



Upcoming Events

*Masks are
Required
at all Events*

**11/5 7:00 PM Friday Night
Services with Rabbi Joshua
via ZOOM**

**11/6 10:00 AM Saturday
Morning Torah Study with
Rabbi Joshua via ZOOM
and in person on the patio
of the Chavurah House**

**11/6 7:00 PM Saturday
Evening Adult Ed with
Rabbi Joshua via ZOOM
and in person inside the
Chavurah House**

**11/7 10:00 AM Sunday
Morning Kids Club with
Rabbi Joshua in person
on the patio of the
Chavurah House**

**11/8 6:15 PM Monday
Evening Board Meeting
at Carol Madruga's House**

**12/5 12:00 PM Sunday
Afternoon Distanced
Potluck Hannukah Party**

The Maggid

C O N G R E G A T I O N E T Z C H A I M

P O B O X 3 7 5 2 M E R C E D C A 9 5 3 4 4

N O V E M B E R 2 0 2 1



Notes from Student Rabbi Joshua

Shalom!

Two Jews, three opinions. It's a classic joke based in truth. Our tradition teaches us that studying and learning in community is multiplicative and not additive. In other words, when we learn together we gain more than if we study on our own. One Jewish model of group learning is called *havruta*. *Havruta* is Aramaic for friendship or companionship. The practice of *havruta* dates back to the earliest rabbis. In this practice, there are three parties that form a triangle. There are two partners and there is the text itself. Each partner has their own relationship to the text and there is the relationship between the partners. Each relationship brings new meaning and understanding.

The value of *havruta* is discussed in the Talmud. In Taanit 7a:7-8, the rabbis look at two biblical similes that describe the value of communal study. The first is "Iron sharpens iron like a person sharpens the countenance of their friend" (Proverbs 27:17). The Talmudic rabbis explain that our reasoning and understanding are refined when we explain our thinking to others and they in turn do the same. The second comparison is to fire. Rabba bar bar Hana explains that a fire does not ignite from a single stick but rather from a bundle of kindling. Similarly, studying and understanding Torah must happen in community and not alone.

The wisdom in the *havruta* model of learning can be applied beyond the study of Torah. Regardless of the subject, we have the opportunity to practice the principles of *havruta*. Debating and disagreeing can be meaningful and productive. We just need to remember to approach these moments in good faith and know that they do not need to be a zero-sum game. Two Jews, three opinions is a practice that has enabled us to reveal layer after layer of meaning from the Torah and insights into life's experiences. As we enter this new month, may we all learn and grow with those in our communities.

L'Shalom,
Josh

NOTES FROM OUR PRESIDENT

by Carol Madruga

Dear Friends,

Do you feel the excitement in the air?

We have been having some wonderful Etz Chaim activities and enjoying our weekends with Rabbi Shapiro.

New community members have reached out to our congregation to learn about Jewish life in Merced, and I am thrilled to report there are UC students who have joined us and are planning on making a Jewish Club on campus with hopes of finding other Jewish students to join in with them.

The Chavurah House looks terrific and the expanded Kids Club is working out very well. We are hoping to work out the kinks of sharing our in-person activities via the Zoom interface simultaneously, which will enable those of us who struggle to meet with us in person the ability to join in virtually.

Please let me know what type of programs are meaningful to you.

What are you interested in? Reach out and let us know!

I am sincerely looking forward to hearing from you and/or seeing you in person.



Fondly,

Carol Madruga

Tributes

Anytime you are celebrating a special event, let us share in your joy. We welcome tributes in honor or in memory of loved ones, births, weddings, Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, and honoring special events.

Send your Tributes to PO Box 3752 Merced CA 95344

Spotlight on our Members

Sheryl Wight

Welcome to the latest installment of our Spotlight on Members feature!

Congregation Etz Chaim has been incorporated in Merced for over 40 years, and we are enjoying getting to know our members, even better.

This month we've swiveled our spotlight to: Ruth Wax

Ruth was born and raised in Los Angeles and made her way to Merced in August 1976 after living in San Diego for five years. She still misses the ocean! Her then-husband was a new lawyer and they moved to Merced mainly because of the affordability of housing here. They had two sons, one in 1976, and the second in 1979. Ruth was a stay-at-home mom for many years.

Ruth's spouse is Dennis Hanks. They have been together for over 20 years. They met when their kids were in kindergarten together (at St. Luke's Episcopal School – known to her parents as “Luke Avenue School”). Dennis lost his wife in 2000, the same year Ruth got divorced, and his daughter then played matchmaker. They have four grandchildren between them – his two are in Walnut Creek and Ruth's are (sadly) in New Jersey. She would be very happy to talk your ear off about the wonderfulness of any or all of them!

