

CONGREGATION SHIR HEHARIM

(Song of the Mountains)



The Brattleboro Area Jewish Community

July / August 2007

Tammuz / Av / Elul 5767

FROM YOUR SHALIACH TZIBUR

I'm still aglow from the marvelous birthday Shabbat last month. So many thanks to all of you who helped make that happen, and particularly to Louise and to Sharon.

Now with summer officially here, I'm hoping that all of us will get at least a bit of off-time to be able to sink into the magic of Vermont. Louise and I will be spending some of it here and some in Ethiopia. I hope also that with the beginning of the Hebrew month of Elul – beginning this year on August 15 - we'll begin preparing inwardly for the High Holidays. That means beginning our reflections on the year that's ending and our hopes and resolutions for the year ahead. It also means making up with those with whom we've been at odds – and even instigating such peacemaking among loved ones (one of the mitzvot.) Imagine what would happen if every family among us resolved to do that! And it means, in our congregation, being intentional about “random acts of kindness,” and then sending them along to me so we can read them, anonymously but collectively, and send them heavenward on Rosh Hashanah.

Paul has made reference in his remarks to some of the innovations we'll be introducing into our High Holiday services this year – all to be fully explained in the September newsletter. Our hope is that these will be a plus for all of us, and will facilitate the spiritual explorations and discoveries that take place during this holy time. Once again our talented bimah team will be in action, with major support from our Ritual Committee. Our choir also will be singing; rehearsal on Tuesday Sept 11 at 7 PM at Greenleaf. Please e-mail me if you're planning to sing this year. (I'm

putting the finishing touches on a new choral version of Yaaleh for our Kol Nidre service.)

Let me close with a personal thanks to all who made this year such a rich one for our congregation. Paul is right. We're in good health – and this is thanks to so many people who have devoted themselves to the wellbeing of our community and, in turn, our ability to contribute to our people's mission of Tikun Olam.

B'Shalom,
Jim

BRIEF REPORT OF THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

This year's annual meeting was attended by more than thirty members. After we heard a “state of the shul” report from Paul (short version: The state of the shul is good!), Randy gave the May 31st treasurer's report, followed by a detailed presentation of the budget proposed for 5768. The budget was passed by an overwhelming vote, with basic dues for the new year set at \$1220 for families and \$715 for individuals and for seasonal members. Anyone who was not at the meeting can get copies of the budget by asking Faith.

Paul expressed the Board and the congregation's thanks to Laura, Johnny Lee, and Margie, as they step down from seats on the Board. Norma, chair of the nominating committee, presented seven candidates for Board of Trustees. The candidates introduced themselves and spoke briefly of how they believe they can contribute to the Board and the congregation. Bobbe, Jeff, Rand, and Faith and Abe (sharing one seat) were elected for three-year terms. Michael was elected to fill out two years of an

unexpired term. For a complete list of the twelve Trustees, see the back page of the newsletter.

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

As BAJC President, each year at the annual membership meeting I have the opportunity to give a “state of the shul” message. This column for the newsletter is a shortened version of that address for those of you who weren’t at the meeting (and for those of you who stopped listening after the first hour).

Last year I reviewed many of the wonderful “firsts” we celebrated together in our new shul. This year I’d like to look forward to some of the developing ideas on which the Board is working. We have “uncoupled” the annual meeting from the traditional September rush of a new school year and the high holidays. Having the annual meeting and setting the budget early gives us the summer to focus on membership and on high holiday planning. This Fall we will have a more varied approach to the high holidays that we hope will meet the different needs of people, including a carefully-timed first day service at West Village Meeting House and a more informal, less-structured second-day service at our shul. We will also make similar changes in our Yom Kippur service to accommodate the differing spiritual needs of our congregants. You will hear more about this in the September newsletter.

In a similar vein, we have “uncoupled” Hebrew School registration, moving the bulk of that effort to the end of the school year in the Spring, as opposed to the beginning of the school year in the fall. Thus, we urge parents of returning and prospective students to be in touch with us as soon possible, both to maximize the opportunity of having an assured place, and to support of our educational planning for the Fall.

