speak on Feb. 1st will be in for an inspiring evening. Temple Beth Am is honored to have this distinguished visitor come to help us celebrate our 25th Anniversary.

## Would Be Collegians Invited To Meet With Experts on Colleges Jan. 23rd, 8:00 P.M.

Beth Am will hold its annual meeting for young people interested in going to college on Wednesday evening, January 23rd at 8 P.M. in the Youth Lounge. The meeting will be chaired by Alan Bialos, Career Development Counselor of the Jewish Vocational Service. Mr. Bialos will bring a panel of well-informed advisors to help the young people and their parents decide what are the best careers open, which are the best colleges, which colleges have the most Jewish students, chances for getting into a college. Information will be available on tuition fees, Israel programs, etc.

Twelfth graders are strongly encouraged to come and eleventh graders and/or their parents are also invited.

**WHO:** Temple Beth Am Brotherhood  
**WHAT:** Congregational Breakfast  
**SPEAKER:** Arthur N. Teitelbaum, Southern Area Director, Anti-Defamation League, B'nai Brith.  
**PLACE:** The Youth Lounge, Temple Beth Am, 5950 N. Kendall Drive  
**TIME:** 9:30 a.m., Sunday, January 20, 1980  
**TOPIC:** Recent Problems and Their Effect on Our Jewish Family  
**ADMISSION:** Brotherhood members \$1.50  
 Non-members \$2.00  
 All friends and relatives are welcome.

## "THE MIRACLE WORKERS"

a 4 week course taught by

**RABBI HERBERT BAUMGARD, D.H.L.**

Tuesdays in February, 8:00-10:00 P.M. (Feb. 5-26)

Let's study the unusual events in the life of Elijah (who went to heaven in a chariot of fire), Elisha (who resurrected a man from the dead) and Jesus (worker of many miracles as described in the New Testament). What do these teachers have in common? To what Jewish tradition do they belong? How do they differ from other great Jewish teachers?

Bring your Bible

Registration preferred

Adult Confirmation Credit

Call 667-5587

## Joan's Jems

by Joan Schwartzman

Mazel tov to Cliff and Betty Suchman upon the engagement of their son Danny to Susan Goffman. The Suchman family met the bride to be over the winter vacation..... Congratulations to Ben and Garnett Friedman upon the recent marriage of their daughter Kay to Dominic Ciancielli. The married couple now reside in New York City..... We are proud to announce the arrival of Brian Samuel Schuster born to Eilleen and Andrew Schuster. Grandparents for the first time are David and Sandra Shore. Mazel to all! Congratulations to Herbert and Gladys Farbish upon the engagement of their son Bob to Missy Noble, daughter of Barbara and Manny Noble. The young couple plan a May wedding at Beth Am.....

## You'll Love The Art Scene At Our Temple January 27

At 7:00 P.M. on Sunday, January 27th, Sisterhood and the Jewish War Veterans South Dade Post 778 and Ladies Auxiliary invite you to view the art which will be auctioned at 8:00 P.M. by auctioneer Richard Reiser from THE ART SCENE at Dadeland. This grand evening in our Social Hall includes WINE, CHEESE, and COFFEE. Admission: \$2.00. RSVP: Temple Office - 667-5587.

## "NEW AND IMPROVED FOR 1980"

How many times have you seen the slogan "New and Improved"? At Beth Am we are using this slogan to indicate that our SUMMER PROGRAM is NEW AND IMPROVED. Counsellor interviews have been held. The Summer Program Advisory Board with Michael Wexler as Chairman, Nancy Weinfeld Camp Director, and made up of the following: Rabbi Baumgard, Iris Franco, Sima Lesser, Stan Mintz, Eleanor Robbins, Joan Schwartzman, Edie Stark, David Stuart, Betty Suchman and Rabbi Weinblatt, have been holding meetings to plan for the Summer of 1980.

Many new innovations and activities are planned. Watch the Commentator for details.





FROM THE RABBI'S STUDY

RABBI, WHY CAN'T I HAVE A CHRISTMAS TREE?

Let me share with you a letter I have recently received from a young lady.

Dear Rabbi:

A friend of mine is Jewish and has a Christmas tree. She told me her father said that Christmas was just a good American holiday, and there was no reason she couldn't have it in her house. Is this true?

Respectfully,

Signed (name omitted)

I replied directly to this young lady, but I would like to use somewhat different language in addressing those adults who might have a similar notion.

The Jewish people has survived for 4,000 years for two primary reasons. First of all, our idea system about God and the purpose of human existence has been different from all other systems. Secondly, we have preserved these ideas through a cycle of holiday customs and observances which have differed sharply from other peoples and groups.

Customs - whether they are religious rites or symbols - are vehicles for ideas. A particular symbol has its association of ideas and beliefs.