As a profession, Ruth taught first and second grade for 25 years, both in San Diego and Merced. She loved teaching children to read. It was one of the genuine joys of her life. She retired in 2009, and shortly after that, Ruth started her landscape business “La Jardiniere,” which is French for “the gardener.” She thoroughly enjoys her second career and has been fortunate to beautify many people's gardens.

Ruth became active in our congregation shortly after the birth of her first child. As a teacher, she wanted there to be a Sunday school for her child and other Jewish kids. After meeting Brenda Hatcher and hitting it off with her, they decided to team-teach the class. Interestingly enough, Suzi Rosenberg, had a great idea to start a unit with the kids called “Famous Jews,” since there were so few Jewish people in Merced. They studied various Jewish people and wrote letters to several. One of the highlights was when Mel Brooks actually wrote a personalized letter to each and every child!

Ruth loves our congregation for its warmth, sense of community and tradition. It provides a feeling of spiritual and cultural camaraderie. Her parents were Holocaust survivors, and she feels like she is continuing our faith in their memory. Her favorite Jewish holiday is Passover. She has many fond memories of family Seders that went on forever!

One of Ruth's favorite hobbies (besides gardening) is travel. She and Dennis have been to 23 countries, visiting Europe 8 times (his daughter used to live in Munich, Germany). She has been to five of the seven continents. She hopes to continue to explore new territory in the years to come. One of Ruth's proudest accomplishments as an adult was becoming a Bat Mitzvah with her younger son Adam, when she was 40. It was one of the most challenging things she has done with her brain! She truly loves being a part of Congregation Etz Chaim and hopes to see our group thrive and grow in the coming years.

Shalom!

*Thank you for sharing some pertinent facts about your life
and letting us get to you know you a little better!*

Rabbi Visits for the Year

Month	Dates	Holiday (if any)	Friday Night Dinner Host	Friday Night Oneg Host	Saturday Night Dinner Host
August	20 - 22	Rabbi's First Visit	Rachel Hadley	Carol and Rachel	Carol Madruga
September	6 - 7	Rosh Hashana	Greg Friedman	The Board	
September	15 - 16	Yom Kippur	Judith Salzberg		
September	17 - 19	Sukkot	Carol Madruga		Rachel Hadley
October	1 - 3	Simchat Torah			
November	5 - 7	No Holiday	Carol Madruga		
December	3 - 5	Hannukah			
January	14 - 16	Tu B'Shvat			
February	11 - 13	No Holiday			
March	18 - 20	Purim		Hamentaschen Shlach Manot	
April	1 - 3	Pre Passover			

Contact Carol Madruga if you would like to sponsor an Oneg Shabbat

Don't Forget to Pay Your Dues!

Other Planned Community Events

November 20 - Community Potluck / Havdalah Social

December 5 - Afternoon Hanukah Party / Latkes provided / Potluck finger food

December 18 - Community Potluck / Havdalah Social

January 29 - Community Potluck / Havdalah Social

February 26 - Community Potluck / Havdalah Social

April 16 - Community Seder

May 28 - Shavuoth & Annual Membership Meeting and Voting in the 2022-2023 Board

*TBA - Friday Nights: 6:30 Potluck and 7:30 Lay Led Services
at our Chavurah House on Parsons Ave*

SAVE THE DATE!

HAPPY HANUKKAH



Latkes!



Desserts!



Menorahs!



Dreidels!

Our congregational party will be on
December 5, 2021
on the patio of the Chavurah House
Starting at Noon

Fun
Games
Dreidel
Pirate Gift Exchange

The Congregation will provide latkes

Please bring:

1. A wrapped gift if you plan to participate in the "Pirate Gift Exchange." A desirable gift would be ideal for this, something homemade or purchased, valued between \$10.00 - \$15.00.
2. Your Hanukkah Menorahs and candles to light.
3. Finger foods, an appetizer or dessert.



**Desirable Gifts
for Stealing!**



Yummy Food!

November Yahrtzeits

Seymour Blatt
 Zelda Harvey
 Irma Schiffman Labbok
 Earl Lewis
 Eric Matlin
 Marti Rabon
 Israel Reiter
 William Spangler
 Morris Shapiro
 Victor Wax

November Birthdays

Daniel Holman 11/01
 Carol Friedman 11/09
 Larry Giventer 11/10
 Don Hadley 11/10
 Kathie Tenenbaum 11/19

Campership!

Amazon.com donates to our Campership Fund when you make purchases by accessing them through their link on our webpage
 (www.jewishmerced.org)



*Those we remember in the
 year of their deaths:*
 Mary Hofmann 5/7/2021
 Alan Snelling 8/25/2021

*זכרונום לברכה
 May their memories be a blessing*

John Hofmann and Greg Friedman have donated gallons of blood in the Congregation's name.
 Any Congregant can access blood via the credit accumulated under the Congregation's name.

