

CONGREGATION SHIR HEHARIM

(Song of the Mountains)



The Brattleboro Area Jewish Community

April 2007

Nissan / Iyar 5767

FROM YOUR SHALIACH TZIBUR

Some of you may have read the wonderful piece in the New York Times about the recent Bat Mitzvah of Cecelia Nealon-Shapiro, originally named Fu Qian, at Congregation Rodeph Sholom in New York. If so, then you also realized that the Rodeph Shalom rabbi officiating at that service was Robert Levine, the brother-in-law of Joe and Marcia and the speaker at our memorable Greenleaf dedication service.

Cece, who was abandoned to an orphanage in China – one of the consequences of that country's "one child" policy and the strong cultural preference for male offspring – and adopted by an American Jewish couple – went through a preparation for her Bat Mitzvah very familiar to that experienced by our B'nai Mitzvah students. She had the same reticence to belt out her portion so that it could be heard throughout the sanctuary, and the same tendency to "under-represent" our famous "ch" sound in Hebrew. (I'm guessing, however, that she never learned Torah and Haftarah trope, didn't have the same exposure to the mitzvot as our students, and surely didn't have a teacher as adept or mind-expanding as Johnny Lee!)

But Cece's Bat Mitzvah reflects two things that we love about our Judaism. The first is the commandment, which we encounter again and again in our Torah portions, to welcome the stranger. Cece, herself, was hardly a stranger to her classmates and fellow congregants at Rodeph Shalom, but the hall was filled with lots of Chinese-born individuals, some from the very same orphanage. Reb Robert's words to the assembled: "Let the stranger in your midst be to you as the native, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

The second is that while the Bat Mitzvah itself was part of a normal Shabbat Morning Service, the ceremony and the events surrounding it celebrated rather than camouflaged Cece's Chinese heritage. When, at the party, Cece was lifted up in a chair, in traditional fashion during "Hava Nagila," she nearly bumped her head on the Chinese umbrellas hanging off the chandelier. A similar Bat Mitzvah in Massachusetts took place during Sukkot which, that year, coincided with the Chinese autumn moon festival.

One of the particularly admirable things about our congregation is that families and individuals among us are able to celebrate our Judaism while still holding dear a national or cultural heritage. Throughout our history, Judaism has survived and sometimes even flourished in many parts of the world, inevitably absorbing particular local customs, melodies and recipes, and, no doubt, rubbing off on these as well. And events like Cece's Bat Mitzvah makes clear that this rich interface is continuing.

Recently I was approached by a Jewish-Tibetan couple asking if I would begin sessions with the Tibetan partner in a move toward conversion. I thought about it for some time, and then told her that I could consider this only if she promised not to give up her Tibetan heritage and if she agreed to share with me, in the process, some of the gems of her tradition. Both partners (the Jewish partner already is fluent in Tibetan) were full of enthusiasm and eagerly anticipate a family life filled not only with Jewish *gefilte* fish and Tibetan *momos*, but also with a depth of religious understanding and observance.

B'Shalom,
Jim

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

On a recent Friday night, our congregation was led in a service by Rabbi David Wolfman, the Executive Director of the Northeast Council of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ). It was a service of great warmth, as Rabbi Wolfman brought his extended family (as well as his guitar), and we were able to share with him our own style of exuberant spirituality.

On a different level, this service was an important milestone in an effort to make our connection with URJ more vibrant and valuable. The URJ, a national organization international in scope, is divided into geographic regions. We are part of the Northeast Council, made up of the New England states plus a part of upstate New York. However, even within a region, there is a diversity of interests and needs, especially seen in large and small congregations. The needs of small congregations has been a subject of much discussion within URJ. In fact, at a recent regional meeting attended by several BAJC Board members, the focus of the entire meeting was on how to improve the relationship between the small congregations and both the regional and the national organization. From where we sit, there is a belief that the URJ needs to be more aware of the richness and variety of small congregations, as well as becoming more responsive to their particular needs. For Rabbi Wolfman to join us for a service, to meet our congregants, to pray in our synagogue is an important step for BAJC and for the URJ.

