

# ***The Beth El Bridge***

Keeping the Jewish Community Connected

Beth El Congregation

Harrisonburg, VA

February 2005

## ***From the Rabbi's Desk***

*My dear fellow Valley Jews and friends,*

Another month has passed rapidly. We have had some cold winter weather, but there has been much warmth among us, and the promise of spring was brought into our midst with the Tu Bi'shevat programs at the Religious School and at a recent Oneg.

**The Calendar and Holidays:** We are towards the end of the month of Shevat. Soon, Feb. 9 and 10 (the 30th of Shevat and the 1st of Adar) will be Rosh Chodesh (the new Month) for Adar I. In months with 30 days we mark Rosh Chodesh for the next month for two days: the 30th of the current month, and the 1st of the upcoming month. For months with only 29 days, we mark Rosh Chodesh for the next month only on the 1st of that upcoming month.

A (longish) word about the calendar. The Jewish calendar is what is called "luni-solar." This means that it is based on a lunar cycle, but adjusted for the solar cycle.

The lunar cycle is 29.5 days (on average). We have on our calendar six 29-day months and six 30-day months. If you do the math, you will find that 12 months of 29.5 days (the average) is 354 days.

We remember that a solar cycle is 365.25 days. The ".25" is the reason that we have a leap year every fourth year, when we add an extra day to keep the calendar synchronized with the solar movement.

Something similar happens on the Jewish calendar, but instead of an extra day every fourth year, we have a much more complex system. First, we have to recognize that there is a difference each year of

## ***The Bridge by Email***

Because of the high cost of printing, postage and paper, we are now sending the ***Bridge*** by email to Beth El members and friends who have Internet access. We are mailing a printed copy to everyone who has indicated they need one.

In December the Beth El Board decided to mail printed copies **only to those** who do not have email, **and to those who specifically request** them. We hope that all members who are able will elect to use our email approach, and print out their own copies of the ***Bridge***.

The electronic ***Bridge*** is being emailed as a PDF attachment, to make downloading as easy as possible. Anyone who has difficulty opening and/or printing the file should send an email to neckowax@jmu.edu, and we'll send a copy in Word. If that doesn't work, we'll mail a printed copy.

**Friends of Beth El:** We also request that **non-members** with Internet access send us your email address so we can send you the electronic version of the ***Bridge***.

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11.25 days between the lunar and solar cycles. If we were to do nothing, the two calendars would fall farther and farther out of synchronization as time passed. Our holidays would move earlier and earlier each year, and we would have spring holidays moving, so that they would fall in the winter sometimes, summer others. This would mean we were celebrating harvest festivals before the planting took place in some years! It would not make much sense.

(Note: this is the approach that Islam has taken: their holidays move through the secular calendar, so that they have no seasonal connection.)

We don't take the approach of Islam, nor do we do as the secular (Gregorian) calendar does, and simply add 11.25 days somewhere in the cycle each year. Instead, the rabbis in Talmudic times came up with a different approach.

They looked at the calendar not as just a single year unit: instead, they saw it as a system that spanned multiple years. Then they calculated in a sophisticated fashion, down to the part of a minute, the actual times of the lunar and solar cycles, and found a way to harmonize them, without too much disruption to normal life.

What did they decide? Here goes!

Our calendar is based on a nineteen-year (19!) cycle. During that nineteen year period, there are seven years in which an adjustment is made, similar in concept to Leap Year in the solar/secular calendar. Instead of adding a day, however, we add a full month in those years to keep our calendar more closely in synchronization with the solar cycle.

When do we add this month? In the Spring! After all, why not increase our enjoyment of a good thing? So we add a month between Shevat and Adar. To identify that added month, we call it Adar I, and the usual month that would follow Shevat is called Adar II in leap years.

The month of Adar was chosen both because the spring is a wonderful time of year, with all sorts of signs of renewal and growth, and because it is the month in which we celebrate Purim, our most joyous (and fun) holiday. That is why it is said, "Hu she'nichnas le'Adar be'simchah marbeh simchah ba'olam." — one who enters into the month of Adar in joy increases joy in the world.

