

Shlom Bayyit

Shalom Bayit (A Welcoming Home) is a column contributed by our Ritual Committee. We hope to share the joys of Judaism with our TBR Community and encourage everyone to bring a bit more of our rich tradition into their lives.

Once again..... It's that December Dilemma



In December of 1978, The New York Times printed an op-ed article called "Christmas Comes to a Jewish Home" in which Anne Roiphe, a novelist, famous for writing Up the Sandbox, celebrated the joys of Christmas trees, Dickens, singing carols and Santa Claus. She was besieged with angry letters of protest. Notable among the published responses was an eloquent letter written by Rabbi Aaron Pearl who served our TBR congregation from 1989 to 1995. In response to such comments as read "Jewish texts rather than Frosty the Snowman," Anne Roiphe began to study and explore the meaning of Jewish identity in her life. She subsequently published many books on Jewish themes and discontinued putting up a Christmas tree in her home.

The December holidays are a difficult time for liberal Jews and especially for interfaith families. Your ritual committee offers you: ***Tips to Embrace Our Rich Heritage and the Beautiful Traditions of Chanukah.***

Celebrate the Family – The principle observance of **Chanukah** takes place in the home. Make these 8 nights family time. Light the Menorah together. This kind of ritual evokes spirituality and helps to preserve traditions.

Make memories - With eight nights to celebrate, plan a variety of activities to amuse young and old. Have a grandparents night, an outing night, a dreidle making night, a dreidle playing night, an activity night (To print out an activity book, go to <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/books/holiday/hannukah/>), a storytelling and book exchange night, a baking night, (Cut out sugar cookies in the shape of stars and dreidles and decorate them with blue and white icing and silver nonpareils. Make an edible Menorah – 9 decorated cupcakes each holding a candle, then have a dinner party night.

Give Tzedekah – Bring your children to a toy store to choose a gift for a less fortunate child. Prepare a meal for a needy family or send goodies to a homeless shelter. Caring for others is an integral part of our Jewish tradition.

Limit TV time - Introduce Jewish videos, audio tapes and storytelling. Make this a time to turn off the TV with its barrage of Christmas commercials and entertainment. Listen to *Spirit of the Holidays* by Andy Statman or *Chanukah: Festival of Light*, a collection of traditional Klezmer songs performed by Ot Azoj Klezmerband. Read the delightful Chanukah in Chelm by David A. Adler with children ages four through eight. For nine to twelve year olds, there's the endearing No Such Thing as a Chanukah Bush, Sandy Goldstein by Susan Sussman. The Spotted Pony, by Eric A. Kimmel is a wonderful collection of Jewish folk tales to read aloud each night of **Chanukah**. All of them appeal to both kids and adults.

Eat – Latkes and jelly donuts are traditional **Chanukah** foods. Introduce and plan your own version of an oil based meal. Consider cooking with a wok.

Do Double Chai – Cap your holiday spending at \$36 per person. After all gift giving at this holiday is an American tradition borrowed from our Christian friends. It will be a model for your children of restraint and financial planning.

Be a light unto to others – Play a role in reversing the commercialization of this season and in fostering respect and appreciation of other religions. Invite your Christian neighbors to stop by for some **Chanukah** fare. Pass along the story of the Maccabee success to the children, and share a bit of Jewish history. Set the stage for learning about and respecting the beliefs and holidays of other religions.

Celebrating **Chanukah** should be a time filled with joy, family, tradition and pride. Jewish children, if they are taught to value their own culture, traditions and faith, need not be threatened by the practices of others. If we continue to assimilate while maintaining our Jewish identity, we may well be doing Judah Maccabee proud.