



**Services**

Kabbalat Shabbat Evening Services

Friday, March 7<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> from 5:45 PM – 6:15 PM **\*Zoom only\***

Purim Feast led by Rabbi Saks **\*see attached flyer\***

Friday, March 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM **\*In Person & via Zoom\***

Congregational Shabbat Service led by Cohen Religious School w/Potluck Dinner **\*see attached flyer\***

Friday, March 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:30 PM **\*In Person & Streaming\***

Morning Shabbat

Saturday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 AM **\* In Person & Zoom\***

Sisterhood Shabbat Service followed by a Free Kiddush **\*see attached flyer\***

Saturday, March 15<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 AM

Tuesday Minyan

Tuesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM **\*Zoom only\***

**March Events**

Laugh the Night Away III Comedy Night

Saturday, March 1<sup>st</sup> at 6:30 PM

Adult Ed with Rabbi Saks

Sunday, March 16<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM

Sprouts **\*see attached flyer\***

Sunday, March 16<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 AM

Purim Carnival

Sunday, March 16<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 PM

Congregational Shabbat Service led by Cohen Religious School  
with Potluck Dinner to Follow

Friday, March 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:30 PM

Blood Drive at TTY **\*see attached flyer\***

Sunday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> from 8:30AM – 12:30 PM

**April/May Events**

Boisvert Family Baby Naming with kiddush sponsored by:  
Stacey & Brett Boisvert and Linda & Bruce Weisman

Saturday, April 5<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 AM

Adult Ed with Rabbi Saks

Sunday, April 6<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM

Sprouts

Sunday, April 6<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 AM

Passover Seder Dinner

Sunday, April 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM

Friday Night Live Service led by Rabbi Saks  
w/Dinner catered by Men's Club

Friday, April 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM

Passover Shabbat Service w/Yizkor led by Rabbi Saks

Saturday, April 19<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 AM

Sisterhood Event: Mitzvah Day

Sunday, May 4<sup>th</sup> Time: TBD



## Celebrating Purim while understanding the dark side

*This article is written to uplift the souls of Ariel & Kfir Bibas and their mother Shiri Silberman. May their memories bless our people with the gift of security and peace.*

The adorable costumes, the noisy groggers, the delicious hamantaschen. These are just some of the ingredients that make Purim such a fun and joyous holiday for the whole family. If you join us for our **Purim Feast at 6:30 pm on March 14th**, you'll be sure to leave shul with a smile on your face.

But while our contemporary celebration of Purim is joyful, there is also a dark side to this holiday. In 1994, Baruch Goldstein entered a mosque in Hebron on Purim Day, which happened to fall on the first day of Ramadan, and massacred twenty-nine Muslim worshippers. This was no coincidence, according to Bar-Ilan University historian Elliot Horowitz, author of "Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence." Haman is a descendant of the nation of Amalek, whose memory Jews are obligated to "wipe out" (Deuteronomy 25:19). On Purim we follow up on that command by not only blotting out the mention of Haman's name with the noise of the grogger, but by recalling how we killed him, his wife, his ten sons and "75,000 foes" (Esther 9:16). This rampage exemplifies what Jews must do to Amalek throughout history, and as such Amalek has been a useful descriptor of many enemies of the Jews, including Arabs and, particularly, Palestinians. Thus, in Hebron, Haman effigies have been hanged with *kefiyyahs* around their necks and the annual Purim parade has become increasingly violent and vitriolic year after year. All this led Horowitz to write his book connecting the holiday of Purim with a legacy of Jewish violence, especially given how Jewish violence played out in settlements like Hebron. As he says, invoking the words of Megillat Esther, "I feel that there is no longer any excuse for me, as a historian or as a Jew, 'to keep silence at such a time as this' (Esther 4:14).