This year, Purim will fall on March 25. Keep your eyes open for information on our congregational celebration. This is the holiday to dress up, turn things on their head, and generally have a fantastic good time, so start planning now for a real blast!

One question that this intricate system raises concerns anniversaries, birthdays, and *yahrzeits* that fall in Adar I or II. How to handle them?

Suppose, for example, that a person was born during Adar I. Unlike the plot of the *Pirates of Penzance*, we don't count them as only seven years old after a nineteen year cycle (seven leap years in the nineteen year cycle)! Instead, those events that occurred in Adar I are folded into Adar in years when there is no Adar I, so that the birthday would be celebrated in Adar I in the years when it was included, but in Adar in other years. This way there is truly only a 12-month period between the anniversaries of the birthday. When a birth occurs in Adar II, the birthday is observed in Adar II in leap years, and in Adar all other years. The same approach is taken for *yahrzeits* and other anniversaries.

Because we do not make the adjustments each year, the Jewish holidays seem to "move" on the secular calendar from year to year. The 11.25 day difference in the lunar and solar calendar means that a holiday can seem as much as 34 days earlier or later on the secular calendar, even though it is on exactly the same date on the Jewish calendar in each of those years. That is why, for example, in some years Chanukah is almost the same date as Christmas, and other times it falls on Thanksgiving.

As complicated as the system seems, it works very well. It is quite amazing to me to recognize just how sophisticated an understanding of astronomy and orbital calculations the rabbis in Talmudic days had, and how they were able to reach such precise measurements despite having none of the benefits of later scientific developments, such as the telescope! *Yofeh me'od!* — very nice!

*Rabbi Joe Blair*

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# Beth El Congregation

# February 2005

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
					Adult Ed Torah Study, 6 p.m. Rabbi Service, 7:30. Rabbi's office day, 10 to 5.	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Religious School, 9:30-12:30. Bagel Bar, 9-11:30.	Rabbi's office day, 11 to 7. Board Meeting, Temple, 7:30.		Men's Club, Dinner and Movie, 6:30, Bo Rose's.	Sisterhood meeting, 6 p.m. at the Temple. Bring dessert, soup, or salad.	Lay Service, 7:30 p.m. Rabbi's office day, 10 to 5.	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Religious School, 9:30-12:30. Bagel Bar, 9-11:30. Book Club, <b>new time, 11 a.m.</b>	Rabbi's office day, 11 to 7.				Rabbi Service, 7:30. Rabbi's office day, 10 to 5.	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Religious School, 9:30-12:30. Bagel Bar, 9-11:30. Lecture Series: <b>End of Life Issues</b> , 7-8:30 p.m., THOI.	Rabbi's office day, 11 to 7.				<b>Men's Club Shabat</b> , 7:30 p.m. Rabbi's office day, 10 to 5.	Fundraising Dinner, catered by Hanks— more info to follow.
27	28					
Religious School, 9:30-12:30. Bagel Bar, 9-11:30.	Rabbi's office day, 11 to 7.					

## News and Notes

### Rabbi's Office Hours

Rabbi Joe's office hours in Harrisonburg are Mondays, 11 to 7, and Fridays, 10 to 5.

Please call ahead (434-2744) or email for an appointment: RabbiJoeB@hotmail.com.

### Religious School

Religious School is sponsoring a visit from Mid-Atlantic Regional Educator Kitty Wolf March 13.

Kitty will spend time in the morning with parents — explaining and demonstrating the Chai Curriculum that soon will be adopted. In an afternoon workshop, she will spend a few hours with our teachers — teaching, listening, answering questions, and being a general source of wisdom.

More information about this event will be forthcoming from the principals.

Also please note that the Upper Religious School will **lead services** at THOI on Friday, Feb 11.

### Book Club

Our next Book Club meeting will be Sunday, Feb. 13. **The time has been changed to 11 a.m.**, and the Bagel Bar will remain open to accommodate us.

The book to be reviewed is *God Was in this Place, and I, I Did Not Know*, by Lawrence Kushner. The book is **not** available at the Public Library or local bookstores, but you can borrow it from the Temple, or order a copy from Books A Million or Barnes & Noble.

This is the last book of our scheduled series, so please join us on that Sunday and bring your suggestions for the next six months of good reading. We'll vote on upcoming selections.

