



<http://va014.urj.net/bethel.html>

The purpose of this congregation shall be to worship God in accordance with the faith of Judaism; to cultivate a love and understanding of the Jewish heritage; to strengthen the ties within the Jewish community; to strengthen the bonds of loyalty with the Jewish people everywhere; to bring nearer the Dominion of God on earth through an emphasis of the principles of righteousness and harmony in society at large.

FEBRUARY 2012

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Shalom everyone! It has been so wonderful being at Shabbat services with everyone, last evening we celebrated with SHORTY, our youth group, as they led services with prayer and song. Our teens are always so inspiring, which is why I enjoyed working with them for so many years. Thank you Rabbi Joe, Becky Mintzer, Ruth Berger and Joel Ornstein for volunteering your time to continue working with our youth. It was a fantastic service, listening to our young adults read Torah, sing, write sermons and just share with us their energy. We were also fortunate to have a large number of Hillel students celebrate Shabbat with us, this is how we keep our faith alive! I urge all of you to take the time to start celebrating Shabbat with us. We have several B'nei Mitzvot coming up, the Men's Club will be leading Shabbat services February 17 as well. There are lots of opportunities to share Shabbat together.

"No other Jewish institution or ritual, no belief or experience has so maintained Jewish identity, solidified Jewish families and built community as has the Sabbath. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy". I will say it again--Shabbat, just do it!!

I hope everyone will plan to attend our community Tu B'shvat Seder on Thursday, Feb 9. Now don't go say oh it's on a Thursday, I can't go!! We will be having a wonderful and fun seder with guitar and music, oh and of course the fruits and nuts and wine. Sounding better?? Make sure and RSVP so we have enough to share. All you have to do is bring a dessert. See you there!

Sherri

FROM THE RABBI'S DESK

My dear fellow Valley Jews and Friends, January has come and is already more than half gone, the Shorty service has happened (and it was a real happening time – mazal tov, Shorty!), and it has been a busy time all around. But don't imagine you can rest in February – we have packed a LOT in to that month as well! Nobody complained about the new format last month, so I will stick with it. Here goes. Since my last article (for January), I have continued with the adult education courses on Spiritual Legacy, Ethical Wills; and the Introduction to Judaism. The next Lifelong Learning Institute courses begin February 1st, and I am schedule to offer a version of the Spiritual Legacy Ethical Wills course in 10 weeks through that program on Wednesdays at 1 pm, if there is a sufficient registration. Starting March 15th at 7 pm I will offer a five session course on Planning A Trip To Israel/The Holy Land, again, if there is sufficient enrollment. Both of these LLI Courses are planned to be held at Beth El. If you wish to sign up for them, please do so through JMU's LLI program. I completed my own studies in the first of three courses with the Gamliel Institute on Shmira and Taharah by Chevrei Kadishah (studying the Halachah/Jewish laws and techniques concerning ritually preparing bodies for Jewish burial, in accordance with the requirement for respect and honor). I have started the second course on the Chevrah Kaddishah itself, history, organization, and how to set up and maintain such an organization. I took part again in the monthly Interfaith Clergy Conference call with a diverse group of pastors, ministers, priests, and rabbis from around the nation. I met with several persons in the larger community who wished to ask questions or learn more about Judaism. I met, called, contacted, or visited with congregants, and was in regular communication with the presidents of both congregations. I prepared reports for, and attended the Board meetings at each congregation. I have met with B'nai Mitzvah students for tutoring, and had practice sessions with those working on reading

Association meeting. I have participated in several webinars for rabbis to continue to enhance skills and knowledge. I have been working on plans for the trip to Israel, and it is firming up, looking to be an excellent experience. I now have an itinerary, and will be asking for a deposit from those interested by March 1st. Ask me about it if you have even the slightest interest in going on this trip. I planned to begin the coffee talks in mid-January but other events overtook me. I will start shortly. When I contact you, please try to meet with me at one of the times I can offer, and let me know your thoughts, experiences, needs, wants, and suggestions with regard to the congregation and the Jewish community. This information will serve to help plan for the future, and help to improve the congregation and the community.

