



*November 2007*

***A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT***

Hello Beth El Family,

The weather is (FINALLY!) changing and the activity level at Beth El is high. Although sometimes I feel like I should just move in a cot, it's good to see so many things going on. It has been a challenging month, for some members of our gang, but things seem to be looking up: Janet Kohen had a successful knee replacement surgery and is in the process of physical therapy (painful but progressing well). Roberta Stein is emerging from her 3-week "siege" that appears now to have been a severe allergic reaction to silicone in the pain pump that was inserted into her back in what-should-have-been an overnight in-hospital event. She is on her way to recovery (which requires some rehab time). By the time this newsletter is printed, Arnie Kahn will have had rotator cuff surgery, to repair a tear. He hopes that his arm will be out of the sling by Chanukah. We continue to keep all of them in our thoughts as they recover.

It was a pleasure to welcome Evelyn Hinds as Corrie ten Boom, on October 21. It was also a delight to see our sanctuary fill with 100+ community and congregation members, to see her 1-woman show. Thanks to Rabbi Joe for making this happen.

Many of you have noticed (and many of you have been there and NOT noticed) that our beautiful Anne and Michael Mintzer stained glass windows have "changed." We have been enjoying them since they were unveiled, but we have not yet recovered the funding to which we committed to purchase and install them. In fact, we are short about \$4,000, about 20%. Consequently, the board voted to cover the middle 20% of the windows, until we can come up with that final bit...hopefully in time for Anne's 95th birthday, in January. You'll be receiving a detailed letter and request shortly, for your assistance in this endeavor. Meanwhile, please keep the window fund "on your radar" as you plan to honor/ remember someone with a donation.

Keep your eye on the Beth El calendar and plan to join in on services and activities, when you can. We enjoy seeing you, and it won't be the same without you.

Margee

***TZEDAKAH OPPORTUNITY***

The Community Resource Center will be having a Holiday Sale and Extravaganza on November 17, 2006 - 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. **We need your help collecting the following items for the sale:** new and gently used children's toys, books, or games (all ages), children's and adult clothes, coats, gloves, hats, sheets, blankets, towels, holiday items, decorations, gift wrap, any small household or gift items and new personal care items.

The sale of these items will benefit the Community Resource Center as well as provide affordable shopping for the community. Following the sale, items will be distributed to agencies serving persons in need. Contact Karen Barnes or Linda Kohn by calling 433-3888 or [volunteer@hrcrc.org](mailto:volunteer@hrcrc.org) if you have items you would like to donate. Collection will be arranged.

## FROM THE RABBI'S DESK

My dear fellow Valley Jews and Friends,

Shalom! The big holiday season ended early in October, and we are enjoying the 'down time' of Mar-Cheshvan (bitter Cheshvan, so called because there are no holidays in it to sweeten it). I, for one, am glad for the less hectic pace after the High Holy days!

On the secular calendar, we have election day (don't forget to vote!), Veterans' Day, and Thanksgiving. On our congregational calendar there are many events happening, and things are humming along.

## THE CALENDAR AND HOLIDAYS

### CESHVAN à KISLEV

Rosh Chodesh (the New Month) for Cheshvan took place on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of October. Cheshvan will end on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, and the 11<sup>th</sup> of November is Rosh Chodesh for Kislev. Kislev continues until the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, and Rosh Chodesh for Tevet is on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December.

A few reminders, in case this edition makes it into your hands before the dates noted.

- There is a Talmud Torah Limud at 6:30 on Friday, October 26<sup>th</sup>. Bring your meal, and eat while we talk about the Torah prior to our Shabbat service at Beth El. If you enjoy this session, you can also attend the following week at THOI, when we will have a Torah Lishmah at 6:30 pm, and will also eat and discuss the Torah at 6:30 pm prior to our Shabbat service.
- Thursday, November 8<sup>th</sup> at Beth El, at 6 to 7 pm, we will begin the five session Crash Course in Reading Hebrew. This is a very brief introduction to the Alefbet with the goal of helping those taking it to learn to decode (sound out) Hebrew. It is free. Please let Rabbi Joe know as soon as you can if you are planning to attend this course, so that he can have enough materials on hand. If Thursdays are not good for your schedule, you can also take this class on Mondays at the same time at THOI in Staunton.
- November 30<sup>th</sup> is Beth El's Community Awareness Shabbat. Be sure to invite your friends, colleagues, teachers, neighbors, acquaintances, students, and anyone else you think might be interested in attending our Shabbat service to learn more about it, and us.

