

YOUTH & EDUCATION

Chai to host summer camp fair

Families are invited to attend Temple Chai religious school's Summer Camp Fair 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 2, at Temple Chai, 4645 E. Marilyn Road, Phoenix.

The fair also includes a free lunch provided by the Chai Cafe at noon (with a reservation).

Arizona camps are Camp Daisy and Harry Stein in Prescott and the Temple Chai Early Childhood Center Adventure Camp in Phoenix. California camps are Hess Kramer & Grindling Hilltop Camp in Malibu; Camp Mountain Chai and Camp Yofi, both in Angelus Oaks; Camp Ramah in Ojai; and URJ Camp Newman in Santa Rosa. Other camps are B'nai B'rith Camp in Beaverton, Ore., and Camp Menominee in Eagle River, Wis.

A representative from Jewish Free Loan will be present to provide information about interest-free loans for summer camp.

To attend, contact Sherie Siegel, director of elementary education, at 602-971-4832 or ssiegel@templechai.com.

Seminar on 'Taming Your Toddler'

Jill Davis, a toddler- and family-specialist, will offer a free seminar, "Taming Your Toddler," 7-8:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 6, at Beth El Preschool, 1118 W. Glendale Ave., Phoenix. Topics will include discipline, temper tantrums, sleeping, eating, temperaments and toilet training. There will be a question-and-answer period at the end of the workshop, which is for adults only.

Davis, who has a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's degree in clinical social work specializing in children and families, has worked in the mental health field for more than three decades.

Reservations are appreciated. Call 602-944-2464.

Kollel holds Thanksgiving lecture

"Giving Thanks Without the Stuffing" is the topic of a "Breakfast & Learn" Thanksgiving lecture to be held 9 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 22, at the Phoenix Community Kollel, 6516 N. Seventh St.

The lecture, for men and women, will feature guest speaker Rabbi Jeff Wohlgelechner of Congregation Adat Yeshurun in La Jolla, Calif. There will be a light breakfast at 9 a.m. and the lecture starts at 9:20 a.m. Email kollel@aztorah.com.

EVJCC holds family event at studio

An East Valley JCC Early Childhood Learning Center family holiday event will be held noon-6 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 18, at Creative Hands Studio, 1120 S. Gilbert Road, Suite 115, Gilbert.

Families can make holiday decorations such as menorahs, dreidels, plates and cups.

Cost is \$7 adults and \$5 for children. Mention the East Valley JCC Early Childhood Learning Center and 30 percent of the proceeds will go to the school's scholarship fund.

Call the EVJCC at 480-897-0588.

'Bagels with Bubbie' at Doll House

The Doll House & Toy Store in Scottsdale will host "Bagels with Bubbie," two toy-shopping days for all bubbies and zaydes and their grandchildren 9-11 a.m. Wednesday, Nov. 28, and Wednesday, Dec. 5.

All grandparents are invited to come to the toy store with their grandchildren — babies and toddlers are welcome — to play and color together. Free coffee, bagels and treats will be served.

The Doll House & Toy Store is a family-owned store which sells educational items, dolls and doll houses, dress-up costumes, games, arts & crafts, pool and bathtub toys, mazes, trucks, and more. It is located at 16447 N. Scottsdale Road, D115, Scottsdale. Call 480-948-4630 or visit azdollhouse.com.

Webinars to help children of divorce

OHEL Children's Home and Family Services, based in New York, will host two free webinars designed to help children of divorce.

"Don't Let the Children Get Caught in the Middle" is for parents, family members and friends and will be held 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 18. "Reinforcing Anchors for Children of Divorce," for rabbis and educators, will be held 7:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 19.

To register, visit ohelfamily.org.

ARTS & CULTURE

Dylan, Cohen: Lions in winter

SALVATORE CAPUTO
Assistant Managing Editor

Who would have thought 50 years ago that Bob Dylan would not only still be touring and recording, but also making some of the best records of his career? The same goes for Leonard Cohen, whose U.S. recording career started in 1967, only five years after Dylan's.

Both released eagerly awaited albums this year — "Old Ideas" by Cohen and "Tempest" by Dylan (both on the Columbia Records label) — that stand among their best artistically and best-received commercially.

There are many similarities between the two: both of Jewish birth in the "north country" (Dylan in Minnesota, Cohen in Montreal), both visual artists and poets (Cohen more accomplished as novelist and poet, Dylan more prolific as a songwriter), both have been living definitions of singer-songwriter, and both are enjoying a late-in-life wave of success that just hasn't been seen before by solo artists who aren't making albums of duets with much-younger stars.