It is important to note that there is significant disagreement with Horowitz's conclusion that there is a deep legacy of Jewish violence and that such violence is a direct result of the teachings of the Purim story. In his scathing review of Horowitz's book, the famed Israeli historian Hillel Halkin, posits that the relatively few incidents through history of Jewish violence on or near Purim pointed out by Horowitz does not connote a legacy of Jewish violence but on the contrary, the paucity of examples exemplify a history of restraint by Jews to not engage in violence. As he says: "It is not only Jews who have been predisposed throughout their history to violence, which has surfaced openly among them under certain conditions and been repressed under others. It is all humanity. What is unusual about Jews is that, for much of their history, the resort to violence was repressed" (Review of Reckless Rites by Elliot Horowitz, Hillel Halkin in Commentary Magazine, June 2006).

What I find interesting in this contemporary debate between Horowitz and Halkin over the degree to which Judaism has a history of violence or non/violence & restraint, is how it is echoed in rabbinic commentary on the Purim story itself. One consequence of Queen Esther's revelation of her Jewish identity to King Ahashverosh was that he had to invalidate the letter he wrote previously to all corners of his kingdom that on the 13th day of Adar all Jews were to be killed (Esther 3:12). Thus, Ahashverosh wrote another letter, not to repeal that decree, but to give Jews the freedom to "fight for their lives" and kill and plunder any adversaries who sought to destroy them as a result of his first letter (Esther 8:11). This created a condition whereby "many of the nations in the land were forcibly converted (*mityahadim*) because a great fear of the Jews fell upon them" (Esther 8:17). However, the Vilna Gaon (18th Century, Lithuania) brings in a teaching from the *Gemara* to say that it is impossible for Jews to forcibly convert others because "one who does not convert for the sake of heaven is not a convert" (*Masechet Gerim*

### March

**Laugh the Night Away III Comedy Night**  
[Sat. Mar. 1st; 6:30 PM](#)

**Purim Feast led By Rabbi Saks**  
[Fri Mar. 14th; 6:30 PM](#)

**Sisterhood Shabbat Service followed by free kiddush**  
[Sat. Mar. 15th; 9:30 AM](#)

**Adult Ed w/Rabbi Saks**  
[Sun. Mar. 16th; 9:00 AM](#)

**Sprouts**  
[Sun. March 16th @ 9:30 AM](#)

**Purim Carnival**  
[Sun. Mar. 16th @ 12:00 PM](#)

**Congregational Shabbat Service led by Cohen Religious School w/potluck**  
[Fri. Mar. 21st; 5:30 PM](#)

**Blood Drive at TTY**  
[Sun. Mar. 23rd](#)  
from 8:30 AM – 12:30 PM

### April / May

**Boisvert Baby Naming w/kiddush sponsored by Stacey & Brett Boisvert and Linda & Bruce Weisman**  
[Sat. Apr. 5th; 9:30AM](#)

**Adult Ed w/Rabbi Saks**  
[Sun. Apr 6th & 20th; 9:00 AM](#)

**Sprouts**  
[Sun. Apr 6th; 9:30 AM](#)

**Passover Seder Dinner**  
[Sun. Apr 13th @ 6:0 PM](#)

**Friday Night Live Service w/Dinner catered by Men's Club**  
[Fri. Apr. 18th; 6:00 PM](#)

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**Sisterhood Event: Mitzvah Day**  
[Sun. May 4th ; Time: TBD](#)

1:3). Thus, the non-Jews who converted did so themselves, which is why the Hebrew term for “convert” (*mityahed*) is self-reflexive -- they made themselves to be Jews.

Pay close attention to what the Vilna Gaon is saying. Unlike adherents of their sister monotheistic faiths, Jews cannot force others to convert. People who want to be Jewish, or feel they need to be Jewish, have to come to Judaism out of their own free will. This point is significant because in a text in which Jews take out violent revenge against their enemies (see Esther 9:16) the Vilna Gaon claims that Jews still did not forcibly convert others to Judaism. Thus, in the midst of the threat of Jewish violence, he argues that Jews resisted engaging in one of the most pernicious forms of religious violence i.e. forced conversion.