## HOLIDAYS AND EVENTS

There are no Jewish holidays during the month of November. This gives us extra time for anticipation of most children's favorite holiday, Chanukah. This year, Chanukah (which always falls on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev) will begin on the evening of December 4<sup>th</sup> and run until sundown on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

Plan ahead for a fun event – the Chanukah dinner which will be held at Beth El on Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm!

## TORAH PARASHIOT

Torah parashiot (Torah portions) read for the period covered by this newsletter include: Chayei Sarah,, Toledot, Vayetze, and Vayishlach. These are drawn from Bereshit (Genesis) 23-36.

Haftarot read this month include readings from 1 Kings 1; 1 Samuel 20; Hosea 12-14; and Obadiah 1.



*Actress Evelyn Hinds portrayed Corrie ten Boom and entertained us with her story of an amazing, righteous gentile who saved many Jews.*

## **MEN'S CLUB**

- Tuesday November 20: Our semi-annual Lion's Club Spaghetti Dinner (and ours as well), to be followed by a short meeting. Please let Eddie Ney (433-0208) know if you are available to help out, especially between 5-7 PM.

- Thanks to all who helped during the autumn holidays with ushering, break-the-fast, or sukkot.

## **RELIGIOUS SCHOOL**

The beginning of autumn (and the unseasonably warm weather) has seen us through October. During that time we enjoyed a wonderful Sukkot Celebration! Thanks so much to the Lovinger and Brown families for organizing great activities. The students created what must have been the longest paper chain ever to be created in Harrisonburg!! The Sukkah was full of color with the various decorations, and the edible graham cracker and marshmallow fluff Sukkahs were a big hit! We also enjoyed making flags for the upcoming Simchat Torah service.

The Simchat Torah and Consecration celebrations at THOI were wonderful. Many of the religious school families attended this special service. We are pleased that Grace Miller, Helen Kramer, and Lilly Levin have begun their religious studies – Mazel Tov!

Our next big event will be our "Ellis Island and Jewish Food Experience" Family Education day on November 18<sup>th</sup>. Religious school parents are strongly encouraged to participate in this event which will run 9:30am – 12:30pm. This will be an opportunity for your children to learn about their family tree and to learn about the diversity of our religious school family. Also, we will be having a potluck luncheon of Jewish foods. We invite members of the Beth El/THOI community to contact Ruth Berger ([ruthberger@comcast.net](mailto:ruthberger@comcast.net), 540-574-0440) or Linda Kohn ([lin5ko@aol.com](mailto:lin5ko@aol.com), 540-269-2213) as soon as possible, with any ideas they might have for joining in our celebration – special memorabilia for our "exhibit" table, stories to share, or perhaps craft ideas.

A huge "thank you" to all of our teachers who put forth so much effort each week to create a positive Jewish learning experience for our children.

Also, Religious School just has not been the same — we wish Roberta Stein a very speedy recovery. She is in our prayers and we hope to see her back at school soon!

L'Shalom,  
Dara, Linda, and Ruth

## **ALIYAH**

Danny Brothers, son of Dale and Monty Brothers, made Aliyah to Israel on September 4, 2007. Danny graduated from The College of William and Mary in May, '07. Danny's passion for Israel developed almost immediately, beginning with his first trip, a Birthright tour (sophomore year) to Israel. Prior to his permanent move, his time spent in Israel had totaled approximately one year. Following Birthright, he worked a three month summer internship in Jerusalem at the Center for Public Affairs. Danny attended Tel Aviv University during the second semester of his junior year and spent the next three summer months studying at Aish Yeshiva.

Log in to Danny's Blog site to follow the adventures of a new Israeli immigrant.

<http://www.bydaybynight.blogspot.com/>

Danny's Email Address is: [dannybrothers@gmail.com](mailto:dannybrothers@gmail.com)

## **YOUTH GROUP**

We had our first meeting on October 21 and were very busy with planning. Our next meeting will be Sunday, November 4<sup>th</sup> at 4:15 pm in Harrisonburg and will last until 6:00 pm. There will be bagels and cream cheese. The Rabbi will also be doing confirmation. Bring your calendars to mark lots of dates for upcoming events. Call Sherri Alt with any questions.. 249-5463

Sherri

## **SPOTLIGHT ON TERROR**

"**Ghosts of Abu Ghraib**," an 80-minute HBO film will be shown at Beth El on Sunday, October 28 at 3 pm. This film features the familiar and disturbing photos of torture at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison. Acclaimed filmmaker **Rory Kennedy** digs beneath the headlines to investigate the psychological and political context in which torture occurred and to ask critical questions about how it happened and how it affects America's credibility as a defender of freedom and human rights. Join us as we participate in this nation-wide project organized by the **National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT)**. Hundreds of congregations across the country will show the film during October 21-28.