I’d like to point out some of the other challenges and aspirations of the year. The newly-formed group, Women of BAJC, is looking forward to participation and involvement in the life of our Jewish community. The Ritual Committee is looking forward to getting the new URJ prayer book and to learning how best to integrate it into our prayer life. Our booming Hebrew school and the Education Committee are looking forward to solving problems of space, non-member registrants, increased family participation. There’s a group exploring the possibility of having a mikveh on our property. We have started a Families in Need Fund, to be sure that we can respond to the emergency needs of our larger community.

The Board is looking forward to strengthening the committee system, forging bonds with other

synagogues in the region and with both URJ and the Grinspoon Foundation; to developing policies regarding dues, membership, fees for life-cycle events and use of our building; to encouraging support from non-members who attend our high holiday and other services. We need to find ways to make the State of Israel part and parcel of who we are. We need a capital fund on which to base plans for the future, and we need to consider how and when we will enlarge our space.

The state of the synagogue is excellent. True, we face significant challenges – physical, financial and spiritual. That will always be the case. The central and enduring challenge of BAJC is to create a spiritual community for people with different religious needs and experiences, who wish to worship, sing, dance, learn and share with one another. As long as we honor this mission and as long as we remember that “people are us”, we will remain in excellent health.

The Board and I are appreciative of all of our members. Each and every one contributes to what BAJC is.

B’ Shalom,
Paul

B’NAI MITZVAH INVITATIONS

It’s Margaret’s Bat Mitzvah!
Join us in ceremony and celebration!
Saturday, July 14th at ten o’clock
West Village Meeting House
Kiddush immediately following service

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Judy and Jim invite the  
congregation to join their family at the  
bat mitzvah of their daughter, Ali,  
on **Saturday, August 25<sup>th</sup>** at 10:00  
in the morning at the  
West Village Meeting House,  
and at the Kiddush following 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!

## SOME RITUAL MATTERS

If anyone needs a minyan to say Kaddish for shiva or for a yahrzeit during the summer, we will do our best to convene a minyan on the day it is needed, either at the shul or elsewhere. Please contact Faith or Marty a few days in advance of the date needed.

If you would like an aliyah, the honor of being called up to the Torah to recite the blessings before and after the reading of a Torah passage, at any Saturday morning service, please contact Jim or Marty a day or two before the service at which you'd like the aliyah. It would be appropriate to ask for an aliyah if you have a yahrzeit, if you are celebrating some special event, or if you feel the desire to have an aliyah for some other personal reason. If no one asks for an aliyah ahead of time, people who are present in the congregation that day will be offered the honor.

Aliyot for the high holidays are assigned to members well in advance. Please let Abe know by the middle of August if you would like to have an aliyah on either Rosh Hashanah (Thursday, September 13<sup>th</sup>) or Yom Kippur (Saturday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>). Also, let Abe know your Hebrew name and the Hebrew names of your parents if possible. There will be many other opportunities to participate in High Holy Day services, with information and a sign-up sheet coming to you in the membership mailing that will go out in mid-July.

There are two opportunities for lay leadership this summer, at Kabbalat Shabbat services on Friday nights, July 20<sup>th</sup> and August 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:30. These are relatively short services, with no Torah reading and no potluck dinners. Contact Marty if you are interested in giving this a try. He can help you prepare a creative service or you can lead a traditional service from our Friday night prayer books.

Please note that our summer schedule for services is actually "off-schedule," not following the usual first and third Saturday and second and fourth Friday pattern. Mark your calendars for services on July 14 and 20; August 4, 10, and 25.

Although music is always welcome as a part of our services, cameras and cell phones are not! Please, no picture-taking during any Kabbalat Shabbat or Shabbat shacharit services. If you want to take pictures of a bar- or bat-mitzvah, it must be done ahead of time, either the day before or by 9:00 the morning of the service. And, of course, don't forget to turn your cell phones off during services!