Interestingly, this connection comes at a time when we have become partnered with the Harold Grinspoon Foundation in Springfield, Mass. As described in our last newsletter, we approached HGF to see if we could benefit from their educational, cultural, and religious programs and philanthropy. After a series of meetings, HGF agreed to extend their programs, normally available only in western Massachusetts, to our area. I am hopeful that both organizations will be richer for the experience.

To be part of a national organization such as URJ means that we subscribe to general principles of the Reform movement. These principles include an assertion of Judaism's innovative character and a willingness to adapt and to make thoughtful changes to the needs of the day, support for absolute gender equality, commitment to social justice within the Jewish community and in the greater society, belief in inclusivity rather than exclusivity, and in shared insight and learning in which holiness and religious wisdom are not the monopoly of religious leaders.

Of course, BAJC being BAJC, we create events, services, education and prayer with a lot of local flavor. Those on our Board spend many (delightful?) hours putting together the jigsaw puzzle of differing spiritual needs, all of which we try to respect and accommodate within these guiding principles. It is exciting and challenging. Our Annual Meeting will be on June 4th this year. If you would like to be considered for a Board position, please let us know. It requires a commitment of time and energy, but the rewards are priceless.

B'Shalom,
Paul

TWO SPECIAL SERVICES THIS MONTH

On Monday evening, April 9th at 6:00, there will be a Yizkor service at our shul.

Yizkor means "may (God) remember," from the root word *zakhor*--remember. It is the memorial service, recited four times a year in the synagogue by the congregation--on Yom Kippur day, on Shemini Atzeret (the holiday adjacent to the end of Sukkot), on the eighth day of Passover, and on the second day of Shavuot. The primary purpose of Yizkor is to remember the deceased by doing tzedakah and deeds of lovingkindness on the theory that the good deeds of the survivors elevate the souls of the departed.

On Friday evening, April 13th at 6:00, at our Kabbalat Shabbat service, we will commemorate Yom HaShoah, remembrance of the Holocaust, with special stories, prayers, music, and remembrance as the older youth of our congregation read the names of children who were killed in the Holocaust. The service will be followed by our traditional vegetarian/dairy potluck dinner at 7:00.

FIRST NOTICE: ANNUAL MEETING

The BAJC annual membership meeting will take place this year on **Monday, June 4th, at 6:30.** The early date will allow us to have a budget set for the new year before the end of the old fiscal year, and will move budget planning and the annual meeting out of the way of both summer heat and the busy fall holiday season. There will be more details and reminders about the meeting in the next newsletter, but mark the June 4th date on your calendars now!

HEBREW SCHOOL REGISTRATION IN APRIL

All parents are urged to register their children for Hebrew school by April 16th this year, especially those children who are registering for the first time (e.g., children who will be six years old for the new school year). We need to know how many youngsters we will have in the school next year now in order to prepare the annual budget. More importantly, we need to know what our enrollment will be so we can prepare materials and hire teachers in advance of the start of school on September 10th.

If you register by April 16th, the tuition will be the same as it was for this year. If you wait until after April 16th to register, the tuition will increase. You do not have to pay the whole tuition at the time of registration; a small down payment will hold a place for your child(ren). Registration forms will be sent out by e-mail to parents of currently-enrolled students, and they will be available at the BAJC office or by mail or on the website. If you know anyone who would like to register a new student, please have that person contact Faith as soon as possible.