This film is for MATURE AUDIENCES ONLY!

S M T W T F S

				1	2 Lay Service @ 7:30pm	2
4 RS & Bagel Bar Youth Group 4:15 pm	5	6	7	8 Reading Hebrew @6pm	9 Torah Study @ 6:30 pm Rabbi-led Service @ 7:30pm	10 NFTY Fall Kallah 11/9-11/11
11 RS & Bagel Bar Gift Shop	12	13	14 Sisterhood Meeting @6pm	15 Reading Hebrew@6 pm Board Mtg @ 7:30 pm	16 Lay Service @ 7:30pm	17
18 RS (Family Ed Day) Gift Shop <b>No Bagel Bar</b>	19	20 Lion's Club Spaghetti Dinner and Men's Club Meeting	21	22	23 Lay Service @ 7:30pm	24
25 No Religious School	26	27	28	29 Reading Hebrew @6pm	30 Rabbi-led Service @7:30pm Community Awareness Shabbat	

## November 2007

<b>01</b>	Selma Miller Sadie Spiro Fredrick Nessen Samuel Freed	<b>09</b>	Annie Ney	<b>21</b>	Ida Miller Monroe Nussbaum
<b>02</b>	Selina Ney Bruno Freudenthal Lawrence Loewner Jack Stein	<b>10</b>	Nathan Ratner Barbara Rotondo	<b>22</b>	Kattie Ney
<b>03</b>	Louis Perlman	<b>12</b>	Irene Nusbaum	<b>23</b>	Albert Wise David Myerberg Dave Levy Doris Freed
<b>04</b>	Albert Lubman	<b>15</b>	Minna Mintzer Ada Krim Dr. Henry Helbraun	<b>25</b>	Isaac Ney
<b>05</b>	Gussie Myers Sam Hirsch Louis Wides	<b>17</b>	Rose Hirsch Charles Schweitzer	<b>26</b>	Sam Fishman
<b>07</b>	Eva Brooslin	<b>19</b>	Baby Ney Sybil Rose	<b>28</b>	Sam Blatt Zvi Hirsch Derechinsky
		<b>20</b>	Caroline Ash Sophia Wuzburger	<b>29</b>	Edward Poster
				<b>30</b>	Sylvan Ney

## DONATIONS

*Beth El Congregation is grateful for the following generous donations:*

### To the General Fund

- Carol & Louis Schepp - In honor of Estelle Robinson
- Lois Poster
- Shelia Padoll - Thanks for the Holiday Services
- Stuart & Judy Liss - Speedy recovery for Janet Kohen

### Window Fund

- Janet & Andy Kohen
- Marty Zahen - In honor of his 75th Birthday
- Jerry Zahen - Wishing for a speedy recovery
- Chuck Slott - Quick recovery for Janet Kohen
- Janet & Andy Kohen
- Bill & Leslie Ney - Speedy recovery for Janet Kohen & Roberta Stein

### High Holiday Memorial Fund

- Ami & Diane Daniel
- Phil & Pam Ungar
- Dale Brothers

## SISTERHOOD

Thanks to all who attended our knitting circle at Joan's, we were able to get some more squares made and catch up with everyone's lives! Thank you, Joan, for hosting us. It was a relaxing and productive get together. We will be scheduling another get together soon.

Our meeting will be on Wednesday, November 14th at 6:00 at the Temple. Please RSVP to Thea by phone (289-5336) or email (theagolub@comcast.net). Can you believe it will be time to talk about Hanukkah already? Hope to see everyone!

Sherri

## YOM KIPPUR 5768 SERMON

*This is Rabbi Blair's Yom Kippur 2007 sermon. It has been edited for space considerations. The Rabbi began by relating an unfortunate highway encounter between himself and a local deer:*

I know that deer are overpopulated in this area, that they are not suited to survive in a suburban environment, and that Virginia has the largest number of deer-car accidents in the US, but I still feel badly. I can't help but wonder if I had done something a little differently, or come along ten seconds earlier or five seconds later, if the whole incident would have been avoided. The very chance nature of our encounter, intersecting only for a split second, only at that precise time and place, is amazing. Any small change on the part of the deer or by me would have changed that incident significantly. In a sense, the very fact that we did intersect is a small miracle.

