



September 2007

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Hello Beth El Family -

What a whirlwind this summer has been for so much of our congregation! I'm so anxious to see all of you and catch up (and catch you up!) on all the latest... illnesses, recoveries, new members, vacations, world travels, life cycle events, you name it! As always, I'm looking for the switch that turns this merry-go-round down a notch!

And now the holidays are looming. The thought of reflecting back over the past year is daunting, of atoning is overwhelming. The Days of Awe will catch us as we speed on by, and will give us the impetus we need to pause, to breathe, to observe, to ponder. Although I am a little leery, I'm also ready for the change of pace and perspective. You, too?

I'll have more thoughts (hopefully, a bit less esoteric!) to share over the holidays, but I do have one request of you, as we barrel forward: You've heard me say, again and again, that Beth El is all of us...that we exist for and because of all of us. As we gather for the new year and again for Yom Kippur, please think about answering Judy's request and be willing to take a part in the holiday services. Sitting on the bimah gives you a true sense of being a part of the community and there are, of course, the windows for additional scenery! Reading a small portion of the service is a one-time, low-risk way to take part. May we count on you? It just wouldn't be the same without you. Please email or call Judy and let her know what you will do.

I hope for you a happy, peaceful new year and I look forward to seeing you.

Margee

GREETINGS FROM THE EDITORS

As the new editors of the Beth El Bridge, we'd like to take this time to say hi and express our hope that you find this edition of the Bridge on par with those that Alan and Kate Neckowitz produced. Alan and Kate did a superb job as editors and set high marks for quality. They devoted many hours to rewriting pieces, checking grammar and spelling, and dealing with format issues. As we receive the baton from them, we want you to know that we are NOT them! Mo is originally from Philadelphia and Mike is from New York. That means we both have an attitude. In that regard, please have your pieces in on time and in one of the following forms: Word, PDF or email. Please check your submissions, as we will not be editing them unless there are blatant problems, in which case we will be sending it back to you.

The deadline for submissions for the October Bridge is 5:00 PM, September 14. Of course, we will happily take anything earlier - just not later as we do have a life!

Mike and Mo

My dear fellow Valley Jews and Friends,

Shalom! Our year is about to begin – in many ways of counting. September is here, Labor day is upon us, the summer vacation is officially over, and Fall has arrived (well, almost!). Once more, school is back in session, classes are meeting, and adult education and regular rabbi-led services are scheduled to begin very soon. Liturgically, our calendar is also about to start. Beginning on September 12th at sunset, with the arrival of Rosh Hashanah, we enter a new year, moving seamlessly from the conclusion of 5767 into the year 5768.

THE CALENDAR AND HOLIDAYS

ELUL

The 14th and 15th of August were Rosh Chodesh for Elul. Elul is the month leading up to the High Holy days, and it is drawing to a close as I write this. Elul is intended to be a time of introspection and self-examination, an assessment of behavior in the year that is closing, with an eye towards improving in the year to come. This process is called a Cheshbon Nefesh, an 'accounting of the soul'. Traditionally during this period, as part of the Cheshbon Nefesh, special selichot (penitential prayers) are recited starting with the month of Elul, until Yom Kippur, except on Shabbat and Holidays, for a total of forty days. This is to give us a 'wake up call' and an opportunity to work on those aspects of ourselves we wish to improve. A less stringent tradition is to recite selichot prayers on ten days during the time from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, not including Shabbat or the holidays themselves. Some people have recently developed the custom of holding a single public selichot service following the Shabbat just prior to Rosh Hashanah, usually after midnight. The power of these selichot prayers is in their regular recitation during this period, serving as a motivation and focus for self-examination and engagement in the process of Teshuvah (repentance, return, and turning). When entered into with the correct kavannah (intention and direction), the Cheshbon Nefesh can be a powerful and transformative experience. It is difficult and uncomfortable to engage in this kind of scrutiny of oneself, but the results are almost always worthwhile. There is really little choice about it: avoidance of this process doesn't simply leave us where we are: it creates a process of movement away from the direction we should be taking, which is a movement towards G-d and godliness.