## JIM PREVIEWS HIGH HOLIDAYS

This year we'll be experimenting with some new ideas for the High Holiday services, ideas we hope will better meet the varied spiritual needs of our congregants. Evening services, first-day Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur day services will be held, as always, at the West Village Meeting House. Our first-day Rosh Hashanah morning service (September 13, 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM) will be similar to our services in years past. We will, however, also have a more informal second-day Rosh Hashanah service at our Greenleaf shul (also beginning at 9:30), which will include many more traditional prayers and many which are more contemporary or freer interpretations. Our Yom Kippur morning service at West Village will be in two parts. The first, from 9:30 to noon, will be similar to Yom Kippur in years past, if a notch more streamlined, and will culminate in the Yiskor service at 11:30. At noon, we'll take a ten-minute break before continuing the service with traditional and contemporary prayers for those who wish to remain for Musaf, without time constraints. Everyone is welcome to join all of these services.

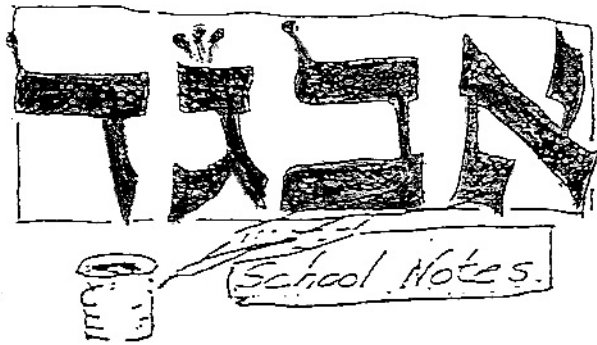
## BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

Once again this year we will publish a *Book of Remembrance* to use at the Yom Kippur Yizkor service and other times. Names of loved ones can be included in the book for a donation of six dollars per name. If you had names in the book last year, we will print them again and bill you accordingly. If you wish to include names in the book for the first time, or if you wish to make any changes, additions, or deletions, or if you had names in last year but do not wish to repeat, please let Faith know as soon as possible. The book will go to press at the beginning of August.



## 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.



Shalom aleichem,

Our school is growing at a wonderful and alarming rate. By the most recent count, 50 students will join us next fall, nine of whom will be attending the B'nai Mitzvah class. I am thrilled. I am terrified.

When I began last September as the school director, I had a million ideas for how we could make Hebrew School as fun and exciting as a dark winter afternoon spent learning a foreign language with a strange alphabet can be. Did we succeed? Sort of. We certainly had some fun, and I think all of the kids learned a lot, but, in all honesty, Hebrew School was not everything I know it can be. Some issues will be cured by better organization on my part, some by better communication between the teachers, but much of the time we just needed more help. As our school continues to grow, this need is even more pressing. We need tutors to lead small Hebrew reading groups. We need volunteers to help with messy projects. We need musicians, story-tellers, and artists to drop in for the day, and we always need "sparkle fairies" (clean-up help). Most of these jobs do not require any knowledge of Hebrew or Judaism, there is no entrance exam...simply an extra pair of eyes to make sure the paint stays in the cups and the cups stay on the table would be a blessing. Please consider your schedule and see if you can make a little time for us. Twenty minutes once a month, two hours once a year . . . think about it. I'll be in touch!

We have been fortunate to have received some wonderful assistance already. Mollie of Silver Spring, MD and mother of our BAJC President Paul, heard of our full-to-bursting school and has sent us an extraordinary donation so that we can offer an honorarium to one or more teacher aides. We are therefore interested in hearing from any B'nai Mitzvah class graduate of recent years, or any member of the congregation, who can read some Hebrew, has some Monday afternoon time to spare, and might be interested in this position.