It seems that we are constantly 'happening' to have things occur to us, that chance plays a huge role. Perhaps, on a personal scale, this is what chaos theory is supposed to help explain. I couldn't help but think about this idea as it plays out in our daily lives. Think about these examples: If I had stopped for coffee instead of going straight home, I would have missed that deer. If I had not had the tires changed and the alignment and brakes done, I might have been less able to steer, slow, and stop and much worse could have happened.

It all seems so random, so subject to chance. Is this really the organizing principle for our lives? Of course, chance is one way to describe it, but perhaps a better term would be 'opportunity.' At the risk of exposing my age, I recall reading a series of books by Carlos Castaneda about a Yaqui sorcerer named Don Juan who lived largely in rural areas of the west coast of Mexico. Castaneda was ostensibly an anthropologist or sociologist, and intended to study the culture of Don Juan. In fact, what we discover through the various books is that Don Juan was waiting for Castaneda, and in fact lured and then captured him as a student. Castaneda thought he was meeting this old man by chance, but Don Juan knew that this was the arrangement he had been seeking.

In a number of the encounters described, Don Juan described to Castaneda how life presents us with opportunities, saying that each opportunity is a chance that pops out in front of us, and (continued on page 7)

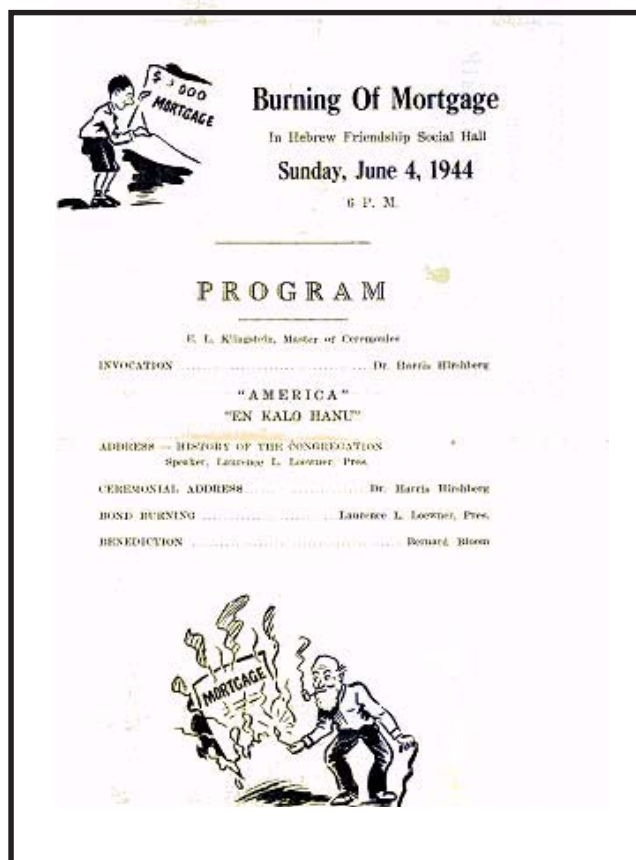
**FROM OUR ARCHIVES**

I thought it would be interesting to occasionally give the congregation's members a taste of what is in our archives. This is the program for the June 4, 1944 "Rededication of the Hebrew Friendship Congregation." A *Daily News-Record* article a few days later described it as "a ceremony to celebrate the burning of a \$5,000 mortgage on the church." Prior to the rededication, congregants had dedicated "a stone wall around the new part of the Jewish Cemetery."

The front of the rededication notice states that the ceremony, held at the height of World War II, was being done "that we at home may preserve the ideals for which our fellow brethren fight." In his speech reviewing the history of the congregation (also in the archives), President Laurence Loewner said that "it is a wonderful honor for this congregation [to have] 3/8 of our manhood of military age in the service. I doubt seriously, that any other organization can boast of this fact of proportions.... Let us sincerely pray that this war will end all wars."

Of course, little did the participants at the mortgage-burning ceremony know that two days later, June 6, 1944, Allied troops would land at Normandy, beginning the end of the war.

Gary



**BOARD MEMBERS**

- Joe Blair ..... Rabbi
- Margee Greenfield ..... President
- Gary Stein ..... Vice President
- Becky Mintzer ..... Secretary
- Bill Ney ..... Treasurer
- Judy Freudenthal ..... Trustee
- Andy Kohen ..... Trustee
- Jerry Minskoff ..... Trustee
- Sherri Alt ..... Sisterhood President
- Ron Ornstein ..... Brotherhood President
- Janet Kohen ..... Past President
- Marlene Brumbaugh ..... At large member
- Thea Golub ..... At large member

**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
- BethEl ..... 540-434-2744
- Temple House of Israel ..... 540-886-4091
- Cell (Leave a message) ..... 434-981-3959

**FROM THE EDITORS**

Mike and Mo would like to apologize to those folks who receive the Bridge via regular mail. It seems we have been using the wrong list and many folks did not receive the September or October Bridge.

