

From Rabbi Michael Silbert

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I love Israel. Of course, when we speak about "Israel", it could refer to the Land of Israel, the State of Israel or the People/Nation of Israel. So, lest there be any confusion about which I'm referring to, let me make it clear: I love them all.

Together, (1) the historic Land of Israel, which today we experience in its closest form as the State of Israel; (2) the People/Nation of Israel, and, (3) God, which we experience most closely through Torah – are the three major pillars of Judaism. I love them all and am deeply committed to them all. I learned this growing up under the influence of my parents' passionate connection with these causes.

In 1948, my late father of blessed memory, born in 1932, argued with my grandparents that they should allow him to go fight in Israel's War of Independence. Ultimately, they refused to allow him to take a leave of absence from high school in South Africa to go fight in a foreign war.

In 1973, my brother's Bar Mitzvah was scheduled for November. In the wake of the Yom Kippur war that October, my parents hastily canceled the celebration plans, radically downscaling them to something more modest in our backyard, and donated the savings to the war effort.

In 1987, when I was required to register with the army to be conscripted to enforce the Apartheid regime's policies, I took it upon myself to defy that legal order without ever disclosing this choice to my parents. My gameplan was that in the event the Defense Ministry ever noticed, I'd flee to Israel. It wasn't lost on me that there too I would encounter compulsory military service, but I was much more at ease doing so for a cause that meant something to me than for one of the 20th century's greatest crimes against humanity.

These credentials, though, might be negated for some by what I'm about to say, and to others it will make complete sense: when I look at Israel today, my heart feels very heavy.

The State was founded on three defining principles: it was to be (1) a Jewish nation-state, (2) in the Land of Israel, (3) with democracy as the foundation of its government. Over the years, many have accused Israel of being undemocratic because



Orthodox religious parties, in particular, have had disproportionate influence in ruling coalitions and over national policies and budgets. Instead, I see this as the fallout of Israel being *hyper-democratic*: it is *too easy* to win a parliamentary seat, making it impossible for any major party to win a majority. In a country where the political fault lines have long run right down the center of the population, this has given small, sometimes extremist, parties outsized importance in their value as coalition partners. Entire governments have fallen when tiny parties have withdrawn because their demands have not been met.

Disagreement has persisted for as long as Benjamin Netanyahu has been in politics about whether his central ideology is the welfare of the State or his own political advancement and survival. But this much is clear: in recent years, after promising Diaspora Jews that he'd defend their rights to egalitarian access to the Western Wall, he reneged on the agreement in order to avoid offending his (Orthodox) religious coalition partners.

In 2018, his government passed the Nation State Law, which they argued further defends the country's fundamentally Jewish character. Others – including many Israeli Jews, almost all Arab Israeli citizens and many Diaspora Jews – were puzzled as to why after 70 years it was suddenly necessary to institute a law that felt to many like a statement of Jewish supremacy, as it seemed to take precedence over the affirmation in the Declaration of Independence that Israel "will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed, or sex."

And most recently he is promoting laws to allow coalition partners who are currently prohibited by law (because of their criminal backgrounds!) from filling certain cabinet posts. Knowing that the Supreme Court will overturn this law if passed, Netanyahu, who himself is currently accused in an ongoing trial on corruption charges, has indicated that he is willing to decouple the Supreme Court and its reach over government policy.

Democracy in Israel is under attack, not simply from within but from the highest offices of its government. As someone who would be willing to give my life for Israel, this troubles me greatly.

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The mission of Temple Beth David is to provide an environment where the concepts of community prayer, education, and service to the greater Jewish community are provided within the context of Conservative Judaism. We take pride in being a friendly, participatory, egalitarian community, welcoming all to be a part of our synagogue family.

Chanukah '22



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I'm struggling with these developments as I worry about what they means for Israel's future as a place that Jews can be proud of, its ability to maintain allies, its long term security and also our relationship with the country as its leaders transform it into a state whose values are increasingly at odds with our own.