THE CALENDAR, HOLIDAYS, EVENTS, & SERVICES

Rosh Chodesh for Shevat (a thirty day month) was on January 25th. Shevat runs from January 25th through February 23rd, with Rosh Chodesh for Adar (a twenty-nine day month) on February 23rd and 24th. Shevat will run from February 24th until March 23rd, with Rosh Chodesh for Nisan (a thirty day month) on March 24th. The evening of February 8th and day of February 9th coincides with the 15th of Shevat, a special day, called Tu Be'Shevat, and known as the New Year for the Trees. It commemorates the start of the growing season (rebirth and renewal), and is thought to be the time when the sap begins to rise in the Almond trees in Israel (the first to bloom). It has become a fairly widespread custom to hold a Tu Be'Shevat Seder – similar to a Passover Seder, but oriented to readings about and eating fruit from trees, particularly those that grow in Israel. This has overtones of a cross between arbor day, earth day, and a celebration of the land of Israel and Torah. This year the Seder is scheduled to be at Beth El on the 9th in the evening. I understand

that this will be a seder and desert event. Watch for more details elsewhere.

In February, the Torah Parashiot read will be Beshalach, Yitro, Mishpatim, and Terumah, from Shemot (Ex.) 13-17-27:19, and 30:11-16. We are in the second year of our Triennial cycle, so we read a portion from the middle of each week's reading.

The associated Haftarat (Haftarah readings selected from the prophets) to be read include segments from Judges 4-5; Isaiah 6-7, 9; 2 Kings 12; and 1 Kings 5-6. We also read the special Haftarah for Shabbat Shekalim on February 18th.

As determined by the Calendar Committee and the two Boards, the scheduled Rabbi-led Shabbat Services for this period are:

- Friday, January 20th, 7:30 pm, Beth El [Shorty Service @ Beth El]
- Saturday, January 28th, 10 am, THOI
- Friday, February 3rd, 7:30 pm, Beth El [Miriam Dickler Bat Mitzvah]
- Saturday, February 4th, 10 am, Beth El [Miriam Dickler Bat Mitzvah]
- Friday, February 10th, 7:30 pm, THOI
- Friday, February 24th, 7:30 pm, THOI
- Saturday, February 25th, 10 am, Beth El
- Saturday, March 3rd, 10 am, THOI
- Friday, March 9th, 7:30 pm, Beth El [Hannah Daniel Bat Mitzvah]
- Saturday, March 10th, 10 am, Beth El [Hannah Daniel Bat Mitzvah]
- Friday, March 23rd, 7:30 pm, Beth El [Marlene Brumbaugh, Judy Freudenthal, and Margee Greenfield B'not Mitzvah]

RABBI'S MESSAGE

February this year takes us through the end of the ten plagues, to the Exodus, Revelation at

Mount Sinai and the giving of the law. The Revelation at Sinai is often thought of as the formative experience of the Jewish people – and it is considered to be something that not only took place then, at that moment in time/history, but is also continually ongoing, so that we are experiencing it now. More, it is understood that every soul that was at that moment a member of the Hebrew people, or that ever would be, was present at that event.

This calls into question the notion most of us hold of time. It defies a linear view of time, and requires at least some sort of cyclical approach. At times I posit a more complex concept of time, one that is recursive (in other words that can call on another moment to occur in the midst of this moment, and that called on moment can also call on another moment, etc.). Either way, we are both in and out of the moment, part of it, and apart from it. This creates great complexity and layers of meaning in reading the text, but it also provide for the interaction of the various levels of voices of different ages to continue to play and interplay, so that Rabbi Akiba and Moses can converse with Rabbi Soleveitchik, and with us – so we are a participant in the ongoing conversation, continually and constantly experiencing Revelation. Perhaps we can continue to explore this idea together at some point. For now, let me close by wishing you a good day, a good week, and a good month.