CELEBRATING ONE MORE SHABBAT EACH MONTH

Currently, BAJC conducts Shabbat services on the first and third Saturday and the second Friday night of each month. Now that we have settled into our own building, another service will be added on the fourth Friday of each month. This added service would begin at 7:30 (to allow people to eat dinner at home before the service). It will be lay-led and will perhaps provide an opportunity for a creative, "different" service. **The first one will be on April 27 and will be led by the newly-formed group, Women of BAJC.** Anyone interested in leading the "fourth Friday" service on May 25 and June 22 should contact Ritual Committee chair Marty Cohn at martin@cohnpr.com. Marty and our Spiritual Leader, Jim Levinson, will gladly assist potential lay leaders in the creation of the service.



GOODSEARCH REMINDER

If BAJC had 100 supporters clicking on Goodsearch.com twice a day, we would receive \$730 in a year! Change your vocabulary: don't "google" —"goodsearch" instead! Tell your friends and relatives to sign on as supporters of the Brattleboro Area Jewish Community, then goodsearch away!

RELIGION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: A PANEL DISCUSSION

Marlboro College's Monday night lecture series concludes on April 9th with a panel discussion of "Religion in the 21st Century." Our own Jim Levinson will be joined by Lise Sparrow and Faiz Khan as panelists. The discussion begins at 7:00 in Ragle Hall at Marlboro College and is free of charge and open to the public. For information, call 251-7644.



Tikkun Olam Mitzvah Project

A simple, yet meaningful project is to collect the hotel toiletries from your stay and bring them to a collection basket at BAJC. The items will be donated to Morningside Shelter and the Women's Crisis Center in Brattleboro.

"Women of BAJC" Upcoming Programs

The Rosh Chodesh group will meet on Sunday afternoon, April 15th from 3:00 to 5:00 at Emily Koester's house. Then the BAJC Women's Group will lead a creative Kabbalat Shabbat service on April 27th at 7:30. For more information about these events, contact Yael at women@baicvermont.org.

Make Your Holidays an Opportunity to Pursue Justice!

The Religious Action Center and the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism have a series of Social Action Holiday Guides for both Jewish and secular holidays that include ritual and activity suggestions to help families and individuals enjoy meaningful celebrations. In the coming months be sure to check out the guides for Passover and Shavuot, as well as secular holidays such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, Memorial Day and Independence Day. All can be found on line at www.rac.org/holidayguides.

SPRING ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES

Ongoing Monthly Gatherings (free for all, no registration necessary)

Singing is Like Praying Twice: last Thursday evening of the month at 7:00. Learn about the joyous path to Jewish experience through song, with a different song leader each month, organized by Allen Ross and Andi Waisman.

Israeli Folk Dance: first Saturday afternoon of the month, 4:00 – 5:30, led by Judith Reichsman and Deb Hall.

Jewish Meditation and Mysticism: second Saturday afternoon of the month at 4:30. Organized by Michael Knapp, the class will discuss Jewish mysticism and will explore the work of a number of Jewish meditation teachers to find what practice is best for each person.

Torah Study: Generally on the 2nd and 4th Shabbat mornings of the month at 10:00 to study the Torah portion in order to understand it in its historical context and to derive wisdom from it that intersects our own life and experience. Led by Marty Cohn.

Spring Courses 2007: April – June (Courses will be presented if there is adequate registration.) Please phone 802.257.1959 and leave message in 'adult education mailbox' to ask questions or to register, or you can register at www.bajcvermont.org. Fee for Courses: \$10 - \$30 for non-members, free for BAJC members.

Conversational Hebrew: Judith Reichsman will teach a course on the grammar and vocabulary of modern Hebrew on Tuesday evenings, April 10th and 24th; May 8th and 22nd from 7:00 to 9:00. Additional dates in June will be determined.

Torah Cantillation (Trope): On four Sunday afternoons: May 27 and June 3, 10, 17 from 4:00-5:30, John Ungerleider will teach the trope melodies used for reading/chanting from the Torah.

Mikveh: taught by Jessica Ann Rubin on April 8th from noon to 2:00 and April 15th from 6:00-8:00 pm. The class will study the history of this ancient ritual of purification, renewal and rejuvenation to learn how it can enhance our Jewish lives.