The last 2 bridges are available on the website (<http://va014.urj.net/newsletters.html>). Hopefully, we have it straightened out and everybody will get this one and any future ones.

each chance presents us with a choice about what to do. The secret, he teaches, is to be alert, aware, trained, and prepared to make a choice, and to seize the chance presented. He calls each one of them a 'cubic centimeter of chance' which comes once and is then gone forever.

In light of this, Deborah Lipstadt, professor of modern Jewish thought and Holocaust studies at Emory University wrote this story about her father, and the intersection of chance and opportunity.

"On Rosh Hashanah in the mid-1960s, my father received a cancer diagnosis. The doctors scheduled radiation treatments, but the initial treatments fell on Sukkot and Simchat Torah. He asked that he be allowed to come in for treatment during the middle days of the festival. The hospital spokesperson explained that those days were reserved for in-patients. Outpatients generally found it too depressing to see the terrible shape these patients were in. My father, unfazed, said that even if it was too depressing, he would come during the in-patient days. Reluctantly, they agreed. On his first visit, he sat in the waiting room surrounded by terribly disfigured, desperately ill people on gurneys. While reading his newspaper, he began to hum. A lady on a gurney nearby said, "That's pretty. Sing louder." My father agreed and did. The lady quietly joined in. Others followed, and soon the room was awash with song. Shortly thereafter, a nurse emerged and asked my father to come in. He rose, but before leaving, he turned to the other patients and said, "That is a tune by Shlomo Carlebach. I knew his family in Germany. He set a verse from the book of Psalms to this music. The words you were singing are, 'Esa eynai el heharim meyyayin yavo ezri. Ezri meyim Adonai, osey shamayim ve'aretz' (From whence shall my help come? My help shall come from the Lord, the creator of heaven and earth.) He concluded, 'And so may it be' then went in to his treatment".

Mr. Lipstadt seized the chance when it arose and made it an opportunity to make a difference to those around him. He made this opportunity in the midst of a chance encounter, thinking of and reaching out to those around him, acting on his values, doing what he had been preparing for for many years.

Of course, all this begs the question of whether there is really any such thing as chance, or is it foreordained? It has been a subject of debate for centuries. It is too large and too hard a question to answer today, so I will leave it for exploration another time. For the moment, it is enough to know that there is something that we call chance, or coincidence, and we must live in such a way as to take that into account. We cannot live in a rudderless, undirected fashion. There must be a guiding light, and an organizing principle, for our lives to have any meaning. For the moment, we will just accept that this light is G-d, and the principles are those enumerated in the Torah and Mitzvot.

Taking advantage of the sudden appearance of a chance, turning it into an opportunity, is not something that simply happens. It requires that we prepare ourselves. Like an athlete, we must train and practice and make ourselves ready to recognize the chance, and to act at the instant, without notice. Thank G-d, that is what all my years of driving did: I knew to first slow and then stop the car, to continue steering, to hold steady in my lane, and so on, all without taking any time to think. Training, preparation, and practice, all came together, and took over to the point that it was all integrated into my bones. I didn't have to think at all, I just KNEW what to do and automatically did it.

This is also the purpose of our traditional routine of prayer, and meditation, and kavvanot, of tikkun olam, and mitzvot, of avodah, tzedakah, and gemilut Chasidim. These are the exercises and practice that we undertake to make ourselves ready to recognize the chance, to seize the instant, and to actualize the opportunity. This is what we do to prepare, to train, and to ready ourself to recognize our beloved when we encounter them. What we do becomes a part of us, so deeply ingrained that we do not need to give it a thought – we simply do the right thing when we have to act. That is why it is so important to have meaningful spiritual practices that are in synch with our values, and a regular routine of reinforcing them.

Today, Yom Kippur, is the culmination of all of that work and preparation for the past year. Now, here, we stand before G-d, our judge, and our basherte. It is up to us to seize this opportunity, to reach out, to take this chance to be close to G-d, and to seek to hear the words telling us that G-d will 'just want to be close' to us, as we seek to be close to G-d. In that way, our lives will be fulfilled, and we will be a blessing and a light to the world. May you see G-d in the face of all you love, and love in the face of all around you. May you be sealed for a good and sweet year of blessings and joys. May you find that G-d wants to be close to you. May there be peace in the world. Let us say, Amen. Shanah tovah. Chag sameach.