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## ***A Message from our President***

Spirituality is a word that has been tossed around recently as if it were something that could lend itself to definition. I do not believe that one can define that which is “spiritual” for any other person. For me it is, at times, a feeling of connectedness. At other times it is almost a beginning awareness of some great truth, or a moment of “aha.” However one defines “spiritual,” I believe that it is always a moment in which we are aware of God. I also believe that we can achieve these moments when we open our hearts and minds so we are vulnerable to them.

There is a midrash about two Israelites who viewed the experience of crossing the Red Sea in a manner that was totally different from that of the majority. Reuven and Shimon started out across the muddy bottom of the Red Sea. Both grumbled and complained all the way across.

“What is this mud?”

“My shoes are covered in it. They’ll never dry out.”

“This is just like the slime pits of Egypt.”

“Why did he bring us here? We might just as well be in the mud there as here.”

They were so busy grumbling and watching the mud as they walked that they never understood why all the other Israelites were on the other shore singing and shouting praises to God. For them the miracle of the parting of the waters might as well never have happened because they didn’t “see” it. Their minds and hearts were only open to their own discomforts and they missed out on a one of a kind opportunity.

Don’t let yourselves become like Reuben and Shimon.

Open yourself to the world around us. Find your own spiritual experiences — those moments of vulnerability. Come join us at Beth El in our worship, study, and even play times. Together maybe we can find a moment of spirituality.

***B’shalom, Janet***

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## **Youth Group Report**

We’ve been really busy this month, getting ready for our annual ski weekend. We had a fantastic weekend despite the possibility of being snowed in — youth groups from Virginia Beach, Newport News, Norfolk and Charlottesville joined us this year.

Shorty created and led a wonderful Shabbat service with Joel Ornstein and Ben Goldsmith playing guitar, and Gabrielle Kalman playing the flute. Philip Chodrow chanted Torah and Jennie Greenfield sang the Haftorah blessings. The rest of the youth group read, sang, and were just awesome! For those not able to attend, you missed our youth at their best!

We would like to send out special thanks to Janet Kohen, who gave of her time and musical talents! Thank you to all who donated food — it was eaten and appreciated! Many, many thanks to all the families willing to share your home with our guests: Kalman's, Meyers, Ornstein's, Giovanetti's, Kulakow's, Cindy Baron, Kohen's, Minskoff's, Funston's, Berger's, Mintzer's, Judy Freudenthal, Brumbaugh's, and Alt's! We could never do this without your support. We would also like to thank the Men's Club for a fantastic spaghetti dinner, and the Sisterhood for donating the funds for dinner. And the biggest thank you to Lisa Giovanetti and Marlene Brumbaugh for preparing the feast!

I am proud and pleased to be taking three of our youth, Gabie and Michael Kalman, and Eli Giovanetti to the NFTY Convention in Los Angeles next month. We wouldn't have this fantastic opportunity without the support of our congregation. We promise to bring back a full report!

Shorty also had a spaghetti dinner fundraiser, and led Shabbat services in Staunton on Jan. 28.

***Sherri Alt, Youth Advisor***

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## Donations

Beth El Congregation gratefully acknowledges the following generous donations, received during January:

### To the General Fund

In honor of Anne Mintzer's birthday:  
Chuck Slott.

With thanks to Janet and Andy Kohen, and the Beth El membership, for help with Rabbi Burton Padoll's funeral: Sheila Padoll.

In memory of Oscar Rodbell, Herb's brother: Chuck Slott.

Best wishes and good health for Harry Clayman: Milton Perlman, Chuck Slott.

### To the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

With thanks to Rabbi Joe Blair, who conducted the funeral of Rabbi Burton Padoll: Sheila Padoll.

### To the Building Fund

In memory of Rabbi Burton Padoll:  
Eddie Ney and Frances Stewart.

### To the Stained Glass Window Fund

Congratulations to Maureen Goldberger on receiving her doctorate: Joan Funston, Ellen DeFriece, and Rachael DeFriece.

