

The Beth El Bridge

Keeping the Jewish Community Connected

Beth El Congregation

Harrisonburg, VA

March 2005

From the Rabbi's Desk

My dear fellow Valley Jews and friends,

There is a promise of spring in the air. I have even seen a few flowers peeping up, and we have had some lovely days — now, if we could just get through the last bits of ice and snow...!

The Calendar and Holidays: We are nearing the end of the month of Adar I. Rosh Chodesh for Adar II will fall on March 11 and 12. This is a leap year in the Jewish calendar, with an added month to recalibrate the solar and lunar cycle calendar systems.

In March we also have two of the seven specially named Shabbatot; Shabbat Shekalim (Sabbath of the Shekels — weights or coins) on which we read about the collection of the shekels for upkeep of the Temple; and Shabbat Zachor (Sabbath of Remembrance), on which we read about Amalek being recalled in order to wipe out its memory — a preparation for Purim!).

The biggest item on the calendar in this month is ***Purim***, from sundown March 24 to sundown March 25, which is the 14th of Adar II. We will mark Purim in our Shabbat service at THOI March 25, and on Sunday, March 27, in Religious School.

Purim is our version of carnival! Everything is done topsy-turvy: we poke fun at anything and anyone, we dress up in costumes, we do things in exaggerated and odd ways, and we have fun! Some people have the custom of drinking until they cannot tell the difference between Mordechai (Yeah!) and Haman (Booo!), but this is not universally accepted (it tends to be more of a college fraternity/Hillel practice). Some people gamble or play games of chance as a way of recalling the use of lots or dice by

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***.

Haman (Booo!) to select the date on which to kill the Jews. We also eat Hamantaschen, the three-cornered filled cookies, as reminders of Haman's (Booo!) fancy hat. In Israel these are called Oznei Haman, Haman's ears! Take that, elephant ears!

The major mitzvah (commandment) for Purim is to hear the Megillah (as is said, der ganze megillah — the *whole* megillah!). It has become the custom to drown out the name of Haman (Booo!) during the reading, which is why shouting, groggers (ratcheted noisemakers), stamping, horns, and the like are heard throughout during the story. It also helps the younger listeners pay attention all the way through!

The second mitzvah of Purim is to distribute Shalach Manot (the sending of portions). Usually, this is a basket of goodies sent to friends and family containing at least three kinds of foods (cookies — Hamantaschen most often, fruit, candy, and nuts are very common) and a greeting. The real mitzvah, to my mind, however, is the Shalach Manot we send to those who are in need as a form of Tzedakah and Gemilut Chasidim. This is a far more substantial collection, such as a large basket or a grocery bag, usually filled with staples and non-perishable foods that can be used for several meals, and sometimes even containing money. There are organizations that will collect money to prepare and distribute these baskets, but you can make them yourself and deliver them, or just give food or money to First Step or the Food Bank. The Shalach Manot are sent both to friends and to those in need so no one needs to feel embarrassed by receiving something as Tzedakah — we hope that everyone gets something!

I strongly urge you to take this mitzvah seriously and make a particular effort to give at this time of year. All the major donations that were received at winter holiday time are long gone, and the need is still very much there. Purim is a way for us to use the holiday spirit to help bridge the gap for those who have too little.

Directly related to Purim on March 24 is Ta'anit Ester (the Fast of Esther). On this day it is traditional to fast in remembrance of the three-day fast that Esther took on in preparation for approaching King Achashveros. The fast is sunup to sundown that day. And just remember: you can break your fast with Hamantaschen! Yummmm!

The day after Purim also is a holiday (Bet you didn't know that!) called Shushan Purim. Because Shushan was a walled city, the messengers from the king were not admitted until the next morning because they arrived late in the evening after the gates were closed. For that reason, the news did not get to Shushan for another whole day. We celebrate the delayed arrival by allowing that any walled city can have a second day celebration, thereby extending Purim an extra day!

Plan ahead: decide what you will dress up as this year. Queen Esther? Mordechai? Haman (Booo!)? The King? Vashti? Darth Vader? Groucho and Harpo? The cast of characters is as wide open as your imagination! I'm looking forward to seeing you there in your costume.

Rabbi Joe Blair

Calling Cards for Soldiers — Donation Deadline Extended to March 4

How can we help during this stressful time for our area sons and daughters serving in Iraq?

The Beth El Social Action Committee has been informed that one of the most prized items on the front is a pre-paid phone calling card. We are working with the local National Guard Post to purchase cards for our local and regional volunteers serving in Iraq.

Please consider a donation to this special fund. For those who meant to contribute but missed the deadline, we've extended it to March 4. A collection box available at all Beth El functions, or you may mail a check c/o Joyce Helbraun, 1452 Crawford Ave., Harrisonburg, VA 22801. Checks should be made out to Beth El Congregation, note: "*Phone Cards for Troops.*"

The comforting sound of a loved one's voice makes this difficult time more bearable. Please help our dedicated National Guard Troops feel closer to their Shenandoah home!