For example, the Chanukah Menorah reminds us of our ancestors' fight for religious freedom 2200 years ago. It challenges us to maintain our distinctive faith in spite of the threats of coercion and assimilation.

The Christmas tree, on the other hand, has been associated for over a thousand years with the birth of Jesus, that baby "born of a virgin" whom Christians believe to be God incarnate. The very name of the tree, a Christmas (Christ-mass or special worship service) tree is indicative of its value and symbolism to Christians. No Christian that I know disassociates the tree from the religious meaning of Christmas. For a Jew to tear the tree away from its religious association is to do a violence to the Christian belief.

I can understand why anyone would admire a beautifully lit and decorated Xmas tree. I visit the homes of many Christian friends and enjoy the beauty of their tree. I am quite satisfied to let my Christian friends have a lovely custom which is theirs and not mine. I can do this easily without imitating their custom because I have so many beautiful customs of my own as a Jew.

There is a Jewish holiday where the beauty of field and forest has a place in the home. It is Sukkot, the major Jewish festival on which the American holiday of Thanksgiving is based. If a Jew wishes to bring natural decorations into his home, Sukkot (which follows a few days after Yom Kippur) is the time to do so - not Christmas. The traditional Jewish practice is to build a little hut in one's yard and to decorate it with all kinds of fruit and greenery. There is plenty of room here for imagination and creativity. I wonder if the Jew who loves greenery so much that he has a Christmas tree makes the effort to follow his Jewish custom of building a Sukkah in his yard at Sukkot.

Chanukah offers us so many opportunities to beautify our home that one wonders why a Jew cannot find within the symbols of Chanukah sufficient opportunities for decoration. The Miami Herald recently carried a picture of a Jewish home with a large Star of David with a stand so that it could serve as a frame for decorations and gifts (i.e., to serve the function of a tree). Other Jewish homes have elaborate forms in the shape of a dreidle, or in the shape of the Temple which was rededicated at this season. I have seen a Temple built of styrofoam which actually had elaborate lighting inside of it. Of course, the central symbol of Chanukah is the Menorah which comes in various designs and sizes. Some families have built a large electrified Menorah on their front lawn. Some build a large Menorah for indoors and dress it up. Of course, nothing is more beautiful than

MEMORY by Evelyn Brown Rosenberg

In yearning memory of times long past  
To a childhood day I turn - - -  
Once again I run swiftly  
To the top of a sloping hill.  
Laughing, tumbling, down, down I roll  
Through scented cooling green grass.  
Above - brilliant azure sky.  
Beneath - yielding brown earth.  
Breezes gently singing to dancing leaves -  
Sunlight softly kissing soft, tender young skin.  
Hear rejoicing - joy and gladness  
Whirl me, spin me around and 'round.  
Though images soon reassemble -  
And to cautious steps I must now return - - -  
Ever and again in memory's garden  
Swiftly, always swiftly I run, run, run.

Camp Coleman Scholarship Applications

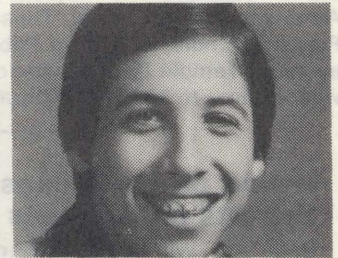
Applications for scholarships to Camp Coleman are now available at the Religious School Office. If you are interested in applying, come by the office as soon as possible. Deadline for filing the application with Rabbi Weinblatt is February 15, 1980.

B'Nai  
Mitzvah

Saturday, January 19  
11:15 a.m.



Jodi, daughter of  
Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Ivans



Matthew, son of  
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Shapo

a simple menorah with its flaming candles, renewed each night for eight days with loving family standing around and sharing the songs. These examples hardly exhaust the list of Jewish symbols one can employ at the Winter Solstice without borrowing a symbol from outside our faith.

Let us Jews not kid ourselves. The Jew who brings a Christ-day tree into his home takes a giant step towards assimilation. He totally confuses his children, and he weakens the efforts of his fellow Jews to stand firm against the pressures of our time.

There is a great pull at Christmas time to be drawn into the festivity and to be like everyone else. The Jews has not survived for 4,000 years by being like everyone else. He has survived by having the courage, often at the cost of great pain, to be different. It is part of this difference that we assert at Christmas time - we stand apart; we do not believe that God took shape in this baby and man named Jesus. On the contrary, we believe that all human beings are created in the image of God, and to say that one person achieved that in full and that we should worship him is to detract from the potential in all of us.

There is an American holiday in which we can join fully with other Americans. That is Thanksgiving, which is based on the Biblical Jewish Festival of Sukkot. This past Thanksgiving, a community-wide interfaith service was held at Beth Am. We join with our fellow Americans in all things where it is possible to do so, but we do not take Christian symbols in our home. Christmas is not a holiday to be compared to Thanksgiving. Ask any Christian about this, and you won't have doubts about it anymore.