Cohen owes his "third act" in no small part to continuing interest in the tune "Hallelujah," first released on his 1984 album "Various Positions." The song reached a much wider audience when John Cale's version underpinned the "ogre loses princess" scene in 2001's "Shrek." The song's slow-burning fire, which combines biblical imagery from the stories of David and Bathsheba and Samson and Delilah to comele physical and spiritual longing, made it a go-to "cover tune" for contestants on TV music competitions — most recently as Nicole Nelson's blind audition on NBC's "The Voice" — with versions abounding on YouTube. (Locally, Temple Solel's cantorial soloist Todd Herzog cut a version on his primarily liturgical 2011 CD, "A Shelter of Peace.") In late 2008, two versions of the song hit the Top 10 in England, and Cohen's original rode the British charts to No. 36, giving him his first Top 40 hit. Not bad for a 70-year-old who at the time was also on an 84-date world tour that sold 700,000 tickets.

Dylan's surge started on the cusp of the new millennium with the 1997 release of "Time Out of Mind," which debuted in the Top 10, eventually sold platinum (1 million copies), was lavishly praised as a return to form, and won him three Grammys. The subsequent studio releases — "Love and Theft" (which hit stores on Sept. 11, 2001), "Modern Times" (2006) and "Together Through Life" (2009) — climbed similar peaks.

(As if that weren't enough, he won an Oscar and Golden Globe for "Things Have Changed," the theme song from the movie adaptation of Michael Chabon's novel "Wonder Boys," in 2001, and this year capped things off when he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.)

Of the Jewish recording stars in their generation, Barbra Streisand, Paul Simon, Carole King and Neil Diamond match their longevity — but Streisand is not known as a songwriter, Simon has always had a more handsome voice and King and Diamond's mainstream Brill Building pop songwriting shows little sign of the roots-music influences in the songs of Cohen and Dylan.

Dylan turned 72 in May and Cohen turned 78

in September. Their voices, which were always distinct and rough-edged, have become even coarser with age: Dylan's more phlegmatic and cracked, and Cohen's sounding deeper and more menacing than the Mariana Trench. Not surprisingly, both sing about the September of their years with a nod to the winter ahead.

Cohen starts "Old Ideas" with "Going Home," a tune that fits the darkness of his voice. Whether it's the voice of God, of his muse, of his spiritual self or of a multiple personality, the persona says, "I love to speak with Leonard / He's a sportsman and a shepherd / He's a lazy bastard / Living in a suit." The voice wryly maintains that Leonard is more or less an automaton, "the brief elaboration of a tube." The chorus repeats "going home" six times with brief elaborations such as: "Going home / Without the costume that I wore" — sounding very much like a noncorporeal destination.

And things take off from there, with highlights including "The Darkness," an understated but intense blues ("Winning you was easy / But darkness was the prize"); "Come Healing," a "penitential hymn" that may suggest Yom Kippur ("Behold the gates of mercy / In arbitrary space ... Come healing of the spirit / Come healing of the limb"); and the lilting country blues of "Banjo" ("There's something that I'm watching / Means a lot to me / It's a broken banjo bobbing / On the dark infested sea") that features an out-of-nowhere clarinet solo and enough menace to fill your quota for the year. He follows it up with the gentle "Lullaby" ("If the night is long / Here's my lullaby").

Though both Cohen's album and Dylan's are filled with guitar-based blues and country variations, Cohen's comes off as gentler, featuring a more varied sonic pallet. Dylan's sound these days is defined more by the chemistry of his band, which has been playing this blend of blues, country swing, rockabilly, and just plain American music for years.

"Tempest," the title tune, is a jaunty waltz that sounds like it might have been played by a string band in a one-horse town in the days when the Titanic's sinking was headline news. The 14-minute epic is a tall tale about the unsinkable ship's demise told by the pale moon that "rose in its glory out on a Western town," with a cast that includes real passengers like John Jacob Astor, and figures like Leo (DiCaprio?), Cleo, and what sounds like Jim Backus (Mr. Magoo). Since it wasn't a storm that brought the ship down, the tempest seems to be the carnage ("there is no understanding for the judgment of God's hand").

Life is a battlefield in most of these 10 songs, mixing bloody images, myth, fact and epochs like a jumbled dream. There's a blues about "Early Roman Kings" dressed in sharkskin suits, where he declares, "I ain't dead yet / My bell still rings." Pugnacious characters like the one in "Pay in Blood" or the murderous lovers of the sultry "Tin Angel" abound.

A similar jigsaw puzzle colors a tune about John Lennon, "Roll on John," which gently closes the set. "They shot him in the back and down he went." Wasn't it one shooter that got Lennon? Hmm. This is the way that tales were told in days of old. Dylan may not seek to mimic ancient balladry, but in this set he continues to deliver the visceral mystery and humanity at its heart.