**Shalom,
Rabbi Joe Blair
February 2012**

Board Members

Joe Blair	Rabbi
Sherri Alt	President
Chuck Slott	Vice President
Mary Handley	Secretary
Michelle Ornstein	Treasurer
Judy Freudenthal	Trustee
Andy Kohen	Trustee
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Dale Brothers	Sisterhood Copresident
Gale Clemons	Sisterhood Copresident
Ron Ornstein	Men's Club President
Ronn Daniel	Member at Large
Mary Hildebrand	Member at Large
Margee Greenfield	Immediate Past President

Bridge Editor

Elliott Golub
Elgolubret@comcast.net
181 Turkey Drive
McGaheysville, VA, 22840
540-289-

Yahrzeits

02	Emmanuel Loewner Harry Weiss Morris Myers	1894	Member
04	Helen Margulis Simon Saul Perlman	2010	Fred Simon's Mother Milton's Brother
05	Fannie Wise Pauline Peck	1877	Member Beverly Zindler's Mother
06	Rae Trubitz		Mark Trubitz' Mother
09	Fannie Goldsmith Hortense Wise Harry Moodnick	1933	Member
		1982	Ann Mintzer's Brother
10	Jennie Auerbach	1987	Suzi Trubitz' Grandmother
	Ada Robinson	1975	Member (Josh Robinson's Mother)
12	Abel Miller Hannah Nusbaum	1945 1937	Member
13	James Moneyhun	2003	Hillary Krohn's Son

14	A J Goldenthal Rosella Wender	Member 2003 Member
15	Fannie Loewner Ney	1946 Member (Eddie Ney's Grandmother)
19	Ruth Frankel	1975 Dave Frankel's Mother
20	Lillie Hirsch Anna Rodbell A J Goldenthal	1956 Member Herb Rodbell's Mother Marilyn Goldenthal's Husband
21	Adolph Wise	1928 Member
22	Emanuel Klingstein	1971 Member (Cap)
24	Charles Moore Milton Mitchell	Cleda Frankel's Father Jerry Minskoff's Brother
25	Julia Hirsch Canning Samuel Loewner	1945 1894 Founding Member Made the Ten Commandment Tablets above the Torahs.
	Herman Heller Sydney Nathanson Joseph Strauss	1983 Mark Strauss' Father
26	Ida Fielder	2002 Arnie Kahn's Mother-In-Law
28	Sam Lane	2007 Stuart Liss' Uncle

DONATIONS

Beth El Congregation is grateful for the following generous donations:

Gifts & Memorials

In honor of Joseph Robert Minskoff, Jerry & Esther's grandson

Judy & Stuart Liss

Elliott & Thea Golub

Yahrzeit Memorial Fund

Arnie Kahn in memory of Lester Kahn, father

In memory of Helen Rothen Levinson

Judy & Stuart Liss

Dale Brothers in memory of Karen Vanderhoof

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Bruce & Leslie Garber

Susan Barbash & Brian Allen

Dr. Elliott & Mrs. Antoinette Band

[Yahrzeit](#)

Mark & Joan Strauss in memory of Mark's father, Joseph Strauss

Arnie Kahn in memory of Ida Fielder

[Janet Kohen Memorial Music Fund](#)

Andy Kohen in memory of Kate Kessler

MEN'S CLUB

PLEASE JOIN US on **Friday February 17**, for our annual Men's Club Shabbat.

Men, please meet at the Temple by 7:15 to pick up your parts.

(Please let Bill Ney know if you plan to participate.)

Everyone else, please come celebrate Shabbat with the Beth El men, as we conduct the service. An oneg shabbat with store bought goodies will follow.

Wednesday, Feb. 15, at 6 PM we'll have our February dinner meeting at Union Station.

Tuesday March 6 will be the last Beth El men feed the Lion's Club spaghetti dinner of this year, so don't miss out on that shared cooking/eating opportunity. (Thanks to those who helped with the January meal, especially to Eddie Ney and Les Mintzer)

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Greetings from Religious School!

Please join us on Saturday, February 25th at 10:00am at Beth El for the **Religious School Shabbat** service led by all of our students. We will enjoy a wonderful service filled with song and youthful exuberance! We look forward to seeing you there!

Also, you and your family are welcome to join the Religious School students and families for our Tu Bi'Shevat seder on Sunday, February 5th at 11:00am.

L'shalom,,Dara Hall, Principal

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chinese Auction/Italian Dinner:

By now, you have received your letter, flyer and tickets for the Beth El Fundraiser: "Chinese Auction - Italian Style". March 3, 2012. You won't want to miss this adult event! Many of our food mavins will prepare an Italian-style dinner of pasta dishes, salads, bread and desert. Bring your favorite wine to share (or not!).

