

The Beth El Bridge

Keeping the Jewish Community Connected

Beth El Congregation

Harrisonburg, Virginia

September 2006

THE RABBI'S DESK

My dear fellow Valley Jews and Friends, SHALOM!

As you know, congregational year 5765-5766 (August 2005-July 2006) came to its end. Now we are at the start of the new congregational year, as well as looking forward to the High Holidays in a short few weeks. In anticipation of the upcoming holidays, allow me to wish each and all of you a sincere LeShanah Tovah veMatokah Tikateivu (May you be inscribed for a good and sweet year). May this be a year of many blessings for all of us, and a year of peace for Israel, and for all the world.

THIS ARTICLE

I am writing this article in late July and early August. I have been enjoying the change of pace that the summer brings, but at the same time, I am missing our regular events and the excitement of congregational life, and I will be happy to return and begin the cycle of activities anew. The year officially starts Aug. 27, and our first regular Shabbat services at Beth El will be Sept. 1. I look forward to seeing each of you again!

THE CALENDAR & HOLIDAYS

As I wrote this, we were in the midst of the month of Tammuz. July 26 is Rosh Chodesh for Av. Aug. 3 will be Ta'anit Tisha Be'Av, the fast of the 9th day of Av. As I have mentioned in prior articles, that is the day on which we solemnly commemorate terrible events in Jewish history, such as the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (twice). Specifically because of this tragic event in our history, Jews would visit the retaining wall at the base of the Temple mount and weep — which is how it became known as the “wailing wall,” or “kotel.” No part of the Temple remains intact. The kotel is the closest we can come to the Temple today.

Religious School Begins Sept. 10

The new Religious School year is about to begin! Our first day of school will be Sunday, Sept. 10. Your new co-principals, Ruth Berger, Dara Hall, and Linda Kohn, have been working hard to prepare for another great year. We have several new families and students starting this year.

If you know of any families in the area that might be interested in registering for Religious School, please email Linda Kohn at lin5ko@aol.com.

Also, if you are interested in serving as a substitute teacher, or in volunteering to share your knowledge with our classes, please contact Linda.

We hope you will all join us for our Religious School holiday celebrations, which will be listed in the congregational calendar. Your participation and involvement will be greatly appreciated!

Dara Hall

First Rabbi-Led Service, Friday, Sept. 1, 7:30 p.m.

Aug. 9 is another day of note during the summer period, but a much happier one. In the Talmud, Tu Be'Av (the 15th of Av) is identified as one of the two happiest days in the Jewish calendar, falling one week after the conclusion of the "three weeks" of mourning that end with Tisha Be'Av, and right in the midst of the period when we read "comforting" Haftarat. Tu Be'Av is called the holiday of Love (think Valentine's day!): it is the full moon of this month. This was said to be the time when the eligible young women would go out into the fields and engage in play and sports, all dressed alike, in white, to be seen by the young men. It is said that many marriages were arranged as a result. Whether this is fact or fancy, it does tie the period of comfort (and our summer) to the High Holidays, and serves as an early reminder of the coming Yamim Nora'im (days of awe), telling us that in forty-four days it will be Rosh Hashanah. This would be a wonderful day on which to have a congregational picnic or other happy event!

Aug. 24 and 25 are Rosh Chodesh for the month of Elul. This ushers in the formal period of Cheshbon Hanefesh (accounting of the soul) we are encouraged to engage in during this time leading up to the Day of Atonement.

Rosh Chodesh Tishrei is Rosh Hashanah (the head of the year, the Jewish New Year for the sovereign, and the celebration of the anniversary of Creation), and this year it falls on the evening of Sept. 22 and Sept. 23 and 24. Yom Kippur is the evening of Oct. 1 and Oct. 2, with Sukkot hard on the heels of this holiday. This is the time of observance of many holidays very close together on the Jewish calendar.

THE CONGREGATIONAL CALENDAR

Speaking of calendars, you should soon have the up-to-date version of the annual congregational calendar. The calendar pulls together in one place all the wide variety of events and dates to plan out the year. By looking carefully over the calendar, you can see the full range of adult education programs, services, holidays, special events, social happenings, and so on, which should make it easier than ever to plan ahead and take advantage of all we have to offer at Beth El!

