

CONGREGATION SHIR HEHARIM

(Song of the Mountains)



The Brattleboro Area Jewish Community

October 2007

TISHRI / CHESHVAN 5768

FROM YOUR SHALIACH TZIBUR

Fast twice in just over two weeks? You've got to be kidding?

But that's exactly what we've been called to do. Rabbis Arthur Waskow, Phyllis Berman and the Shalom Center in Philadelphia are organizing an interfaith "Fast for Peace" on Monday, October 8th, just sixteen days after Yom Kippur – a fast being sponsored locally both by our interfaith clergy association and our interfaith initiative. The dawn-to-dusk fast is seen as one way for faith communities to stand together in opposing the war in Iraq (a position being taken with increasing passion by our Union of Reform Judaism), and in opposing the still-prevalent mentality of conquest and colonialism in our country. There will be well-publicized national events taking place at the same time as our local faith communities will be breaking the fast together at our shul on Greenleaf Street at 6:45, with appropriate prayers from each of the traditions and with a vegetarian potluck supper. If you're a Hebrew School family, think about bringing some food and then staying after school for our ma'ariv minyan and the break-fast with our interfaith community. If you're not a Hebrew School family, come for ma'ariv at 6:00 and/or the potluck supper at 6:30.

The October 8th fast is just one event in a month absolutely jam-packed with richness. Please pull out your calendars and mark the dates. If you'd like to experience fully the breadth and diversity of this community, join us for these happenings together with your loved ones. A look inside the newsletter provides information on our Sukkot service and potluck on Monday October 1, our raucous and celebratory Simchat Torah service on October 4th,

Manya's bat mitzvah celebration on Oct 6th and Galen's bar mitzvah on Oct 13th – these two celebrations following Nina's on Sept 29th.

And then, on Sunday afternoon October 28th – still have calendars and pencils out? – We have another first for our Brattleboro community, an Abrahamic Musical Service for Worship, beginning at 3 PM at West Village Meeting House. With our own Kate, three choirs (including our own), instrumentalists, and sacred music and movement from Judaism, Christianity and Islam, I can promise you a rare spiritual experience. How wonderful to have musicians performing together not for fame or fortune or reviews in the national press, but rather to connect with the holy and the spiritual in one another!

Let me add to Paul's lovely Rosh Hashanah compliment, my own heartiest mazal tov to Andi and Julie for the prestigious "Congregation of Learners" award won by our adult education program in a national competition sponsored by the Union of Reform Judaism.

Perhaps not unrelated, we received recently the most wonderful of all compliments, this from a rabbi who has seen a great many congregations over the years and speaks of ours as one which truly seeks to live out the teachings. I can't think of any better resolution for the New Year than continuing to live up to a compliment like that.

B'Shalom,
Jim



FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

When I became President of BAJC just two years ago, we were renting space at All Souls Church, limited in our activities to a relatively few hours a month and only a modest number of programs, all of which had to be paid for and scheduled well in advance. There was little opportunity for spontaneous events and gatherings. The past year, since we've been in our own home, we have had activities springing up like mushrooms after the rain. Although we are a little shul of maybe 100 families and individuals, we accomplish much.

We have an extraordinary Spiritual Leader who ministers to both our membership and to the larger Jewish community in our region. We have an adult education program so varied, extensive, and participatory that it has added the richness of Jewish life, culture and experience to many people and has won national recognition in a prestigious URJ award honoring us as a Congregation of Learners. We have a school program that is now bursting at the seams, with dedicated teachers bringing Jewish tradition and culture and Hebrew language to fifty six- to thirteen-year-olds. We are reaching out to share experiences and activities with other synagogues and Jewish organizations in our region. We have a variety of small-group activities within our congregation--Women of BAJC, a Rosh Chodesh group, a men's and a women's Chevra Kadisha, Israeli dancing, mah jong, a Significant Jewish Books club, a weekly ma'ariv service, and more. We have well-prepared youngsters bring their Jewish identity with them to all sorts of endeavors in this essentially non-Jewish part of the world.

However, the many successes of this past year have brought about some of this year's challenges. We are running out of space for Hebrew School and will probably have to split the school next year to two days a week in order to have room for all the classes. We need to hire a teen coordinator/program director to work with our post b'nai mitzvah young adults in order to maintain meaningful participation for them in our Jewish community and continuing involvement with each other and with other Jewish youth in our region. We have wonderful volunteers, but they will last longer and not fall prey to burnout if we can hire people for some of the tasks we now ask volunteers to do.