There are so many faults and flaws to avoid, and we are each likely to have engaged in many of them in the course of a year. All of us have room to improve, to grow, to increase in godliness and kedushah (holiness), to be better people and more like the person we want to become, closer to G-d. Some of these errors are acts we commit. For example, one of the most pervasive, but most damaging is lashon hara (gossip, evil speech), said to injure three people (the speaker, the listener(s), and the one(s) spoken about). I know personally that these acts are present in our community. Lashon Hara is understood to also include dismissing or belittling another person, or denigrating their ideas or efforts, and discouraging and disheartening them from trying, giving reasons such as 'I tried that, it won't work here'. Another example of an act we commit is Sinat Chinam (baseless hatred), whether personally directed, or in the form of bigotry against a group. It is said to have been the reason for the decree concerning the destruction of the Temple. And another type of act we see: egotism and self-importance, said to be the base causes for murder and the wanton destruction of others when taken to the extremes. When we act on these motivations, we injure others, offend G-d, and damage our own soul. Some errors are passive: refusing or failing to act when we should. A few examples of these kinds of things are failure to assist another person in their time of need, or choosing to hide or withhold information that would allow others to succeed. Sometimes, we act or withhold intentionally, other times inadvertently. In either case, we still injure other people, and we diminish our soul in that process.

Reviewing all the events of the past year and the times we may have missed the mark and acted in such a way, or failed to act when we should have, is painful and difficult, but the pathway to growth must traverse the thorny and difficult trail of self-knowledge. I pray that all of us shall find a way to follow that pathway and grow and change for the better. May your Cheshbon Nefesh be fruitful and meaningful, and may you arrive at new heights in your journey towards G-d. *(continued on page 3)*

THE CALENDAR AND HOLIDAYS (continued)

TISHREI

We are told in Bamidbar (Numbers) 29 that we are to mark a festival on the first day of the seventh month, the day of sounding the shofar. This is Rosh Hashanah. Immediately following, we are instructed to observe the tenth day of the month as a solemn day of afflicting our souls. This is Yom Kippur. On the fifteenth day of the seventh month we are to observe a festival of seven days. This is Sukkot.

Rosh Chodesh (the New Month) for Tishrei (the seventh month) will take place on the 13th of September, when we mark Rosh Hashanah, literally, the head of the year. On September 22nd we observe Yom Kippur (the day of atonement), and beginning on September 27th we celebrate Sukkot (the harvest festival). Of course, in the Jewish calendar, each day begins at sunset, so we start our observances at sundown of the preceding secular calendar day (so September 12th for Rosh Hashanah, September 21st for Yom Kippur, and September 26th for Sukkot).

TORAH PARASHIOT

Torah parashiot (Torah portions) read for the period covered by this newsletter include: Ki Tavo, Nitzavim-Vayelech, Ha'azinu, Vezot Habrachah, Vayera (in part), and Kedoshim (in part). These are drawn from Devarim (Deuteronomy) 26:1-34:12, Bereshit (Genesis) 18:1-22:24, and Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:1-20:27.

Haftarot include readings from Isaiah chapters 55-56, 58, 60-63, 1 Samuel 1, 2 Samuel 22, Ezekiel 38-39, and the book of Jonah.

TRIP TO ISRAEL

The trip took place, and it was **WONDERFUL!** I can't tell you how much all of us enjoyed it and gained from it. It was a moving, inspirational, fun, funny, informative, exciting, exhilarating, exhausting, overwhelming, emotional time for all eleven of us. Ask those who went, and take a look at their photos. The experience beggars description.

NEW YEAR WISHES

I want to close this article with a sincere wish that all of you will be written and sealed for a Shanah tovah umetukah, a good and sweet year. May you and your loved ones know peace, health, prosperity, and joy in the coming year, and receive even more and better than you deserve.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Greetings from the Religious School,

The summer has flown by! We hope everyone enjoyed a fun and relaxing break and is energized for the new school year. Another great year of Religious School begins on Sunday, September 9th at 9:30am!

Families should have received a registration packet in the mail and should bring their registration forms and tuition on that first Sunday. (If you have not received a packet and you have school-aged children whom you wish to enroll, please call Ruth Berger at 574-0440 or email ruthberger@comcast.net.) Also, parents should plan to stay for a brief meeting to go over plans for this year. We are looking forward to seeing everybody!

We hope that everyone will join the Religious School in celebration of the following upcoming events:

Sunday, September 30, 2007 – **Sukkot celebration**

Friday, October 5, 2007 – **Consecration Service & Simchat Torah @ THOI**

May your high holidays be joyous and peaceful!