A few notes on upcoming calendar events and items:

- Regular rabbi-led Shabbat services begin Sept. 1 at Beth El.
- Check your calendar for the schedule of meetings of the Beth El Board. Board meetings are open to all congregants.
- Religious School will begin Sunday, Sept. 10.
- Torah Lishmah (Torah study for its own sake) will begin Sept. 15, at noon at THOI. The focus for this is Parashat Hashavuah (the weekly Torah reading). This year we are in the third year of the triennial cycle.
- Talmud Torah Limud (Torah Studies), will occur on a monthly schedule at Beth El, at 6 p.m. Monday evenings, beginning Sept. 18. The focus is a more in depth look at one topic or part of the text from the Torah readings for the month. In September, we will look closely at Bereshit/Genesis 22, the binding of Isaac — the Torah reading for the morning of Rosh Hashanah.
- The first Tot Shabbat program will be at 10 a.m. at THOI Sept. 16. Generally, Tot Shabbat will be on the third Shabbat of each month, except in October (when it will be conducted on Oct. 7 to celebrate Sukkot — contact Shelby for more information on the location). All families with children in the pre-school age group are invited to attend. Please RSVP to Shelby Apple, or leave a message at THOI during the week.
- There will be a thematically appropriate film and discussion followed by a Selichot service Sept. 16, starting at 6 p.m. at THOI. The film is tentatively identified as either *Crimes and Misdemeanors* or *Million Dollar Baby*, depending on availability.
- The first adult education program for this year will be a class on the High Holidays on Sept. 21 at 7 p.m. at THOI. There will be three similar holiday related classes through the year, one Oct. 5 for Sukkot, and the others in the weeks prior to Passover and Shavuot.
- Israel Trip planning and preparation meetings will take place, with five sessions planned, starting in January for those who will be going. I will be asking for commitments in order to plan soon.

The Rabbi's message continues on Page 4

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Aug. 27 Rabbi's office day.	Aug. 28 Board Meeting , Temple, 7:30 p.m. Rabbi's office day.				1 Rabbi Service , 7:30 p.m.	2
3 Rabbi's office day.	4	5	6 Men's Club Picnic , 6 p.m., location TBA.	7	8 Lay Service , 7:30 p.m.	9
10 FIRST DAY, Religious School , 9:30-12:30. Bagel Bar, 9-11:30. Rabbi's office day.	11 Rabbi's office day.	12 Sisterhood Meeting , 6 p.m., Temple, Lox and bagels.	13 Board Meeting , Temple, 7:30 p.m.	14	15 Rabbi Service , 7:30 p.m.	16 Tot Shabbat , THOI, 10 a.m. Film and Selichot Service , THOI, 6 p.m.
17 Religious School , 9:30-12:30. Bagel Bar, 9-11:30. Rabbi's office day.	18 Rabbi's office day. Torah Study , 6 p.m., bring your own meal.	19	20	21	22 Erev Rosh Hashanah , 8 p.m. , Rabbi Sue Elwell.	23 Rosh Hashanah , 10 a.m., Rabbi Joe Blair. Tashlich Service , 1 p.m.
24	25 Rabbi's office day.	26	27	28	29 Rabbi Service , 7:30 p.m.	30

RABBI'S AVAILABILITY THIS YEAR

Starting Aug. 25, the Rabbi's available days for this year will generally be Sundays and Mondays in Harrisonburg, and Thursdays, Friday days, and some Wednesday evenings in Staunton. The rabbi is out and the office is closed for all Jewish holidays, Shabbat, and some secular holidays. The office is closed as well as during those times the rabbi is out of town or otherwise unavailable. You may leave a phone message at the congregation. Messages are checked periodically by the rabbi.

REACHING THE RABBI

If you wish to meet or speak with the rabbi, please email or call for an appointment, preferably on one of the available days in your location, to be sure that Rabbi Joe will be able to give you his full undivided attention, as you deserve.