Beth El Congregation

March 2005

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|---|---------|--|--|--|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 Religious School, Rabbi Service, 7:30. Rabbi's office day, 10 to 5. | 5 |
| 6 Religious School, 9:30-12:30. Bagel Bar, 9-11:30. Film at THOI, 7 p.m., <i>Rosenstrasse</i> . | 7 Rabbi's office day, 11 to 7. Board Meeting, Temple, 7:30. | 8 | 9 | 10 Sisterhood Meeting, pizza, 6 p.m., at the Temple. | 11 Lay Service, 7:30 p.m. Rabbi's office day, 10 to 5. | 12 |
| 13 Religious School, 9:30-12:30. URJ curriculum expert visits. Bagel Bar, 9-11:30. | 14 Rabbi's office day, 11 to 7. | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 Adult Ed Torah Study, 6 p.m. Rabbi Service, 7:30. Rabbi's office day, 10 to 5. | 19 Silent Auction, Beth Israel Congregation, Charlottesville — 7:30 p.m. |
| 20 Religious School, 9:30-12:30. Bagel Bar, 9-11:30. Lecture Series: <i>Jewish Lifecycle</i> , 7-8:30, at Beth El. | 21 Rabbi's office day, 11 to 7. | 22 | 23 Men's Club, Meeting, dinner & Game Night , (poker, etc.), beginning 6:30, at the Temple. | 24 | 25 Lay Service, 7:30 p.m. Purim Service at THOI. Rabbi's office day, 10 to 5. | 26 |
| 27 Religious School, Purim Celebration, 9:30-12:30. Bagel Bar, 9-11:30. | 28 Rabbi's office day, 11 to 7. | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

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 Visit

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.

Men's Club Game Night

The next Men's Club meeting will be Wednesday, March 23, at 6:30 p.m., at the Temple. Dinner will be served, followed by **Game Night**, including poker and other entertainment.

Also, thanks to all who have paid Men's Club membership dues. If you haven't done so yet its never too late to join or renew.

Congratulations to Judy Freudenthal, winner of the Men's Club Lucky Chai for February.

A Message from the Library Committee

Very soon there will be many new books for Beth El congregants to borrow from and use in our library. First, we have been the beneficiaries of a donation, by Mr. Paul Weinstein who lives in Massanutten, of a second copy of Encyclopedia Judaica.

Second, we have been the beneficiaries of the following books from a philanthropic organization called Bubbe's Bookshelf, which collects gently used Jewish books and provides them to congregational libraries—at no charge. So, sometime in early spring please come in and sample the new offerings (or the old ones) available in our library:

Robert Abrahams, *Sound of Bow Bells*.
S.Y. Agnon, *Two Tales by S.Y. Agnon: Betrothed and Edo and Enam*.
S.Y. Agnon, *The Bridal Canopy*.
Sholom Aleichem, *Selected Stories of Sholom Aleichem*.
Sholom Aleichem, *Collected Short Stories of Sholom Aleichem — The Old Country*.
Sholem Asch, *East River*.
Stephen Birmingham, *Our Crowd*.
Lucy Davidowicz, *The Golden Tradition*.
Alan Dershowitz, *Chutzpah*.
Daniel Elazar, *Jewish Communities in Frontier Societies*.
Albert Friedlander, *Leo Baeck: Teacher of Theresienstadt*.
Reena S. Friedman, *These Are Our Children*.
Ari Goldman, *The Search for God at Harvard*.
Amos Oz, *Don't Call it Night*.
Amos Oz, *To Know a Woman*.
Cynthia Ozick, *The Messiah of Stockholm*.
I.B. Singer, *The Spinoza of Market Street*.
Raoul Wallenberg, *Letters and Dispatches 1924-1944*.

Finally, if you have suggestions about items to add to the library, please let me know. Happy reading!
Andy Kohlen

Religious School Report

Life at religious school is active, as always. We've modified the schedule a bit, separating the older and younger students for a service and morning activity. The younger students have a service with the rabbi and singing with Roberta Stein, then retire for a craft or other fun activity. Recently, they braided challah, then took it home to bake. The older students begin the day in conversation with a "guest speaker," an adult member of Beth El or THOI, who shares his/her expertise. Recent and upcoming topics include, Growing Up Jewish, Being Jewish in Asia, Growing up Jewish in Alaska, Choosing Judaism (conversion), Judaism and Adoption, Growing Up Jewish in Harrisonburg, and Growing up Jewish in the Deep South. Students then participate in a service and music with the Rabbi and Roberta.

We appreciate all of our guests and encourage others to come forth and share. Please contact Margee, if you would like to spend 30 minutes or so with our 12-13 year olds on a Sunday morning.

The four classes are working busily on preparing to lead the Shabbat service on Friday, March 4, in Harrisonburg. A few weeks later, they will perform a Purim Spiel, written by Roberta Stein. Then, before you know it, it will be time for the model seder.

We welcome Linda Kohn, our newest teacher, who has filled the vacancy left by Amy Myers, with our youngest students. She has a wealth of knowledge to share, as well as experience with young children. We are fortunate to have her join us.