L'shalom v'rei'ut,

Dara Hall, Linda Kohn, and Ruth Berger

S M T W T F S

						1	
2	3	4	5 Men's Club Mtg/Picnic and Sisterhood Mtg 6 pm	6	7 Lay Service	8 Selichot @ 6 pm	
9 RS & Bagel Bar	10	11	12 Erev Rosh Hashanah 8 pm Rabbi Sue	13 Rosh Hashanah 10 am Rabbi Joe Tashlich @ Purcell 1pm	14 Rabbi-led Service Shabbat Shuvah	15	
16 RS & Bagel Bar Yizkor at cemetery 1pm	17	18	19	20	21 Kol Nidre 8 pm Rabbi Joe	22 Yom Kippur 10 am Rabbi Sue	
23 RS & Bagel Bar Build Sukkah	24	25	26 Pizza in the Hut and Erev Sukkot Service 6 pm	27	28 Lay Service	29	
30 RS (Sukkot) & Bagel Bar	 <h2 style="margin: 0;">September 2007</h2> 					 <p style="font-size: small;">שנה טובה Happy New Year</p>	 <p style="font-size: small;">גמר חתימה טובה</p>

2	Lena Paul Miller	12	Sidra Nemoytin Dubel	23	Kalman Meyer
5	Rose Minskoff Edythe Sanders	16	Fannie Meyerberg Harry Blatt Bertha Brooslin Kaye Barbara Clayman Callihan Beth Ash Ney	25	Berdie Frank Ney Kattie Iseman Nettie Berney Theodore Weiss Ben Handler Sara (Sissy) Loewner
6	Arthur H. Hirsch Thomas Blatt Dr. Alfred Agrin	18	Rosalyn Loewner Solomon Loewner Gladys Wise Joseph Ney	27	Samuel Fisher Alexander Nemoytin
8	Rabbi Stephen Levinsohn Norman Kaiser	20	Simon Marrick Samuel Rubin Nebelkopf	29	Belle Neckowitz Julius Berman Charles Rodbell
10	Lee G. Loewner	21	Katie Ney		
11	Alfred Raff Gilbert Litvin				

Beth El Congregation is grateful for the following generous donations received during the summer:

To the General Fund

- Bill & Leslie Ney - Get well wishes for Janet Kohen
- Shirley & Dave Merlin - Get Well wishes for Janet Kohen, Rabbi Joe, & Mo Goldberger
- Esther & Jerry Minskoff- Get Well wishes for Janet Kohen, Rabbi Joe, & Mo Goldberger
- Kate & Alan Neckowitz - In memory of Dave Merlin
- Kate & Alan Neckowitz - Wishing a speedy recovery for Shirley Merlin
- Estelle & Josh Robinson - In honor of Tish' A B'av 5767

To the Yahrzeit Memorial Fund

- Bill & Leslie Ney - In memory of Carol Ney (Bill's Mother) and Joseph Ney (Bill's Father)
- Kate & Alan Neckowitz - In memory of Jack Neckowitz (Alan's father)
- Arnie Kahn - In memory of Ronnie Kahn (Arnie's wife)
- Eddie Ney & Frances Stewart - In memory of Irving Ney (Eddie's father) & Albert Ash (Eddie's grandfather)
- Estelle & Josh Robinson - In memory of the following relatives: Henry & Ada Robinson, A David & Marie Good, David I Robinson, William & Annie Robinson, Joshua & Sarah Rabinowitz
- Allan Poster - In memory of the following relatives: Rose Poster Carr (Allan's mother), Marvin Poster (Allan's brother), and Edward Poster (Allan's father)
- Lois Poster - In memory of Marvin Poster (Lois' husband)
- John Stewart - In memory of Susanne Glasser (John's sister)
- Alan & Kate Neckowitz - In memory of Belle Neckowitz (Alan's Mother)
- Harvey Litvin - In memory of Gilbert Litvin (Harvey's Father)
- Herb Rodbell - In memory of Gilber Litvin (Herb's cousin)
- Lenny & Marilena Berman - In memory of Julius Berman (Lenny's Father)

To the Building Fund

- Ruth & Bary Berger
- Franklin Blatt
- Phil Renick
- Karen & Steve Sodikoff
- Joseph Landson
- Eddie Ney & Francis Stewart - Wishing a speedy recovery for Shirley Merlin
- Chuck Slott - In memory of Dave Merlin
- Chuck Slott - Wishing a speedy recovery for Shirley Merlin
- Esther & Jerry Minskoff - In memory of Dave Merlin
- Esther & Jerry Minskoff - Wishing a speedy recovery for Shirley Merlin

To the Anne Mintzer Window Fund

- Chuck Slott - Wishing for good health for Janet Kohen
- Janet & Andy Kohen - In memory of Dave Merlin and a speedy recovery for Shirley Merlin and Mo Goldberger
- Bill & Leslie Ney - Speedy recovery for Shirley Merlin and Mo Goldberger
- Joan Funston - In memory of Dave Merlin and in honor of Arnie Kahn's 65th birthday