Email: RabbiJoeB@hotmail.com

Beth El Congregation

Temple House of Israel

Home [Emergencies only, please]

540-434-2744

540-886-4091

434-971-4741

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SHORTY

A Shorty (Youth Group) kick-off activity and/or trip is tentatively planned for early September, and a meeting will be called sometime later in the month for installation of officers, planning for the year, a program, and confirmation activities. Members of Shorty and their parents will hear more about this on their own email lists once the dates and times have been finalized. If you, or someone in your family, is eligible for membership in Shorty (post-B'nai Mitzvah age through Senior year in High School), please contact Rabbi Joe or Sherri Alt.

While I am thinking of the Youth group, let me mention the excellent job that they did leading services on June 3 at Beth El, including the members of Shorty for last year and some of those eligible to join Shorty this year. It was a lovely service celebrating Shabbat, Shavuot, and Confirmation, and they led it so well they made us all proud. We can look forward to having them lead services several times during the course of this year.

B'NAI MITZVAH

Looking ahead, this congregational year we plan to celebrate three B'not Mitzvah (plural of Bat Mitzvah). Dec. 1 and 2 are the dates scheduled for Riff Blair at THOI. Jan. 26 and 27 for Rachel Berger at Beth El, and March 23 and 24 for Roberta Stein at Beth El.

Two more Religious School students also are working toward their B'nai Mitzvah at this time: Sean Miller at THOI and Jacob Stein at Beth El share an August birthday. These two are scheduled to celebrate their B'nai Mitzvah a week apart in October, 2007.

I will be meeting with each of these individuals during the course of the year to "coach" them, monitor progress, and encourage them to "be all they can be" in advance of this milestone marking their achievement of reaching a basic adult level of Jewish knowledge and education.

If you are interested in studying for and having your own B'nai Mitzvah, or in learning to leyn (read/chant) Torah and/or Haftarah, or lead services, please contact Rabbi Joe.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

The board of Beth El has decided that they wish me to monitor and account for compliance with the service attendance standards, such as those stated in the B'nai Mitzvah guidelines. I am looking into various systems of keeping track, and providing positive reinforcement for those students who comply.

All parents with students in the religious school should watch for more information on how this will be implemented. It is my hope that your children will want to attend services and that you will help them to achieve this goal. Look for them to talk about rewards for levels of achievement in this area. Ongoing Service attendance is the best and the least painful way for them to learn the liturgy they will need to master in the years before their B'nai Mitzvah. If they want to attend for other reasons, who would question their motivation? ☺

TORAH PARASHIOT

Torah parashiot (weekly portions) for this month include Ki Tetzei, Ki Tavo, Nitzavim/ Vayelich, and Haazinu from Devarim (Deuteronomy) chapters 21 to 32.

On Sept. 23, Shabbat Rosh Hashanah, as the holiday Torah portion we will read one of the most well-known sections of the Torah, the Akedat Yitzchak (binding of Isaac), Chapter 22 of Bereshit (Genesis). Talmud Torah Limud on Sept. 18 will focus on this Torah parashah and the various commentaries on it. These 23 verses have generated LOTS of commentary!

ADULT EDUCATION

I have attempted to plan a full series of classes and lectures that respond to the requests of congregants, and take into account what was popular and sparked interest in the past. Consequently, the plan for this year is quite extensive.

Events planned include weekly Torah Lishmah (THOI) and monthly Talmud Torah Limud (Beth El), similarly to last year. Also scheduled is a crash course in Reading Hebrew. This is a five-week course offered at each congregation starting in November. Intermediate Hebrew will start in January at each congregation.

In addition, there will be an adult education program most months at each congregation. At Beth El by request it will be a Jewish Film and Discussion program on Sunday evenings. I anticipate selecting films of Jewish interest that will raise some interesting questions, and cover a range of genre and topics.

I will be presenting a five-session series helping to prepare those who plan to travel to Israel next June. I will offer four sessions at each congregation, and one combined session at the end for all travelers.

CONVERSION CLASSES

Although I will not be offering the formal Introduction to Judaism class this year, I am teaching some classes that will cover some of the same information and material as part of the Adult Education offerings. Among those classes that may be useful for this purpose are: the five session Crash Course in Basic Judaism, the four Crash Courses in Jewish Holidays, the two Meet the Talmud sessions, the single session classes on the Five Megillot and Pirke Avot, Talmud Torah Limud, Torah Lishmah, and the Film and Discussion sessions. I believe that these are all appropriate for those considering conversion, as well as those simply interested in learning more about Judaism, whatever their level of knowledge. If you are interested in the conversion process and what it entails, please contact me.