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### Yahrzeits for February

2	Emanuel Loewner Harry Weiss Morris Meyers	14	A. J. Goldenthal Rosella Wender
4	Helen Margulis Simon	15	Fannie Loewner Ney
5	Fannie Wise Pauline Peck Joseph Strauss	19	Ruth Frankel
6	Rae Trubitz	20	Lillie Hirsch Anna Rodbell
9	Fannie Goldsmith Hortense Wise Harry Moodnick	21	Adolph Wise
10	Jennie Auerbach	24	Charles Moore Milton Mitchell
12	Abel Miller Hannah Nusbaum Ada Robinson	25	Julia Hirsch Canning Samuel Loewner Herman Heller Sydney Nathanson

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**Memo from the Board:** Please note the following **calendar change**. Rabbi Blair will lead services at Beth El on May 20. A lay Service is now scheduled for May 27.

Remember to get in touch with Judy Freudenthal to learn the **fees for cleaning up** when you need to hire the Ashburns to do cleaning after your private function held in the Temple.

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## Adult Education

**From Rabbi Joe:** The next monthly **Torah Study** at Beth El will take place Feb. 4 at 6 p.m. Once again, bring your own dinner, eat and join in as we discuss the Torah portion. A Torah Study also is planned for March 18, April 15, and May 9.

**Hebrew — Intermediate/Advanced classes** at Beth El will be held on Mondays, Feb. 14, 21 and 28, from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

The **Jewish Lecture Series** continues on Sunday evenings from 7 to 8:30 p.m., usually on the third Sunday of the month. Come to any or all, and if you have topic suggestions, please feel free to tell me.

Here is a list of the topics currently planned (subject to change):

**Feb. 20, at THOI**  
**March 20, at Beth El**  
**April 17, at THOI**

**Jewish Ethics: End of Life Issues.**  
**Jewish Lifecycle: Liturgy and Practice.**  
**Passover: Ritual and Rules.**

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## More News and Notes

### Thank You from the Claymans

Congregants and dear friends,

Ruth and I take this important opportunity to thank you all for all the kindnesses, prayers, and get well wishes for my return to good health. The food, cards, donations, and prayers are most appreciated — not to mention the visits. Thank you, and I hope to rejoin you all as my health returns to normal.

*Ruth and Ruth Clayman*

### Goodbye from the Meyers

The Meyer family is relocating back to Sarasota, Fla., this month. Our new address is 3189 Greendale Rd., North Port, FL 34287. E-mail will continue to asmwrite@yahoo.com only.

We have all enjoyed being a part of this congregation and will miss the community greatly! Please stay in touch!

*Sincerely, Jon and Amy Meyer, et al.*

### Calling Cards for Soldiers

The Social Action Committee will be contacting members to buy calling cards to send to soldiers in Iraq. We hope to send the cards to a company from the Harrisonburg/Rockingham County area. You can buy a card for any amount.

### Confirmation Class

The Confirmation program has gone well. We have a wonderful group with 16 participants. Discussions, on a variety of topics with an overall eye towards Jewish Ethics, have been lively and very interesting. I am truly enjoying working with these young people each month.

My goal for the Confirmation program is to develop a deeper and more adult understanding of Judaism and what it offers in the areas of morality and ethics, social interactions, and religious views, and how these interrelate in a Jewish worldview. The culmination that I envision of this multi-year program is Confirmation — a celebration of the full adult status at the end of their High School careers.

This year we anticipate celebrating this milestone for Gabie Kalman and Eli Giovanetti at the Shavuot service on June 10. We will also be welcoming the incoming class of Confirmation students at our Youth Service, led by them and all current Confirmation class members, June 3 at THOI.

*Rabbi Joe*

### Fundraising Dinner

A fundraising dinner, catered by Hank's, is set for Sat., Feb. 26. Tickets to sell should arrive at your home soon. Joyce Helbraun is chairing the event.

### Men's Club

Dinner and Movie returns on Feb. 9 at 6:30 p.m. This time it will be at Bo Rose's house. Directions and more information will be sent to Men's Club members soon.

Men's Club Shabbat is Feb. 25. If you would like to participate, come to the Feb. 9 meeting or contact Andy Kohen.

### Sisterhood

The Sisterhood will meet on Thursday, Feb 10, at 6 p.m., at the Temple. Please bring a soup, salad, bread/muffin, or dessert to share!