

The Beth El Bridge

Keeping the Jewish Community Connected

Beth El Congregation Harrisonburg, Virginia June, July, August 2006

My dear fellow Valley Jews and Friends,

Shalom!

Looking Back: What a full month May was! We started out with the Brotherhood-Sisterhood Interfaith Dinner with Cooks Creek Presbyterian Church April 30; then an Interfaith Association meeting on Clinical Pastoral Education May 3; and Community Awareness Shabbat May 5. Shorty worked at the Volunteer Farm in Woodstock May 6. The last day of Religious School was May 7. We had a Torah Lishmah May 18 at Beth El. The Religious School picnic was May 21. A Minchah service and baby naming for two of the Minskoff's granddaughters was held May 27. We also had all the regular ongoing events: Parashat Hashavuah weekly Torah study, monthly Torah Limud, Board meetings, Hebrew classes, Shabbat services, and the lovely onegs that enhance them so much.

Looking Forward: We have quite a bit packed in for June as well. June 2 is a spaghetti dinner at Beth El, a fundraiser for the youth group, followed by services led by Shorty, which will combine Shavuot and Confirmation. Shorty will have a cosmic bowling night and shul-in after the service that evening, with a meeting that includes elections to take place before they head home the next morning. The Beth El Yard Sale is June 4 — don't forget to donate your goodies! The last scheduled rabbi-led service for the year is June 9 at Beth El. June 11 is the Beth El congregational picnic. The Beth El Board will meet June 14. June 16 and 17 are the dates of the Bat Mitzvah of Grace Lambeth at THOI. June 18 is the last Shorty meeting of the year. Lots going on, even though the year is winding down! ☺

This is the last Rabbi's newsletter article for the year. The next article I write will look forward to the new year, which begins in September! I wish each of you a lovely, refreshing, and fun-filled summer. ***Blessings to all!***

The Calendar and Holidays:

The next month in the Jewish calendar is Sivan. Rosh Chodesh for Sivan is May 28, and the month continues until June 26-27, Rosh Chodesh for Tammuz.

We begin Sivan in the midst of the Omer count, leading up to Shavuot, Sivan 6-7 (from sundown June 1 to sundown June 3). Shavuot (the Festival of Weeks) is the holiday associated with Revelation and Receiving Torah. It falls seven full weeks after Pesach, the celebration of Redemption, liberation and freedom. We will celebrate Shavuot on June 2 at Beth El, led by Shorty, and including the Confirmation of Joel Ornstein as he prepares to move on to college in the fall.

Sisterhood Yard Sale — Sunday, June 4

8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

We need donated items and help! We need help for set-up on June 3, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. We also need help early on ***Sunday morning***, and for packing up whatever is left beginning about 12:30.

Call Lisa Giovanetti, 434-6515, or email giovanetti@juno.com, to volunteer, or if you have any questions about dropping off your donated items.

Jewish Lifecycle: Review and Wrap Up, and Request for Suggestions

Last month we concluded this year's presentations on the Jewish lifecycle events. Last year we went through the Jewish calendar and holidays. Of course, there is no possibility that an article in the newsletter could do full justice to these subjects, but I hope that my presentations in this forum have provided you with an overview of the main ideas, and helped you to realize how much more there is. Both of these topics are rich, with much information, many traditions and customs, and lots of history, and deserve a fuller treatment than is available in this kind of presentation. Each topic we touched on could serve as the basis for a full course, so if you are interested in knowing more, or have any questions, please get in touch with me.

Of course, the book is not sealed — there are at least a few other customs, traditions and celebrations that we did not touch on, including Kiddush Levanah and Rosh Chodesh. Moreover, there are events in life for which there is no existing ritual or tradition, and I would be interested in working with you to explore our tradition, and to create such a ritual when it is appropriate.

The Coming Year: As I beginning to think about what to include in my monthly column in the coming year, I would appreciate your suggestions. Please let me know what you would like me to talk about in the newsletter next year so I can address the interests of congregation members.

Adult Education

Jewish Lecture and Discussion Series: I am thinking about what to offer next year, and would be happy to hear your suggestions. As a single session I am thinking about studying about the Chevrah Kadishah, the Holy Society that helps to prepare the deceased for burial. Some interest in forming such a group was expressed, and I think it is worthwhile to learn about it and then consider what we might want to do as a community in the Valley. I am also thinking in terms of a film viewing and discussion, based on Jewish themes in the film. I have also considered the possibility of a more ambitious program, perhaps using the Bill Moyers *Genesis* program as the catalyst for discussion, or a multi-session program on How to Get More out of Being Jewish, but I am open to hearing other ideas.