B'shalom  
Mara

## JUDY CHICAGO EXHIBIT AT HUC-JIR

On view until July 6<sup>th</sup> in the Museum at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, an exhibit "Judy Chicago: Jewish Identity," a career survey focusing on the impact of Judy Chicago's Eastern-European roots on her identity and artistic vision, a part of national Feminist Art Project promoting awareness of women's cultural production and feminist art. The Museum is at One West Fourth Street in Manhattan. Admission is free. Go to [www.huc.edu/museum/ny](http://www.huc.edu/museum/ny) for more information, or call 212-824-2205.

## CULTURE CONNECTION

"Culture Connect" will connect you with lots of interesting events going on in the Pioneer Valley and southern Vermont area. Check out [http://www.hqf.org/culture\\_connect/events.php#537](http://www.hqf.org/culture_connect/events.php#537) to find out some of the lectures, concerts, plays, and other special events you can enjoy just a short drive from our area. You can also link to this site from our own BAJC website ([www.bajcvermont.org](http://www.bajcvermont.org)).

## MENTION THE MENSCHEN

We know there are many mensch out there and we would like to be able to honor them by "menschening" their names in the column reporting on donations each month. Please think about donations you would like to make to BAJC in honor of a special person or a special event, or in memory of a loved one at any time, or to observe a yahrzeit. A card acknowledging your gift will be sent to the appropriate person(s). You can donate any amount to a fund of your choice: building, education, cemetery, music, gifts, arts and cultural events, Torah, Israel/camp scholarship, discretionary, operating, capital, prayer book, adult ed., etc.

In anticipation of our congregation receiving *Mishkan Tefilah*, the new URJ siddur, this coming fall, several people have already made donations to have a prayer book dedicated and inscribed. A number of books are still available for dedication, at \$36 each. If you donated in years past for *Gates of Prayer*, you might want to see your dedication repeated in the new siddur. Simply send a check to BAJC for the prayer book fund and let us know what you wish the inscription(s) to say.

## REFUAH SHLEMA

May it be your will, our God, God of our ancestors, to send a healing of body and soul to all who suffer. We wish Bob a speedy recovery from surgery, and Rosalie gaining in strength and ease in getting around.

## TODAH RABBAH

Special thanks to Judith and Jackie and their enthusiastic Aleph and Bet students for planting part of the slope in front of our shul. We hope these plants will grow healthy and strong, just like the kids who planted them!

Thanks to Larry for replacing the broken shade in the sanctuary. Thanks to Johnny Lee for fixing the windows in the BAJC office.

Now—who wants to fix the handicap-ramp railing, and who wants to install a screen door on the shul and on the office?

## ABOUT NEWSLETTERS, E-MAILS, AND MEMBERSHIP

BAJC members receive a newsletter by mail eleven or twelve times a year, as well as interim updates and announcements by e-mail. People who are not members who live out of the Brattleboro area or who are seasonal residents may subscribe to the newsletter for \$36 a year and they may opt into (or out of) the e-mail updates. People who live in the Brattleboro area but are not members can subscribe to the newsletter for one year, after which we hope they will become members and thus will continue receiving the newsletter. The same is true for e-mail; the e-mail connection is for members and paid newsletter subscribers. If you are a non-member non-resident, you can subscribe to the newsletter by sending a \$36 check to BAJC. Non-members and non-subscribers and all others who wish to maintain contact with BAJC for information and activities can always check our up-to-date website, [www.bajvermont.org](http://www.bajvermont.org), or call the office voice mail phone (257-1959).

Membership forms for 5768 (September 1, 2007-August 31, 2008) will be mailed out in mid-July, along with other membership information. Please send the form in as soon as possible, and indicate your method of payment-- weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, or in a lump sum. You also have the option of automatic debit from your checking account.

If you have any questions about any of this, or if you want to be a member but cannot manage the full amount of dues, please talk to Faith. No one is ever turned away who wishes to be a member, and special arrangements are kept in strictest confidence. It is, however, important for us to know who our members are, so please send in your form or contact Faith as soon as possible. If you don't let us know that you want to be a member, we will (most reluctantly!) remove your name from our rolls.