B'virkat shalom (with Blessings of Peace) and best wishes for the new year,

Rabbi Joe

Yahrzeits for September

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

Donations

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

To the General Fund

In honor of Joel Ornstein's confirmation: Shirley and Dave Merlin, Michelle and Ron Ornstein.

In memory of Lila Hyman, Joyce Helbraun's sister: Judy Freudenthal, Shirley and Dave Merlin, Anne Mintzer.

In memory of Marvin Mondres: Anne Mintzer, Eddie Ney and Frances Stewart, Michelle and Ron Ornstein.

In honor of the grandchildren of Esther and Jerry Minskoff: Michelle and Ron Ornstein.

Wishing a speedy recovery for Joan Funston: Michelle and Ron Ornstein.

Wishing a speedy recovery for Shirley Merlin: Michelle and Ron Ornstein.

Wishing a speedy recovery for Anne Mintzer: Michelle and Ron Ornstein.

In memory of Harold Stahl: Shirley and Dave Merlin, and Judy Bergman.

In honor of the birth of Noa Rose Sachs-Kohen, granddaughter of Janet and Andy Kohen: Judy Freudenthal, Bill & Leslie Ney, Chuck Slott.

Thank you for the Bridge: Helen Prince.

A generous General Fund donation also was received from Jessica MacWilliams and Adam J. Best.

To the Yahrzeit Memorial Fund

In memory of her granddaughter, Elisa Tomaszewski: Anne Mintzer.

In memory of her father, Albert F. Miller: Mona Wolf.

In memory of Bill's mother, Carol S. Ney: Bill and Leslie Ney.

In memory of Bill's father, Dr. Joseph Ney: Bill and Leslie Ney.

In memory of their son, Steven Nemoytin: Irma and Gene Nemoytin.

In memory of Alan's father, Jack Neckowitz: Kate and Alan Neckowitz.

In memory of Ronnie Kahn: Arnie Kahn.

In memory of Lena Raff, Irma's mother: Irma and Gene Nemoytin.

In memory of his mother, Rose Poster Carr: Allan Poster.

In memory of his brother, Marvin Poster: Allan Poster.

In memory of her husband, Marvin Poster: Lois Poster.

In memory of his father, Louis Slott: Chuck Slott.

In memory of his father, Irving Ney: Eddie Ney.

In memory of his mother, Beth Ney: Eddie Ney.

In memory of his grandfather, Albert Ash: Eddie Ney.

In memory of Suzanne Glaser, John's sister: John and Nancy Stewart.

In memory of Samuel Nebelkopf, Shirley's father: Shirley and Dave Merlin.

To the Building Fund

Congratulations on the birth of Noa Rose Sachs-Kohen, granddaughter of Janet and Andy Kohen: Sandi and Bo Rose, Eddie Ney and Frances Stewart.

In response to Beth El's call for Building Fund donations: Claire and Tom Aycock, Dale Brothers, Max Derechinsky, Michael and Maureen Goldberger, Marjorie Huisinga, Rabbi Lynne Landsberg and Dennis Ward, Bob Lantz, Shirley and Dave Merlin, Irma and Gene Nemoytin, Bill and Leslie Ney, Milton Perlman, Sandi and Bo Rose, Carol and Mike Schikman, Chuck Slott, Karen and Steve Sodikoff, Evelyn and Larry Williams.

To the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

With thanks for the help and comfort, and for leading the funeral services for Marvin Mondres: Roberta Mondres.

With thanks for leading the baby naming services for their granddaughters, Lilly Sophia Minskoff and Natalie Rose Singerling: Esther and Jerry Minskoff.

To the Anne Mintzer Window Fund

In honor of Joel Ornstein's confirmation: Esther and Jerry Minskoff.

(continued)

Donations

To the Anne Mintzer Window Fund

In honor of Rabbi Blair's leading the baby naming service for their granddaughters: Esther and Jerry Minskoff.

In honor of the baby naming of the Minskoff grandchildren: Janet and Andy Kohen.

In honor of Janet and Andy Kohen for their participation in the baby naming service for their granddaughters, and for all they do for Beth El: Esther and Jerry Minskoff.