Limud Torah: There will be a Torah Limud on June 8 at Beth El at 6 p.m. Please mark this date on your calendar and plan to attend, and 'BYO' meal. No prior knowledge or experience is needed, and no preparation, other than your meal! We will start with the Torah portion Naso in Bemidbar (the Wilderness), Numbers 4:21–7:89. This includes the census of the Levites, the exclusion from the camp of Lepers, the test for an unfaithful wife, the Nazerite restrictions, the three-fold priestly blessing, and the dedication offerings of the leaders of the twelve tribes. A very rich portion, ripe for discussion! ☺

Israel Trip Update

The June 2007 trip Israel to is on, and I'm working on plans and details. If you're interested in going to Israel on a group trip, and you have not told me so specifically, please contact me and let me know of your interest. So far I have heard from about 15 people in our community who would like to go. I think the trip will be a blast!

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Many of you have been generous in donating to the Rabbi's discretionary fund, this year and in past, which I appreciate very much. Many made donations in honor of something I did, or in honor or memory of someone else in our community. The rabbi's discretionary fund is available to be distributed by me solely for Tzedakah purposes, and I have striven to distribute that money responsibly and well, in accordance with Jewish values and ethics. I have made donations to many organizations at the local, regional, national, and international levels, supporting a wide variety of causes, from education, to hunger relief, to disaster relief, to housing needs, and many others — helping to meet the needs of many people on behalf of our community, based on the generosity of those who have donated to the fund.

For the first time in my service as your rabbi, that fund has now been totally expended. As I have said, the needs are very great. I thank those of you who have made donations to that fund, and hope that you will continue to do so, to permit me to serve as the agent of our community for Tzedakah (righteous action) purposes.

— Rabbi Joe Blair

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2 <i>Shavuot, Youth Group Service, Joel Ornstein Confirmation, 7:30 p.m.</i>	3 <i>Bring in items for Temple Yard Sale, help with set-up, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.</i>
4 <i>Temple Yard Sale, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., helpers needed!</i>	5	6	7	8 <i>Torah Study, 6 p.m., bring your own meal.</i>	9 <i>Rabbi Service, 7:30 p.m.</i>	10
11 <i>Congregational Picnic, noon, Hillandale Park, Shelter 11.</i>	12	13	14 <i>First Meeting, new Beth El Board, 7:30 p.m.</i>	15	16 <i>Lay Service, 7:30 p.m.</i>	17
18	19	20	21	22	23 <i>Lay Service, 7:30 p.m.</i>	24
25	26	27	28	29	30 <i>Lay Service, 7:30 p.m.</i>	

Sisterhood Yard Sale

The irises are blooming and everyone's eyes are itching — it must be almost time for the Annual Beth El Yard Sale. Both your help and your castoffs help make this the biggest fundraiser for sisterhood each year. We will be setting up for the sale on Saturday, June 3, beginning at 10 a.m., and will probably finish about 3 p.m. If you haven't already dropped off your donations (please leave them in the classrooms) you may do so June 3. Also, please consider helping on that day.

The yard sale takes place on Sunday, June 4, with doors opening at 8 a.m. sharp. If you've never seen the 100-plus bargain hunters lined up at the door waiting, it's quite a sight. Help would also be welcome on Sunday, especially about 1 p.m., as we pack up the leftovers for donation to charity. Please email or call Lisa Giovanetti (giovanetti@juno.com or 434-6515) with questions, or to volunteer to help, either or both days.

Congregational Family Picnic — Sunday June 11, at noon

Hillandale Park, Shelter No. 11

The Men's Club will provide hot dogs, hamburgers and drinks.

Please bring your favorite salad, vegetable or desert to share.

RSVP to Bill Ney by Wednesday, June 7

— 442-6397 (work), 434-5163 (home)

Yahrzeits for June

1	Dora Brill	10	Leo Zindler, Sr.	21	Emma Ney David F. Blatt
2	Setta Scheuer Marie A. Good William Piper Samuel Horn	11	Anna Meyers Estelle Handler	23	Anna Klingstein
5	Bernard Ney F. Rita Kaslow	12	Joseph Funston Gertrude Davidson	25	Joseph Fox Elisa Tomaszeski
6	Pauline Zindler Leopold Wise	14	Fred Bersson	26	Steven R. Nemoytin
7	Baby Samuel	15	Miriam Hirsch	27	Lawrence Meyers
8	Manuel Levine	17	Elon Brand	28	Herbert Gould Stanley Figgatt Morris Spiro
		19	Herbert Kaslow	29	William Obersig