We need to start planning for an already-needed expansion to create a large sanctuary, more classrooms, and a social hall that will allow us to

conduct b'nai mitzvah and other life-cycle events at our synagogue rather than in rented space elsewhere. We really need to expand our facility!

So where do we go from here with our little shul in our little town? This is our synagogue - we need to do more than simply sustain the status quo. Each of us must do whatever we can to promote its growth and to enable the congregation (meaning each of us) to reach its fullest potential. Our shul is where we mark the most important events of our lives--births and baby namings, bar & bat mitzvah, auf rufs and weddings, funerals and memorials. It is where we gather to grieve and to say Kaddish for those who have left us. The synagogue is where we hear the call of the shofar and pray to be inscribed in the

Book of Life. This is where we educate our children and grandchildren about our tradition and beliefs and ethics. This is where we come together in a Kehilla Kadusha - a holy community of families and friends, who gather together for support and celebration, in times of joy and in times of sadness.

So let me first thank our volunteers; our teachers and administrators, our Board members and committee members; our oldsters who show us the way and our youngsters who show us the future, and a special thank you to all our members who give us the support, financial and otherwise, that we need to keep our very special synagogue moving forward. Then I ask each of you to find out about everything that the Brattleboro Area Jewish Community has to offer and consider taking advantage of at least one offering. We publish a newsletter and have a wonderful website. Both inform about programs and events and services. If you pick just one thing that you think you will like and become involved, you will be surprised at how addictive it can be and perhaps you will be inspired to become a member. Your membership will help us with our ongoing efforts to maintain and grow a holy community that truly is special and unique--a community that has something to offer everyone and that adds some measure of holiness to everyone who seeks it.

This, therefore, is my High Holiday appeal, as traditional at this time of year as round challah and apples dipped in honey. There is much more that we can do. We have tremendous talent and energy and intelligence and willpower; we have wonderful ideas and we have wonderful people who want to implement these ideas. We must not be held back by a lack of money. As a Board, we have discussed different options for raising funds at this time of year. Many synagogue budgets, for example, are based on income from selling High Holiday tickets. We prefer to welcome all to our services and simply appeal to you for support at this time--a time when

the larger Jewish community comes together with our members to pray, to renew, and to be part of this larger whole.

We need more money, and I am asking each of you to help. You know what we have and you know what we want to do and what we need to do. What we have here is no accident. It should not be taken for granted. What we do takes time and effort and money. To meet the dreams and hopes of our congregation requires meeting the financial challenges ahead of us. Becoming a member and paying dues, to me, is the biggest win/win situation, but even if you cannot become a member, any amount of support you can give will help. Long ago, our sages said, "do not rely on miracles". More recently, Chaim Weizmann, Israel's first president, said, "Miracles sometime occur, but one has to work terribly hard for them." You can help miracles happen here!

Finally, I ask all of you to think of what this congregation means to all of the Jews in our region. On Greenleaf Street stands the first synagogue in the history of the Brattleboro area, a dream come true.

I am asking for your money, your energy, your presence and your support to keep this congregation alive, vibrant, and growing.

B' Shalom,
Paul

CEMETERY CLEAN-UP

Fall clean up of our BAJC cemetery will be held on October 14th at 11:00 (with the 21st as the rain date). Bring pruning shears, rakes, elbow grease, drop cloths, and a caring heart. Contact the Temple office.



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.hgf.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.

FROM OUR HIGH HOLIDAY CHAIR

On behalf of the BAJC Ritual Committee, I would like to thank everyone who helped make our High Holy Day services so spiritually rewarding this year.

We are truly blessed by a congregation that works together to create a holy place for all of us to worship. A big "todah rabah" goes out to: our dedicated "bima team" (Andi, Kate, Hannah, Rebecca, Allen); all the folks who helped set up and take down West Village Meeting House (Abe, Faith, Paul, Julie, Linda, Laura, Margie, Michael); our choir; all our shofar blowers; our greeters (Bobbe, Paul, Marylin, Deb, Linda, Jennifer, Julie, and Michael), our Torah chanters (Moss, Johnny Lee, Rebecca, Jenna, Eve, Miriam, Kate, Allen, David, Sandra, and Sandy), Sharon Dunn and Jackie Gould for the beautiful sunflower arrangements and all those who shared their voices in reading English portions and in chanting the Torah blessings.

Sandi's magnificent new needlepoint Torah cover and Mara's elegant new quilted white Torah cover (white, for the high holy days) made our services even more beautiful, and will continue to honor and enhance our Torahs in the years to come.