After dinner, we'll enjoy a "Chinese auction". Here's how it works: Every attendee brings an unwrapped gift (worth at least \$10) for the auction. As each participant arrives for dinner, a committee member will take the gift and hand each person an envelope with 10 pre-numbered tickets. These gifts will be displayed on tables around the social hall. Each gift will have a cup or other receptacle in front of it. You are invited to peruse the gifts and place any number of tickets in the cup in front of any gift you hope to win. Additional tickets will be available for purchase, to improve your chances. Once time is called and all tickets are deposited, a winning ticket will be randomly pulled from each cup and the gift awarded.

Its a fun evening! We encourage you to purchase a ticket for yourself, your spouse or significant other, and to sell tickets to your friends, your colleagues, your neighbors...anyone who would enjoy a yummy, fun, social and a-little-goofy evening out.

If you have questions or need additional admission tickets, please call Sherri (249-5465) or Margee (476-0299). Also, please remember that, unlike our former fundraising dinners that encouraged table turnover throughout the evening, we will need to limit the number of tickets sold, to make sure we have room for all.. Please get your money to Bill Ney ASAP.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to new members Josh Linder and Martha Bomar, and MazalTov ! on the birth of their son, Jacob Shai !!!

646 Sunrise Ave,

Harrisonburg, VA 22801

(540) 746-7406

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Each year the local newspaper *Daily News-Record* publishes the "Roll of Honor" issue in which local businesses, churches, and organizations are included in a series of ads. Each ad notes how many years the organization has existed, the date of its founding, and local contact information.

In the January 27th issue there will be an ad for *Beth El Congregation*. Get the paper on January 27th and look for Beth El's ad.

On Thursday, February 9, we, at Beth El, will host the annual joint Beth El/Temple House Of Israel Tu B'Shevat seder. You know this seder: fruit, nuts, wine..."The New Year for Trees." Please join us at 7 for the brief seder followed by a pot-luck dessert.

It is really important that you call Margee (476-0299) or email her at az2va@msn.com by Sunday, February 5 - let her know that you'll be joining us and what dessert you will bring, to share. Looking forward to seeing you for another wonderful reason to celebrate.

Some of what I learned at the 71st Biennial Convention of the URJ

I offer all of you that read the monthly Bridge of Beth El Congregation some of what I learned while attending the URJ biennial in the DC area last month. I hope that the others that attended will add to my observations, because I am sure that we learned different things, some of which are very personal and private and others of which we specifically sought out for sharing with our Chaverim in the community.

So, the first thing that I had affirmed (not new learning) is how overwhelmingly inspiring it is to participate in worship services with hundreds, no thousands, of other Jews. Hand in hand with this is how inspiring it is to sing during services with that many others, even when the melodies are not the ones to which I am accustomed but to which I can easily become accustomed. In particular, the mincha and maariv services led by groups of cantors from across the nation left me in awe.

Second, I got confirmation of the importance that Social Justice has in Reform Judaism of the 21st century. I learned from workshops, learn-shops, at the luncheon of the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ), from the presentations celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Religious Action Center (RAC) and from the accolades honoring our outgoing president, Rabbi Eric Yoffie. I also got it particularly from 2 of the resolutions passed at the plenary sessions.

The one on Genocide Prevention ends by saying that the URJ “1. Stresses the moral imperative of the Jewish community’s obligation to monitor, speak out and mobilize against genocide, reflecting the Jewish community’s historic experiences as victims of genocide; 2.) Emphasizes that a response to early warning signs may reduce the need for more drastic actions to stop genocide and that the moral, financial and human costs of genocide prevention are significantly less than such costs when responding to crises after escalation; 3.) Calls on the governments of the US and Canada to . . . b.) Continue to provide international development aid that has been shown to play a stabilizing role for countries in crisis. Aid should be transparent, efficient and monitored to ensure it is received by intended recipients, . . . c.) Advocate for security assistance directed toward reforming and strengthening other nations’ and regions’ security systems that enables them to act with integrity and efficacy in addressing genocidal activity and genocide prevention. . . .