Personally, I find the Vilna Gaon’s interpretation fascinating though a bit of a stretch to the *p’shat* (simple meaning) of the text which, from context, seems to indicate that the process of *hityahadut* was born out of violence. As the historian Shaye J.D. Cohen writes in his book "Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties) -- “*The simple meaning of the Hebrew [in Esther 8:17] is not that many non-Jews converted to Judaism but that they pretended to be Jews: they professed themselves to be Jews to be something they were not. They did so because they feared for their lives; the Jews had just been given carte blanche by the King to kill their enemies, and therefore many gentiles pretended to be Jews in order to protect themselves.*”

Yet perhaps the purpose of the Gaon’s comment is that despite the presence of violence in the text, that Jewish communities do not engage in violence. At worst, the story of Purim is an ancient version of Quentin Tarantino’s *Inglourious Basterds*, a Jewish revenge fantasy about what Jews would want to do to their sworn enemies but could not do. That’s also what Halkin is doing - reminding us that though there is a Jewish desire for revenge against its enemies, a desire shared by every culture in the world, this is not the world Jews have lived in nor have created throughout their history. And perhaps Horowitz is warning us that because of texts like Megillat Esther we cannot just expect Jews to read it as fantasy, but that there is a fear it can be a guidebook for how to take revenge in the future. So while we’re having fun celebrating Purim with hamantaschen and costumes, let us be reminded that not all Purim teachings are worthy of being emulated because violence has no place in a Jewish community.

Chag Sameach,

Rabbi Ari Y. Saks



## President’s Message

As we step into March, the promise of spring feels just around the corner. The day length is notably longer and the daytime highs are reaching into the 40s and low 50s. The other night, I ordered my first vegetable seeds and am so looking forward to starting seedlings for this year’s garden.

March is a month of transition for us as well. It’s also a time of joy, reflection, and preparation. With Purim arriving in a few weeks, we’re gearing up for a celebration filled with costumes, laughter, and the retelling of Esther’s story—a reminder of resilience and the power of standing together. I hope you’ll join us for our Purim feast on March 14<sup>th</sup>. It’s a chance to see the Rabbi’s new costume, to let loose with your own costume and to connect as a community- something we could all do more of these days.

By the time you read this, our Comedy Night fundraiser may have already taken place. If so, I hope you took advantage of the opportunity to spend a fun night with friends and family, to win some amazing gifts, and to support TTY. I want to extend my thanks to our Ways & Means Committee, who have been so hard at work for the past few months organizing this important fundraising event. Their creativity and effort make this such a memorable evening of joy and connection.

I’m also pleased to share that our Nominating Committee will soon begin crafting a slate of officers and other board members for the coming fiscal year. If you wish to serve, please let me know. If you’re passionate about a specific project or role but aren’t ready to commit to a board position, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me directly. I’d love to find a way to harness your energy and ideas - no board membership required!

Finally, keep an eye out for an announcement later this month about the first wine and cheese night this year. We will be showing a documentary about the amazing ingenuity and courage of Al Schwimmer, Lou Lenart, and the other volunteers who created and supported the fledging Israeli Air Force. Their contributions were critical at a time when Israel faced overwhelming odds, with limited resources and no formal air force, against the combined militaries of multiple Arab nations in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

L’Shalom,

Michael



## Message from Our New Capital Campaign

Our Capital Campaign is moving toward reaching our goal to raise \$1,000,000 to reduce our mortgage and to build a new Aron Kodesh for our sanctuary. The Aron Kodesh is the focal point of the sanctuary and houses our Torahs. It is only fitting that our holy writings rest in a permanent place that better befits their importance.

We continue to receive donations from our members. We are reaching the \$350,000 mark of the Capital Campaign with the generosity of our members. Your support to place the Temple in a strong financial condition is priceless. Your commitment is critical to the continued long-term success of Torat Yisrael.