The Roots of Zionism: Sunday, April 29th, 3:00 pm. We will learn about the development of Zionism as it emerged from the Jewish Enlightenment and about the multiple paths Jews followed in response: assimilation, emigration, Marxism and Zionism. Taught by C. Paul Vincent, Associate Professor of Holocaust studies at Keene State College and Director of The Cohen Center for Holocaust Studies.

SJBC

The Significant Jewish Books Club's next selection is *A Thread of Grace* by Mary Doria Russell. Discussion and potluck will be on April 24th at 6:30 at the home of Bobbe. After that, we will meet on May 29th at Norma's house to discuss *Suite Francaise* by Irene Nemirovsky. If you have never joined us for a book discussion, you are welcome to do so on March 6th, April 24th, and/or May 29th. If you contact Faith (info@bajcvermont.org or 464-2632), she will put you on the SJBC e-mail list.

NATHAN E. COHEN MEMORIAL LECTURE

Ron Blomberg, major league baseball's first designated hitter and "the great Jewish hope" of the New York Yankees during the 1970's, will discuss his autobiography, *Designated Hebrew: the Ron Blomberg Story* as a lecturer in the Cohen Memorial Lecture Series in Keene, NH. Often a victim of cruel anti-Semitic discrimination, Ron Blomberg faced many struggles in his life, both on and off the playing field, but he always reacted to adversity with class and dignity. Hear his inspirational story on Sunday afternoon, April 29th at 3:00 at Congregation Ahavas Achim in Keene. Admission is free and all are welcome.

HADASSAH EVENT AT HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE

The Western New England Region of Hadassah (including Greenfield) invites you to a program, "The New Anti-Semitism: Anti-Zionism on the College Campus; What You Need to Know to Respond," with presentations by Dr. Jack Levin, internationally renowned sociologist and criminologist and Director of the Brudnick Center on Conflict and Violence at Northeastern University, where he teaches courses in prejudice and violence; and by the David Project Center for Jewish Leadership, whose mission is to promote a fair and honest understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The program will take place on Thursday evening, April 12th at 7:00 in the West Lecture Hall of Hampshire College. Admission is free; refreshments will be served. For more information, call Carol Goodman Kaufman at 508-752-7030.

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Energizing Reform Jewish Teen Life this Summer at Kutz

The NFTY Kutz Campus for Reform Jewish Teen Life is a unique Reform Jewish teen-only environment for high school students entering the 9th –12th grades. Teens from all over North America, Israel and other parts of the world create the community known for its warm embrace. Kutz is a college-campus environment where each young person chooses from programs like “Money Matters,” “TEVE” (an intensive outdoor experience), Songleader training, or *Tikkun Olam* projects. Sign up to for this life-changing experience t at www.kutz.urjcamp.org.

Pursuit of Justice as Summer Vacation: NFTY Mitzvah Corps

As the summer arrives and school lets out, there are those teens out there looking for a meaningful and productive way to spend their summer vacation. NFTY Mitzvah Corps has many opportunities to address this need. With programs across North America, participants will engage in meaningful work with low-income students, young people with autism, and continuing to rebuild the Gulf Coast. To learn more visit www.nftymitzvahcorps.org or email nftymc@urj.org.

Attention College Students: Argentina is beautiful in May. Do you want to go?

Join college students from across North America on the KESHER Argentina Ambassadors program from May 27th – June 7th. Twenty students will fly to Argentina to meet with the Progressive Jewish community, work hands-on to help those in need, and learn about the beautiful heritage of the Argentinean Jews. Space is limited so apply now for this *Tikkun Olam* Ambassadorship! For more information please visit www.keshernet.com/argentina/ or call 212.650.4070 or email keshher@urj.org.