Finally, we eagerly await the arrival of religious school curriculum expert Kitty Wolfe, from URJ, who will spend time with religious school parents, teachers and prospective teachers March 13. — ***Margee***

Yahrzeits for March

| | | | | | |
|----|--|----|------------------------------------|----|--|
| 1 | Ivan Lantz | 12 | Joe Kimmel | 22 | Sigmund Wise Esther F. Clayman Abraham Bersson |
| 3 | Julias Wise | 14 | Nathan Minskoff Anna Rodbell | | |
| 4 | Joshua Rabinowitz | | | 23 | William Friddle Michael Mintzer Aaron Sissman |
| 5 | Bertha Ney Lilly Schwartz Shirley Dobin | 15 | Jonathan Freudenthal Mary Blatt | | |
| 6 | Joseph Berney Hetty Marrick | 16 | Louis Amberg | 24 | Esther Miller |
| 7 | Maurice Scheuer | 18 | Rose Solomon | 25 | Charles Schwalb |
| 9 | Rae Slater | 19 | Joseph Huffman Louise Perlman | 26 | Phillip Feig |
| 10 | Baruch Ney Phyllis Rodbell Merwin Kalman | 20 | Augusta Loewner Bernard Bloom | 27 | Beatrice Schwalb |
| | | 21 | Morton Nusbaum | 29 | Fanny Spivack Max Sissman |
| | | | | 31 | Rabbi David Fazon |

Adult Education

From Rabbi Joe: The next monthly **Torah Study** at Beth El will take place March 18 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 April 15, and May 9.

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

The **Adult B'nai Mitzvah** class has shifted into a more individual mode for those who are participating. If you are interested in pursuing this goal, please speak with me. The time needed to accomplish this milestone is anywhere from about eight months upwards, depending on your free time, flexibility, commitment, and knowledge base. It is a very significant undertaking, and certainly worthy of celebrating and acknowledging when it is reached!

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):

March 20, at Beth El
April 17, at THOI

Jewish Lifecycle: Liturgy and Practice.
Passover: Ritual and Rules.

Naomi Ornstein to become Bat Mitzvah

“The Ornstein family would like to encourage the Beth El Congregation to celebrate with us, as our daughter Naomi becomes Bat Mitzvah. Naomi will be leading services and presenting her Bat Mitzvah project on **Friday evening, April 1**, followed by our oneg. She'll then continue on **Saturday, April 2**, beginning at 10 a.m., leading services and being called to the Torah. Please plan to stay and join with family and friends for the luncheon following services.”

More News and Notes

Donations

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

To the General Fund

In honor of the birth of Leah Greenfield:
Chuck Slott.

In honor of her grandchildren, Joel and
Naomi Ornstein: Margene Ward.

Confirmation Class

The culmination that I envision of the several-year-long program of continuing Jewish learning for teens is Confirmation — a celebration of the full adult status and ongoing Jewish education of the participants at the end of their High School careers, as they prepare to go off as adults. This year we anticipate celebrating this milestone for Gabie Kalman and Eli Giovanetti at the Shavuot Shabbat service June 10 at Beth El.

We will also be welcoming the incoming class of Confirmation students (those having their B'nai Mitzvah this year) at our Youth Service, led by them and all the current Confirmation class members on June 3 at Temple House of Israel, perhaps to be followed by a Cosmic bowling and Shul-in. Please keep a lookout for more details! I encourage you to hold both of those dates open, and to attend these wonderful events. I know that you will join me in kvelling (shaking with pride and joy).

From Rabbi Joe

Rosenstrasse at THOI

The film is *Rosenstrasse*, will be shown at Temple House of Israel on Sunday, March 6, at 7 p.m. It's about a handful of Aryan women in 1943 who held a spontaneous weeklong vigil outside the Jewish Community Center in the heart of Berlin, where their Jewish husbands were detained by the Nazis pending transportation to the extermination camps. The demonstration eventually coerced the Nazis to release the men. It was the only public demonstration of such resistance of such resistance inside Nazi Germany. There is a story about how one Jewish family made it to America, and how they dealt with the past. It is an excellent film.

Popcorn and drinks are included. There is no charge. We hope members of Beth El will join us.

From Shirley Brand, THOI

Silent Auction in Charlottesville

Get ready for an evening of quiet music, tasty hors d'oeuvres, a silent auction, and wine tasting — at Congregation Beth Israel's O'Mansky Hall, 301 East Jefferson St., Charlottesville. The event will be held on Saturday, March 19, at 7:30 p.m.

A number of fine wines, all kosher for Passover, will be presented by the Market Street Winery. Order forms will be available to order wine for Passover. Some fabulous items have been donated for the silent auction, including two nights at a luxury inn in Lexington, two tickets to the Paramount Theater, a facial and massage at City Spa, and many more. Be sure not to miss it! Tickets are \$18/person and will be available at the door.

All proceeds benefit CBI Preschool. Additional donations are always welcome. For more information, call 434-295-6382.

From Annick Salomon, for CBI Preschool