Besides donating to the Capital Campaign by check, direct transfers to the Temple from one's retirement account may satisfy the donor's required annual minimum distribution. Donations of marketable securities allow the donor to receive a tax deduction at the current fair market value of the donated securities without having to recognize any income tax gain between the original cost of the securities and its fair market value on the date of transfer. Donors of appreciated securities may receive a charitable deduction on their individual income tax return if the amount of their donations exceed the minimum deductible threshold set by the IRS. Even if one is not able to take advantage of a charitable deduction, any gain on the direct transfer to the Temple of marketable securities having a current market value more than their original cost is not recognized by the donor.

Our goal is attainable with your support. Members of the Capital Campaign are reaching out to all the congregants. Please answer their calls, meet with them and hear our need. We need everyone's support to reach our goal. Together we are stronger.

If not us, who? There is no one. Thanks for your support.

Andrew G. Sholes



## Torat Yisrael's Cohen School

Hope everyone had a relaxing break. Our field trip to Tamarisk has been rescheduled to March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Students will be singing a few songs, and have an opportunity to meet with the residents. Read on to hear about the exciting activities your children have been working on.

Gr. K/1: Students have been working hard on their Hebrew letter recognition and getting through the whole Hebrew alphabet. They are also learning about Tzedakah and how we incorporate it in our lives and have created their own Tzedakah box.

Gr. 2: Students have been working hard on their phonetic awareness of Hebrew and learning many more phrases & words. They are currently focused on Mi Chamocha, Shema and V'ahavta, the Ashrei and Modeh Ani.

Gr. 3/4: Students have been continuing decoding Hebrew skills through word search and matching game activities. They are also working with K/1 class on the concept of Tzedakah.

Gr. 5: Students are continuing to learn about Shabbat and what it means to rest and find peace & joy.

Gr. 6/7: Students have been busy working on learning and acting out scenes from each parsha and reviewing words of the week and how to use them in everyday life.

B'kavod,

Hillary



## Message from Ways and Means

### Comedy Night Fundraiser was a Huge Success!

Our main fundraiser event of the year—Comedy Night took place on March 1, 2025. This event is our biggest revenue source, and everyone's generosity and support made it yet again successful. It was a wonderful night filled with good food, friends & laughter. Our headliner,

**Linda Belt** was fabulous and we were so excited to have her back. Many thanks to all those who made this night possible.



## Message from Yad Chessed

Yad Chessed has been in communication with R.I Blood Center for them to host a blood drive at the Temple on Sunday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM.

The Blood Center is hoping to collect 15 to 24 pints of blood. If you are a regular donor, and your next donation is due in March, it would be great if you

would consider donating at the Temple. Please see enclosed flyer.

Also, if anyone has greeting cards they do not need, please drop them off at the Temple for Yad Chessed.

Please keep us informed about any of our Temple members, who might benefit from a ride to the Temple for services, for the Rabbi's Study Groups or any of the Temple's Social events by notifying the Temple office or me directly.

Susan H. Sidel, Chairman

401-884-1899 [shsidel2@gmail.com](mailto:shsidel2@gmail.com)



## Librarian's Corner

*Your Presence Is Mandatory: A Novel by Sasha Vasilyuk*

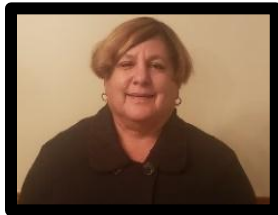
A riveting debut novel, based on real events, about a World War II veteran with a secret that could land him in the Gulag, and his family who are forced to live in the shadow of all he has not told them.

Ukraine, 2007. Yefim Shulman, husband, grandfather and war veteran, was beloved by his family and his coworkers. But in the days after his death, his widow Nina finds a letter to the KGB in his briefcase. Yefim had a lifelong secret, and his confession forces them to reassess the man they thought they knew and the country he had defended.

In 1941, Yefim is a young artilleryman on the border between the Soviet Union and Germany, eager to defend his country and his large Jewish family against Hitler's forces. But surviving the war requires sacrifices Yefim never imagined-and even when the war ends, his fight isn't over. He must conceal his choices from the KGB and from his family.