Yahrzeits for July

3	Joseph Brooslin Ralph Miller Shirley Borodkin	14	Vincent Elkind	25	George Becker
5	Jessie Masniloff	15	Miriam I. Hirsch	26	Samuel Klingstein Ronnetta (Ronnie) Kahn
6	Theresa Wise Loewner Edgar Wise	16	Siegfried Meyers Bernard S. Rubin Adrian Sonn	27	Henry Ney Emanuel Loewner
9	William Robinson Carol S. Ney	17	Mollie Hirsch Mary Neff Loewner	28	Theresa Sissman
11	Regina Ney	19	Jack Neckowitz	29	Alvin Ney
12	Florine Kohen Ney	21	Dorothy Fox	31	Leon Wise Louis Isaacs Maude Snyder
13	Max Helbraun	22	William Wender		
		24	Harry Lewin		

Yahrzeits for August

4	Eugene Berney Robert W. Rudd	15	Alexander Auerbach	21	Irving Ney
11	Valerie G. Ney	16	Robert Hirsch Ali David Good	23	Rubin Peck
12	Blanche Goldman Betty O'Callaghan	17	Carrie Ney Scheuer	24	David I. Robinson
13	David Aaron Kraus Lena Raff	18	Albert Ash Adele Bilsker Moses Louis Slott	26	Raymond Hoffman
14	Jessie Frankel	19	Suzanne Glazer	29	Rose Poster Carr
15	Moses Rosenbloom	20	Arlette Lewin	30	Joseph Mintzer Marvin B. Poster Abraham Goodman

A Message from our new President

I am so honored to have been elected president of the congregation, and incredibly humbled to be included among the names of my amazing predecessors. Thank you for your trust. I am counting on you to keep me informed, to keep me on track, and to keep me from becoming full of myself!

As expected, there is no "easing into" the job of president. My name is on the board by the front door, the mail is stacking up in the president's mailbox, and I already have a "to do" list! The new board's first meeting is June 14 at 7:30 p.m. Congregation members are always invited to attend, and/or to call me with discussion items.

We'll be talking a good bit this year about your involvement in Beth El. We're a small congregation, so we need everyone to pitch in and take part. We're all busy, with kids, grandkids, jobs, health issues, traveling.... If we each step up and select one way in which to take part, the time commitment is not overwhelming. Enough now. More later!

I'm looking forward to seeing you at the congregational picnic. Be there and play with us!

— *Margee*

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

Board announces dues increase

The Board of Directors has approved a dues increase for 2006-07, which will be sent out to members June 1. It's the first increase in five years. During those five years our expenses have increased considerably, including a 20 percent increase in the salary of our rabbi. Utilities have gone up 40 percent in the last two years alone. During the last five years we have not had an increase in our membership, and despite our efforts we have not completely met our fund-raising goals.

In order to continue the services that we offer to our Jewish community, the board voted to raise dues. The goal was to keep the rate at less than 2 percent of each member-family's income.

The new dues rates, announced at the Congregational Meeting, are as follows: family income under \$30,000, dues = \$450; \$30,000-\$39,999, \$600; \$40,000-\$49,000, \$800; \$50,000-\$74,999, \$1,150; \$75,000-\$99,999, \$1,500; \$100,000 and above, \$2,000.

Please remember that anyone who can't meet these figures can contact our treasurer, Bill Ney, to discuss a possible reduced rate.

Donations

Beth El Congregation is grateful the following generous donations, received during the past month:

To the General Fund

Wishing a speedy recovery for Joan Funston: Alan and Kate Neckowitz, Bill and Leslie Ney, Chuck Slott.

Wishing good health for Harry Clayman: Bill and Leslie Ney.

Congratulations to Peter Kohn on his promotion at JMU: Bill and Leslie Ney.

Congratulations to Kate Neckowitz on her upcoming retirement: Bill and Leslie Ney.

A generous General Fund donation also was received from Jessica MacWilliams.

To the Yahrzeit Memorial Fund

In memory of Manuel Levine, Janet's Father: Janet and Andy Kohen.

To the Religious School

A generous Religious School donation was received from Becky Mintzer.

To the Building Fund

Wishing a speedy recovery for Joan Funston: Eddie Ney and Frances Stewart.

In honor of the baby naming of the grandchildren of Esther and Jerry Minskoff: Eddie Ney and Frances Stewart.

To the Anne Mintzer Window Fund

Wishing a speedy recovery for Joan Funston: Dave and Shirley Merlin, Jerry and Esther Minskoff.

Wishing good health for Harry Clayman: Chuck Slott.