I look forward to being in discussion with you about this, whether we end up agreeing or disagreeing with each other. It is always a blessing to share the love of Israel and the desire for its success, with another Israel-lover, whether or not we agree on the details of how to get there.

Michael

All in the Family

February Birthdays

Bonnie Abrams	February 3
Philippa Jacobson	February 8
Marc Lande	February 9
Steven Meyers	February 13
Susan Langmann	February 14
Arthur Stoler	February 18
Thomas Wolbert	February 18
Helen Kashtan	February 23
Rabbi Michael Silbert	February 24
Sanford Toole	February 25



Happy 99th Birthday,
Paul Eissenstat!



The next **Temple Beth David Board of Trustee Meeting** will be held Tuesday, **February 21 at 7:00 pm** via Zoom. All temple members are invited to attend or you may submit your questions or concerns in advance of the meeting for consideration by the board of trustees. Board member names are listed on the last page of this bulletin. For more information on how to attend the meeting, please contact the temple office at 585-266-3223 or office@tbdrochester.org.



**Shabbat Service will be held in the
Temple Beth El Sanctuary on
Saturday, February 18 at 9:30 am**

Kiddush News

What food or foods do you associate with each week's parashah? Contact Alison Helms, kiddush coordinator, at alison.helms@gmail.com, and she will try to include those foods in the kiddush/take home treats for that Shabbat. Please consider sponsoring a treat at \$18 or cholent at \$36 in honor of a good news event!

Riverside Cemetery Plots are available to purchase from Temple Beth David

at reduced temple member rates for Jewish burials in adherence to Temple Beth David ritual requirements. For questions regarding purchase, contact the temple office. For questions pertaining to Jewish burial ritual requirements, contact Rabbi Silbert.



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Received December 16 - January 15, 2023

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Ruth Rappaport-Kristal

IN HONOR OF OUR SON, JAKE SCHAFFER, STEM CELL DONOR AND LIFESAVER

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February Yahrzeits

February 1

Bertha Dobkin*

February 3

Barbara Goldman

Minnie Haymoff

February 4

Morris Klein

George Moidel

Lee Schwartz*

Don Vanas

February 5

Dorothy Schwartz*

February 6

Ida "Toots" Skopitz*

February 7

Janet Gordon

Charles Jaffey

February 8

Lillian Schneider

February 10

Charles Conwell

Garson Kleinberg

Davis Nussbaum

February 11

Max Gordon*

February 12

Miriam Bauman*

Rose Kurlanshik*

Alexander Phillips

February 15

Rose Kessler*

Florence Levinson

Lillian Narotsky

February 17

Herman Miller

February 20

Minnie Himmelstein*

Sidney Schatz*

Elynor Vine

February 21

David Phillips

February 22

Julian Braiman

Frank Sherman

Fanny Simon Passer

February 23

Werner Schaffer

February 24

Florence Levinberg

Earl Schwartz

February 25

Jack Miller

February 26

Minnie Blumkin*

Shirley Shapiro*

**Memorial plaque on display in the Temple Beth David sanctuary.*

The yahrzeit date that appears above is the date of observance using the secular calendar.

These dates match those of the Hebrew calendar for the actual date of death.

SEND A CARD TO A FRIEND OR LOVED ONE!

Checks payable to: **Temple Beth David, 2131 Elmwood Avenue, Suite 204, Rochester, NY 14618**

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Fund: If no fund is specified, your donation will be made to the David Solomon Operating Fund. Thank you.

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Temple Beth David will no longer be collecting donations for the Marsha Fishman Youth Education Fund. Please contact Eric Brandt at ebrandt@jewishrochester.org for details about donating.



It's so easy to make donations and dues payments online! Visit our donation page at www.tbdrochester.org/donate. The minimum online donation is \$10.



Do you receive our Weekly News email?

You may be missing the latest news about Temple Beth David services and events, as well as other important community information. Call or email the Temple Office to add your name to the mailing list!

Please call the office if you or a family member is scheduled for surgery or is admitted to the hospital. We want to offer comfort to congregants who are ill but regulations do not permit the hospital to contact us with your news. We will only know if you let us know.



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