A more “local” theme appears in the Resolution on Principles of Economic Justice in a Time of Fiscal Crises, which ends by saying that “Therefore, the URJ resolves to: 1.) Affirm the role of the private sector, including the religious sector, to care for the poor and vulnerable, and to expand such efforts at times of economic crisis; 2.) Affirm the indispensable role of the government in ensuring economic justice and therefore call on our RAC, synagogues, rabbis, and social action committees to advocate at the national, state, provincial and local levels for the preservation and strengthening of the social safety net to uphold those in need and sustain those who are struggling; 3.) Call on the US to rededicate itself to a society based on economic justice, including a.) Preserving vital social safety net programs including, but not limited to: Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, Earned Income Tax Credit, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, . . . c.) . . . while eschewing deficit reduction efforts that increase poverty or that significantly reduce funding for critical programs serving the needs of vulnerable populations; d.) Ensuring that tax policy distributes the tax burden equitably in accordance with individuals’ and corporations’ ability to pay and provides a just and fair method of producing the revenues necessary for the well-being of our country. This may include measures such as higher taxes for well-to-do individuals, more equitable taxes on corporations. . . . 4.) Urge our congregations and congregants to expand both their own efforts and their inter-religious endeavors to help cope with the staggering pressures now confronting shelters, community kitchens and other communal agencies serving those in need; . . .

Finally, for this writing, I got confirmation that there is so much more that I have to learn about Judaism, Reform Judaism, and how we in Harrisonburg can act on things that matter to all congregations and congregants that comprise the URJ. While we certainly are active and involved, it’s possible to do even more. I will share some additional thoughts in the next issue of the Bridge.

L'Shalom
Andy Kohen

It's difficult to describe the experience of learning, worshipping and interacting with thousands of Reform Jews over a 5-day period. Sherri Alt, Judy Freudenthal, Marlene Brumbaugh and I were fortunate to have received support from the Beth El Board, the Sisterhood and a Small-Congregations grant from URJ that made it possible for us to attend the URJ Biennial, in December . If you have the time and stamina, ask any of us the 4 of us about living together in a hotel room, about serving as volunteers for the Women of Reform Judaism and about hearing speeches by Barak Obama (Yes, he was amazing!), Natan Shiransky (What a mensch.), Eric Cantor (who gave a "safe" speech to a decidedly more-liberal-than-he-is audience, talking about Israel and about growing up Jewish, in Richmond), Wendy Mogul (Hysterical author- can't wait to read her books), Rabbi Eric Yoffie (Who was honored in retiring from his years of service to URJ and who we giggled with in an elevator, when we first arrived), Rabbi Richard Jacobs (who is dynamic and energetic and has the seemingly-impossible job of stepping into Eric Yoffie's shoes), Theodore Bikel (he's 89, he sang and he's STILL Tevye), Nancy Brinker (Sister of Susan G Koman and founder of the "For The Cure" Foundation and inspiring speaker), and so many others. Whew!

On the way home, in the car, we talked a lot about what and how to share our experiences. It didn't take long for us to realize that, amidst all of the star power and amazing wisdom of rabbis, cantors, educators and URJ administrators, it was Shabbat services that had the biggest impact on all of us. What we all remember was the sense of "celebrating" Shabbat. The clergy turned a hotel ballroom, filled with thousands of congregants, into a joyous holy space. We sang, we clapped, we danced and we laughed while we worshipped. What a gift it was! We want to share this feeling with our Beth El family. We have already talked to Rabbi Joe and we are meeting soon with the choir, to discuss steps that we can take to make our Shabbat services more of a celebration. Watch for some changes. Let us know YOUR ideas, please!!

Most of all, we want to thank you for the opportunity to attend this event. Please ask any/all of us about the trip, as well as Andy Kohen, who shepherded us novices through the throngs. And please consider attending a biennial in the future. You'll never forget it!

Margee Greenfield

February 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3 Shabbat BETH EL Miriam Dickler B/M	4 Shabbat BETH EL Miriam Dickler B/M
5 [REL SCH Tu Be-Shevat]	6	7	8	9 BETH EL Tu Be'Shevat Seder	10	11
12 [REL SCH]	13	14	15 Men's Club Dinner Meeting 6 PM Union Station	16	17 Shabbat Men's Club Shabbat	18
19 [REL SCH 21]	20	21	22 Sisterhood Meeting 7PM	23	24	25 Shabbat BETH EL & [REL SCH Service]
26 [NO REL SCH]	27	28	29			