In loving memory of our sister-in-law, Sylvia Minskoff, who passed away on May 16: Jerry and Esther Minskoff.

Religious School Report

As I prepare to hand over my Religious School responsibilities, I want to offer some very special thank you's:

— To our Religious School teachers, Laura Jean Brand, Linda Kohn, Sara Lewis, Lisa Solod, and Sarah Stein. Week in and week out, they gave of their precious Sunday mornings to help to educate our children. In addition, they adopted (and adapted) new curricula in Judaica and Hebrew, which often took them out of their comfort zones.

— To Roberta Stein, who enthusiastically led the classes in music, led them in the musical portion of Religious School Shabbat, wrote and directed wonderful plays, started a children's choir, and, in her spare time on Sundays, served as assistant principal.

— To Rabbi Joe, for his wisdom, his persistence, and his amazing flexibility, as schedules changed (most every week!).

— To Gary Stein, our photographer extraordinaire, tolerant go-fer, and picnic grill king.

— To Gale Clemmons and Herb Rodbell, who donate their time and fun personalities as they provide the bagel bar and Herb's Grille each week

— To the parents, who care!

— To the students, who mostly don't realize how much their parents care, and who challenge us every week to do and be our best.

We anticipate that there will be several new students next year. If you have a student who will be joining us and/or would like more information, or if you know of anyone who fits that category, please contact Margee ASAP, so that we can make sure not to miss anyone.

Enjoy your summer, students. It's not a bad idea to review your Hebrew every once in a while, so that you can pick up where you left off in the fall.

— Margee

News and Notes

Youth Group Dinner, Service

The **Youth Group** is preparing for the **Shavuot/Confirmation Service** June 2, which will be led by its members. A spaghetti dinner fundraiser will precede the service.

Congratulations to Joel Ornstein, who will be confirmed during the service. Please join us, if you can, for dinner at 6 p.m. and services at 7:30.

Reminder: The youth will be going cosmic bowling after services, followed by a shul-in. Elections for next year also will take place that evening.

Congregation Honors Eddie, Janet

Eddie Ney and Janet Kohen were honored at our Congregational Meeting May 7 for their dedicated service to Beth El.

Eddie has “retired” after many years as a trustee. Janet has moved from president to past president, as she continues her service on the Board.

Thank You from Funston Family

We just wanted to take a minute to thank everyone for their phone calls, flowers, cards etc., for Mom.

She is currently in rehab at Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community and improving each day.... It will be a long road but she is working really hard to get better.

Thank you again for all the well wishes!

Ellen, Gary, Mark, and Dian Funston.

Bring In Old Phones

A reminder from the Social Action Committee for folks to deposit old cell phones and peripheral equipment for them in the box in the lobby....

Our main motivation is to preserve the environment. We will ship the stuff to another location, where the equipment will be dismantled to salvage the reusable components. As a sidelight, we get about \$1/phone for doing this.

JEWS IN HISTORY, from Rabbi Joe

Jewish Music

The two best-selling Christian holiday songs were written by the son of a cantor named Israel Baline, better known as Irving Berlin. Born in 1888 near the Siberian border, his family fled a pogrom in 1893, and came with eight children to New York. According to Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin “has no place in American music. He IS American music.” Berlin wrote some of the most enduring songs, including *God Bless America*, our unofficial national anthem, but his best-known and best-loved works are probably *White Christmas* and *Easter Parade*. Not too shabby for a poor Jewish immigrant who never learned to read or write music!

Jewish Film Stars

A Jewish man named Emmanuel Goldenberg was born in 1893 in Romania. He emigrated to America, and made good. In the course of his life he obtained a master’s degree from Columbia, and planned to study for the rabbinate and practice law, but became involved in vaudeville, appearing in a drama he wrote called *The Bells of Conscience*. He broadcast to the continental underground in nine languages during World War II. He changed his name to that of a character in a play called *The Passerby*. He was awarded a special Oscar in 1972 in recognition for his lifetime of achievements, just weeks before his death on January 23, 1973. We know him best as a gangster – Edward G. Robinson, *see?*

Betty Joan Perske, daughter of William Perske and Romanian-born Natalie Weinstein, grew up to be one of the studio system’s few Jewish leading ladies. She called herself Lauren Bacall, because “Bacal” was a Romanian version of Weinstein. She starred in *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* and *Woman of the Year* on Broadway, and who could ever forget her in those films! She married Hollywood royalty twice – Humphrey Bogart and Jason Robards. Her family is nothing to sneeze at either – her first cousin is Shimon Peres, former Prime Minister of Israel.