## B'NAI MITZVAH SCHEDULE

Five young people are studying hard, even over the summer, looking forward to being welcomed into the congregation as responsible adults. Please mark these dates on your calendar: July 14-Margaret, August 25-Ali, September 29-Nina, October 6-Many, October 13-Galen. Plan to be at these Shabbat services to show your support of these young adults. Even if you don't know them, you will "kvell" when you see and hear them! You don't have to be invited to the party to be warmly welcome at the bar- or bat-mitzvah service!

## UPDATING THE YAHRZEIT LIST

We keep a yahrzeit list for our members as a reminder of the date on which to honor relatives or other dear ones who have died, and we publish the appropriate part of the list in the newsletter each month. If you want a name added to this list at any time, contact Faith and tell her the name of the person, the person's relationship to you, and the Hebrew date of death. If you do not know the Hebrew date, give us the month, date, and year according to our civil calendar and we can translate it to the Hebrew date, which will be the same each year. Names will be mentioned for Kaddish at the service closest to the Hebrew date. It is traditional to make a donation in memory of the person you are honoring on the anniversary date, and to be at the service to say Kaddish if possible.

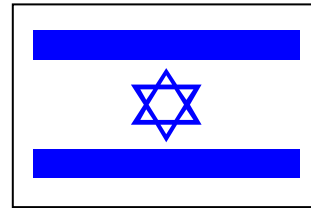
## JOIN A MIKVEH COMMITTEE

Andi is forming a committee to explore the possibility of having a mikveh on our property. Here are some of her thoughts:

I feel excited about how this mikveh might enrich our shul life, add an arm of participation that might encourage people to join BAJC, and widen our spiritual experience together. Quoting the writing from the Mayyim Hayyim Community Mikveh and Education Center in Newton, Mass., "The mission...is to reclaim and reinvent one of our most ancient Jewish rituals -- immersion in the mikveh--for contemporary spiritual uses...to make the mikveh sacred space that is open and accessible to all Jews and those becoming Jewish."

From comments of the participants of the Mikveh workshop and others in our shul, I feel there is a desire to spruce up and make accessible the stream on the BAJC property: build a bench, a natural arbor canopy, a walkway for folks to get to the stream easily. We can then use that spot for a service, a class, a place of sanctuary for our community, a meditation refuge. It would be a unique and very lovely part of our new home.

There is also a desire to have people in our synagogue prepared and willing to lead mikveh rituals for our congregants who want to use this ancient ritual for spiritual transitions in their life: childbirth, first menstruation, bar/bat mitzvah, marriage, conversion, a career change, a move to Brattleboro, to bring in the high Holidays...or just to welcome Shabbat. My vision is that a group of people would be versed in leading those rituals, both traditional and creative versions, when requested. The next step is to find people willing to coordinate these efforts with me. I look forward to hearing your thoughts, suggestions, constructive feedback, and your interest in joining this effort.



## ISRAELI FILM & FOOD FESTIVAL

BAJC's unique summer fun(d)raiser will take place on Sunday, August 19, 2007, celebrating the culture and cuisine of Israel, at the Mountain Park Cinema in West Dover. We will begin at 11:30 with a light buffet lunch of traditional Israeli / Middle Eastern foods. An award winning Israeli film, "The Syrian Bride", will follow this. After that, we will serve traditional Israeli / Middle Eastern desserts, followed by another award-winning Israeli film, "Walk on Water."

Tickets for the daylong event are just \$18 if purchased in advance. Tickets at the door will be \$25.

For more tickets or information, call 802-257-1959 or 802-464-2632.

## 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

**Spiritual Leader:** James Levinson

### Board of Trustees

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is in session, or by appointment

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### NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTIONS

This online copy of our newsletter is a much-reduced version of the real thing! The print version includes Honorable Menschen, Yahrzeits, and other individual member news. If you are not a member but would like to receive the newsletter, we ask that you contribute \$36 to BAJC for a subscription for the year 5767. Your subscription will include frequent e-mail updates. (If you want the newsletter but do not want to receive e-mails, please let Faith know.)