In memory of Lila Hyman, Joyce Helbraun's sister: Joan Funston, Janet and Andy Kohen.

In memory of Sylvia Minskoff, Jerry Minskoff's sister-in-law: Joan Funston.

Get well wishes for Anne Mintzer: Esther and Jerry Minskoff, Chuck Slott.

Get well wishes for Shirley Merlin: Esther and Jerry Minskoff, Chuck Slott.

Wishing a speedy recovery for Bo Rose: Dr. Ian and Ghita Saremback.

Congratulations on the birth of Noa Rose Sachs-Kohen, granddaughter of Janet and Andy Kohen: Joyce and Erwin Helbraun, Esther and Jerry Minskoff.

A message from our President...

The summer has flown, as always, and I'm looking forward to the new year — to see and worship with all of you, to welcome back Rabbi Joe from his vacation, to have Rabbi Sue Elwell with us for the holidays, to catch up on children, grandchildren, trips taken, illnesses weathered, and other news.

My email request for participation in temple committees resulted in eight responses, three of which are from board members. Thanks to you eight for stepping up. To the others — we'll talk, during the holidays.

Don't forget to pick up your Jewish calendar when you're at Beth El. There is one per member family, and they're in the social hall.

Enjoy what's left of the summer! Can't wait to see you!!

Margee

A yard sale success

Thanks to the donations of the Congregation, and the schlepping, upacking, hanging, pricing, straightening and cashiering efforts of a large contingent of congregants, the yard sale was once again a smash success.

We netted \$1,143, and we were very pleased.

Thank you to all those who helped with our annual yard sale!

Lisa

Sisterhood meeting

Sisterhood's first meeting of the year will be held on Tuesday, Sept. 12, at 6 p.m., at the Temple. We'll have lox and bagels for dinner.

Please join us to help start planning events for our new year!

Sherri

MAC BIENNIAL (Oct. 20-22): UPDATE

From Rabbi Scott Sperling

Staying Connected: How We Make Community Matter

Online registration is now up and running. Thanks to everyone who's already registered. If you haven't yet, please register now! You can find the link at <http://www.urj.org/mac/biennial>.

Program Notes – Tracks That Will Take You In Many Directions

We created the Veteran's Track in response to numerous comments by folks who, after attending many biennials, wanted something different. Most spoke of wanting opportunities for serious study.

Here's what we're offering:

— Rabbi Marc Raphael is the Nathan and Sophia Gumenick Professor of Judaic Studies, Professor of Religious Studies (since 1989), and Chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, as well as Rabbi of Congregation Bet Aviv in Columbia, Maryland. His topic will be: The Future of Judaism Versus Jewish Futures.

— Rabbi Michael Feshbach, senior rabbi of Temple Shalom in Chevy Chase, MD, will present a timely (the portion that Shabbat is the first in the Torah – B'reishit) workshop on: First Things First: A Sacred Exploration of the First Letter, First Word and First Sentence of the Torah.

— Dr. Julie Galambush, Assoc. Professor of Religious Studies at The College of William and Mary and a member of Temple Rodef Shalom in Falls Church, VA, will do a workshop based on her recent book, *The Reluctant Parting, How the New Testament's Jewish Writers Created a Christian Book*.

SMALL CONGREGATIONS RESOURCE FUND

For anyone who is a member of a congregation that is fewer than 250 member units, you need to know about the Small Congregations Resource Fund. Along with many other funding programs, the SCRF provides scholarships towards attending a regional biennial. You can get more information at: <http://urj.org/small/fund/> or by contacting Rabbi Victor Appell at 212.650.4080 or at vappell@urj.org.

Congratulations to Margee Greenfield, our new president, and to other elected and re-elected members of the Beth El Board for 2006-07!

Margee Greenfield *	President
Gary Stein	Vice President (open)
Bill Ney	Secretary
Linda Kohn	Treasurer
Becky Mintzer *	Director
Janet Kohen	Director
Sherri Alt	Past President
	Sisterhood President
	Men's Club President (open)
Judy Freudenthal	Trustee
Andy Kohen	Trustee
Jerry Minskoff *	Trustee

** newly elected*