MEN'S CLUB

- Wednesday September 5, Picnic and Opening Meeting, 6 PM. Contact Bill Ney re: cooking help. Bring a side dish to share. Hillandale Park Shelter #12 or 11. (next to last one from the end with the bathroom).
- Sat. Sept. 22 - Help out with Break-The-Fast following Yom Kippur Services - contact Dan Bly
- Sunday Sept. 23 - Help put up the Sukkah during bagel bar. Contact Kevin G.
- Sunday Oct. 7 - Help take down Sukkah during bagel bar. Contact Kevin G.
- Mark your calendar; on Nov. 20 Lion's Club spaghetti dinner # 1. Contact Eddie Ney
- Also remember that Men's Club helps out with ushering for the High Holidays (Rosh Hashanah Sept. 12 and 13 and Yom Kippur Sept. 21 and 22). Sign ups will go around at the meeting.
- We'll work on the rest of the calendar at the picnic meeting. Bring appetite and ideas.



For several years the Beth El Men's Club has donated Jewish books to local school libraries as a grant in conjunction with Chautauqua Society's Reading in Education program. In 2007, Broadway High School was the recipient. Librarians Lori Peltonen and Ann Hill accepted the donation.

MISCELLANEOUS - LIBRARY

Ruth Clayman has generously donated the following books in memory of her husband Harry to the Beth El library in the hope that people will read and enjoy them. The library is a great resource of non fiction and fiction books on almost any Jewish theme one can think of. All members are encouraged to check out (and then return) books by simply filling out one of the little yellow slips and posting it on the bulletin board in the library. The library committee is actively seeking volunteers to help organize and care for the books in our collection. Let Ron or Andy know if you are interested. Thanks to all and many thanks to Ruth.

Mysteries of the Bible, Reader's Digest
Lightning Out Of Israel: The Six Day War, The Associated Press
Heritage: Civilization and the Jews, Abba Eban
Great Events of Bible Times, Doubleday
Atlas of the Bible, Reader's Digest
Great People of the Bible and How They Lived, Reader's Digest
Our Living Bible, Michael Avi-Yonah and Emil G. Kraeling
The Jews in Their Land, David Ben-Gurion
Israel 25: A pictorial celebration
The Hope, Herman Wouk (fiction)
Rabbi Jesus: The Jewish Life and Teaching that Inspired Christianity, Bruce Chilton
Blood Brothers, Sol Wachtler and David Gould (fiction)
Moses: The Man and His Vision, David Daiches
King of the Jews, Leslie Epstein (Hol. fiction)
How the Great Religions Began, Joseph Gaer
History of the Jews in America, Deborah Pessin

The Beth El Board has acted on a variety of new initiatives, and is still considering others, based on recommendations from our recent Congregational Survey. An ad hoc committee headed by Gary Stein presented survey results and a number of recommendations at a special board meeting July 17. Responses to the many issues raised in the survey were quite positive, but congregants offered suggestions in a number of areas.

Following are the results related to Friday night and holiday services:

— **Music:** Most congregants want to participate in the singing during Friday night and holiday services. The consensus favors a blend of traditional melodies, with just a few newer ones introduced periodically, then used regularly so that they become familiar. The majority thinks that the role of the soloist and choir should be to facilitate congregational singing, so familiar melodies are preferred. The board discussed the possibility of creating a compact disc of Shabbat melodies that could be made available to any who want to learn the songs at home.

— **Sermons:** Board and survey committee members discussed the very positive responses to Rabbi Joe's sermon about the Virginia Tech tragedy, which was reprinted in the Summer Bridge. While recognizing that sermons are a freedom of pulpit issue and are up to the Rabbi, it was recommended that Rabbi Joe continue to look at contemporary topics, and probe more deeply into them. The survey suggests a preference for more thought-provoking and reflective sermons.

— **Length of Services:** Many responders to the survey favor streamlining Friday services to a shorter and more consistent length. The board will request that the Rabbi and the Religious Services committee confer, with a goal of beginning services at 7:30, and ending by 8:45, followed by the oneg. This would be helpful with planning, for congregants who travel long distances, for those who bring young children, and for those who leave their children at home with a sitter.

— **Meet the Mishpocha:** Also considering the length of services, the board decided that the *meet the mishpocha* series be shifted to begin about 15 minutes into the oneg, placing the presentations in a more social setting. Board members have received much positive feedback about *meet the mishpocha*.

— **Saturday Morning Adult Services:** Based on strong interest expressed in the survey, two Saturday morning adult services have been added to the Beth El

calendar. Lay services will be held the Friday before each Saturday morning service.