Spanning seven decades between World War II and the current Russia-Ukraine conflict, *Your Presence Is Mandatory* traces the effect Yefim's coverup had on the lives of Nina, their two children and grandchildren. In the process, Sasha Vasilyuk shines a light on one family caught between two totalitarian regimes, and the grace they find in the course of their survival.

Laura Steele



## Sisterhood

Sisterhood had a great turnout of 14 women to discuss the book *The Things We Cannot Say*, by Kelly Rimmer. Thank you to Barbara Karetny for leading the discussion.

We are looking forward to our Sisterhood Shabbat on Saturday, March 15<sup>th</sup>. Please rsvp to [TTYsisterhood@gmail.com](mailto:TTYsisterhood@gmail.com) if you would like a part, it can be in English, Hebrew or non-speaking. If you would rather not, please just come by and participate as members of the congregation. Rabbi Saks will be there to assist us and add his knowledge and spirit to our service. Bring your family and enjoy some togetherness.

Also, save the date of Sunday, May 4<sup>th</sup> for our Mitzvah Project, where we will be crocheting and knitting things for donation.

Stay healthy, and warm. See you all soon.

Leah Ross-Coke and Marion Woolf, Co-Presidents

## Frederic G. & Lawrence G. Cohen Educational Scholarship Eligibility & Criteria

Torat Yisrael provides scholarships for post-secondary education to members of Temple Torat Yisrael (TTY). In order to apply, parents must be a current member in good standing of TTY for at least 5 prior years and also be a current member in good standing for at least 5 years with TTY's Men's Club and/or Sisterhood. The applicant shall write a 2-page criteria statement of their commitment to Judaism as well as submit 3 reference letters and a financial award letter from the college they are attending showing total cost of enrollment. Applications will be judged and chosen with several factors being taken into consideration.

[Click here](#) for application and criteria page with more details and deadline dates.



## In Our Torat Yisrael Family



### **Mazal Tov to everyone celebrating a Birthday in March!**

Dr. Aaron Salinger, Craig Zettel, Sharon Schwartz-Vanderhoff, Nancy Goldstein-Waszki, Michael Katz, Elizabeth Picchione (15 years), Meredith Barr, Phyllis Potash, Mark Woolf, Nathan Salinger (11 years old), Roberta Wilfand, Hope Silverman (20 years old), Liana Weisbord (19 years old) & Zane Pezza (14 years old).

**Mazel Tov to everyone celebrating an Anniversary in March!** Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Shapiro (43 years), Mr. & Mrs. Frank Antin (16 years), Mr. & Mrs. Jeffrey Salk (42 years) & Mr. & Mrs. Carlos Goncalves (32 years).

## Our Torat Yisrael Community Acknowledges with Thanks the following Generous February

### 2025 Donations:

#### GENERAL FUND

In Memory of David Cohen

-Gerald & Esta Cohen

In Memory of Madeline Cohen

-Gerald & Esta Cohen

In Memory of Joy "Hannah" Field

-Michael & Sharon Field

In Memory of Richard Philip Goldman

-Hyman Goldman

In Memory of Morris Jagolinzer

-Helen Davis

In Memory of Anna Kirzhner

-Sofya Tonkover & family

In Memory of Bella Mendelowitz

-Sam & Lillian Mendelowitz

In Memory of Dr. Harry Pass

-Lorraine & Harvey Rappoport

In Memory of Selma Rappoport

-Lorraine & Harvey Rappoport

In Memory of Joseph Saltzman

-Richard Saltzman

In Memory of Irwin Silver

-Phyllis Potash

In Memory of Ada R. Slobin

-Marcia Slobin

In Memory of Mollie Tapper

-Michael Tapper

#### DAVID A. SMOLLER FUND

In Memory of David Smoller

-Lenna & Stan Picker

In Memory of David Smoller

-Susan & Michelle Smoller

#### STREAMING FUND

In Memory of Abraham Koslov

-Elaine & Steve Shapiro

In Memory of Kenny Kuzzman

-Elaine & Steve Shapiro