Take Us out of Egypt - 1

(sung to the tune of Take me out to the ball game")

Take us out of Egypt
Free us from slavery
Bake us some matzah in a haste
Don't worry 'bout flavor--
Give no thought to taste.
Oh it's rush, rush, rush, to the Red Sea
If we don't cross it's a shame
For it's ten plagues,
Down and you're out
At the Pessah history game.

Take Me Out to the Seder - 2

(Sung to the tune of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame")

Take me out to the Seder
Take me out to the crowd
Feed me some matzah and kosher wine
We'll wine and dine and we'll have a good time
For we'll root for Moshe Rabbeinu
And our crossing through the Reed Sea
For it's one, two, ...four cups of wine
We rejoice that we are free!

Take Me Out To The Seder - 3

(To the tune of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame!")

Take me out to the Seder
Take me out with the crowd.
Feed me on matzah and chicken legs,
I don't care for the hard-boiled eggs.
And its root, root, root for Elijah
That he will soon reappear.
And let's hope, hope, hope that we'll meet
Once again next year!

Take Me Out To The Seder - 4

(To the tune of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame!")

Take me out to the Seder
Take me out with the crowd.
Read the Haggadah
And don't skip a word.
Please hold your talking,
We want to be heard.
And lets, root, root, root for the leader
That he will finish his spiel
So we can nosh, nosh, nosh and by-gosh
Let's eat the meal!!!

Dr. Seuss version of the 4 questions

(author unknown...)

Why is it only
on Passover night
we never know how
to do anything right?
We don't eat our meals
in the regular ways,
the ways that we do
on all other days.

`Cause on all other nights
we may eat
all kinds of wonderful
good bready treats,
like big purple pizza
that tastes like a pickle,
crumbly crackers
and pink pumpernickel,
sassafras sandwich
and tiger on rye,
fifty falafels in pita,
fresh-fried,
with peanut-butter
and tangerine sauce
spread onto each side
up-and-down, then across,
and toasted whole-wheat bread
with liver and ducks,
and crumpets and dumplings,
and bagels and lox,
and doughnuts with one hole
and doughnuts with four,
and cake with six layers
and windows and doors.
Yes--
on all other nights
we eat all kinds of bread,
but tonight of all nights
we munch matzah instead.

And on all other nights
we devour
vegetables, green things,
and bushes and flowers,
lettuce that's leafy
and candy-striped spinach,
fresh silly celery
(Have more when you're finished!)
cabbage that's flown
from the jungles of Glome
by a polka-dot bird
who can't find his way home,
daisies and roses



and inside-out grass
and artichoke hearts
that are simply first class!
Sixty asparagus tips
served in glasses
with anchovy sauce
and some sticky molasses--
But on Passover night
you would never consider
eating an herb
that wasn't all bitter.

And on all other nights
you would probably flip
if anyone asked you
how often you dip.
On some days I only dip
one Bup-Bup egg
in a teaspoon of vinegar
mixed with nutmeg,
but sometimes we take
more than ten thousand tails
of the Yakkity-birds
that are hunted in Wales,
and dip them in vats
full of Mumbegum juice.
Then we feed them to Harold,
our six-legged moose.
Or we don't dip at all!
We don't ask your advice.
So why on this night
do we have to dip twice?

And on all other nights
we can sit as we please,
on our heads, on our elbows,
our backs or our knees,
or hang by our toes
from the tail of a Glump,
or on top of a camel
with one or two humps,
with our foot on the table,
our nose on the floor,
with one ear in the window
and one out the door,
doing somersaults
over the greasy k'nishes
or dancing a jig
without breaking the dishes.
Yes--
on all other nights
you sit nicely when dining--
So why on this night
must it all be reclining?

BAJC Mission Statement

The Brattleboro Area Jewish Community provides a context and structure for people to be Jewish together in a rural environment. Our community fosters Jewish pride and identity by participating together in religious, spiritual, educational, social and cultural experiences. We welcome anyone interested in participating and learning.

BAJC Directory

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