— **Young Children at Services:** Young children are welcome in the sanctuary during Friday night services. However, the survey suggests that children sometimes distract congregants during the service. Board members noted that it is up to the parents to monitor their children's behavior, and remove them to one of the classrooms if they become too disruptive.

A number of suggestions were offered to help the parents. The board encourages continuing the babysitting system begun this year, possibly with help from Youth Group or JMU Hillel. Ideally it would have toys and materials to support a Jewish education theme. The board will look into an occasional Saturday morning children's services, like the Tot Shabbats at THOI.

— **Holiday Services:** The survey suggests continuing most holiday services on the nearest Friday evening. The board decided to celebrate one holiday, Sukkot, on its calendar date, Wednesday, Sept. 26, with "Pizza in the Hut."

— **Joint Services with THOI:** To increase interaction with members of THOI, the board discussed planning and increasing publicity for some joint events, and encouraging car-pooling among interested congregants.

Other survey results also were positive, and led to the following recommendations considered by the board:

— **Adult Education:** To increase attendance at adult education sessions, and to ease the burden for all the planning on our busy rabbi, the board decided that Beth El needs a stronger adult education committee. The committee would facilitate programming in coordination with Rabbi Joe. Fewer, more popular offerings might lead to better attendance. A number of suggestions were discussed. For on-going classes, get groups of people to organize by interest/subject and request and work with the Rabbi to arrange meeting times.

Continue Torah Study once a month, returning to Friday early evening with BYO dinner. For single session events, have the committee organize just a few additional events a year, (speaker, discussion, films were leading suggestions) rather than relying entirely on Rabbi Joe to instruct us. Leading the suggested topics were Jewish history, Torah, ethics, and culture.

— **Welcoming New Members:** Gift baskets are now presented to new members. The board is considering (continued on page 8)

CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY RESULTS (continued)

setting up a welcoming committee.

— **Communicating with the Board:** A number of congregants expressed difficulty in getting in touch with members of the board, and Janet Kohen volunteered to serve as the initial contact. In addition, the names and information about all board members will be posted on a bulletin board, and will be listed regularly in the Bridge. The board also is considering creating a suggestion box.

More than 40 congregants responded to the survey. The complete results soon will be posted on the Beth El website: <http://va014.urj.net/bethel.html>. If you have any questions or comments about the survey results, please contact Gary Stein: Steingaryst@aol.com

Respectfully submitted, Alan Neckowitz

SISTERHOOD

We will have our first meeting Wed, September 5 at 6:00 pm at the Temple—it will be an installation for our new officers—Maureen Goldberger as Treasurer and Thea Golub as Vice President. Dinner will be served! This will also be a special dinner to thank Gale Clemons and Dale Brothers for all of their years of serving as officers to Sisterhood. Please join us for this special dinner and welcome. RSVP to Sherri Alt so I may plan for dinner (249-5463).

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Please think about attending the 7 pm Songs of My Family concert performed by the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington, DC at JMU. It will occur on September 15 and is a benefit concert for SVGLA and the general support of more equality for all human beings in the Shenandoah Valley. What a great "social action project" and a way to do tzedakah to begin the New Year.

THE RABBI'S AVAILABILITY

The Rabbi is available this year by prior arrangement on Sundays and Thursdays in Harrisonburg, and Mondays and Fridays in Staunton. If you wish to meet or speak with the rabbi, please email or call for an appointment to be sure that Rabbi Joe will be able to give you his full undivided attention, as you deserve.

The office is not staffed and the building is generally closed when the rabbi is not there. In the event of an urgent need the rabbi may be contacted by email or telephone. Messages are regularly checked at both congregations, and email is frequently read. Please understand that the rabbi will not be available or reply on Shabbat or on Jewish holidays unless it is an emergency that cannot wait. In that case, please be sure to express the need for an urgent response.

Email	RabbiJoe@hotmail.com
Beth El	540-434-2744
Temple House of Israel	540-886-4091
Cell (Leave a message)	434-981-3959

BOARD MEMBERS/MACHERS

Joe Blair	Rabbi	Janet Kohen	Past President
Margee Greenfield	President	Marlene Brumbaugh .	At large member
Gary Stein	Vice President	Thea Golub	At large member
Becky Mintzer	Secretary	Andrew Kohen	MAC Board Member-Ex Officio
Bill Ney	Treasurer	Janet Kohen	Para-rabbinic Aide
Judy Freudenthal	Trustee	Linda Kohn	Religious School co-principal
Andrew Kohen	Trustee	Ruth Berger	Religious School co-principal
Jerry Minskoff	Trustee	Dara Hall	Religious School co-principal
Sherri Alt	Sisterhood President		
Ron Ornstein	Brotherhood President		