Thanks also to Ira Wilner who was able to borrow a sound system from Richard Levine at Interface in Keene, and for setting it up for us. Thanks to both Richard and Ira we didn't miss any of the inspiring words of the holy day services.

And, a special thanks you to our spiritual leader, Jim Levinson, for his warmth and caring of our congregation.

B'shalom,
Marty

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.

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!

GETTING MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION UP-TO-DATE

In addition to sending in your completed membership forms, please let Faith know whenever you have a change of address, a new telephone number, or a change of e-mail address. Equally important, please let Faith know when someone is ill or hospitalized, or just needs a bit of cheering up, or when there is a "mazal tov" type event occurring.

ISRAELI FILM CLUB—SOMETHING NEW AT BAJC



Following on the success of our "Israeli Film and Food Festival", a bi-monthly showing of an Israeli film will take place at our shul. Popcorn and soft drinks will be available and there will be ample time for discussion of the films. The first film is "Nine Star Hotel", winner of Best Documentary at the Jerusalem Film Festival, will start at **6:00 pm on October 28**. Thereafter, the films will be shown at 4:00 on the fourth Sunday afternoon of every other month.

SUKKOT, SIMCHAT TORAH, AND OTHER CELEBRATIONS

Sukkot begins this year the evening of September 27th, but BAJC will begin the holiday on the 24th, joining with the Hebrew school to decorate the sukkah constructed and put up by Felipe Sipowicz on our beautiful side lawn. Then on Monday, October 1st, we will have a Sukkot service beginning at 5:15, followed by a potluck dinner. Weather permitting, we will do as much of the service as possible in the sukkah, and we hope also to eat at least part of our meal there. Bring your best vegetarian or dairy dishes to share, and bring the whole family to celebrate this joyous holiday.

Sukkot ends on October 3rd, followed immediately by Shemini Atzeret on the 4th and Simchat Torah on the 5th. For Simchat Torah on Thursday, we will begin with Yizkor at 6:00, followed by a 6:30 service, more raucous than serious, as we share the joy of finishing the Torah, only to roll it back to the beginning to once again read the very first words.

And while in the celebratory mode, don't forget the last three b'nai mitzvah of the 2007 class: Nina at ten on September 29th, Manya at ten on October 6th, and Galen at nine-thirty on the 13th.

GARDEN GROWERS AND GIVERS

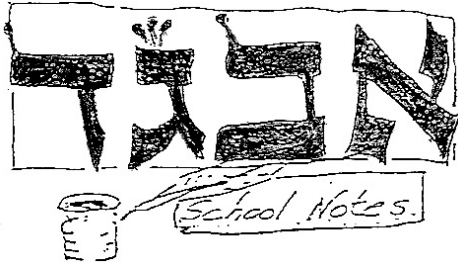
The chalutzim (pioneers) of Kita Bet, Jackie's class in the BAJC Hebrew school, want to add to the flower border on the bank in front of the shul. They would appreciate donations from gardeners who are separating perennials or bulbs or who have extra fall seeds to plant. Triple-bag the roots or put the plant in a container, including the name of plant and any planting instructions (shade or sun, depth of planting, watering, etc). Please bring your plant and bulb donations to services or drop them off at our shul on Sundays, Mondays, or Wednesdays during September or October. If you have any garden tools to donate or lend, we could use them too. Put your name and phone number on anything you want returned. If you are a gardener who would like to help with this project, please contact Jackie.

Free Trip to Israel for Young Adults

Jewish 18-26 year-olds who have never been to Israel on a peer educational trip before are eligible for a FREE 10-day trip to Israel. KESHER, the Union for Reform Judaism's College Department, offers a FREE 10-day trip to Israel under the gift of Taglit-birthright israel. Registration for the winter 2007-2008 trips is now open. All information and registration can be found at <http://www.keshercollege.org/birthright>

Set the course for Biennial today – Don't miss the boat!

It's time to plan your journey to San Diego this December 12-16—and the first step is registering. With just two months left until the biggest gathering of North American Jews, the excitement is palpable! Register today to be part of the largest Shabbat Service you have ever seen, learn with our top teachers and rabbis, and celebrate being part of the most vibrant and dynamic Movement of Judaism with 4,500 of your closest friends. For more information and to register please visit <http://www.biennial.uri.org> today.



Shalom aleichem,

Hebrew School and the Holidays came rushing in on us all at once this year. We barely had time to get acquainted, let alone review a few blessings, before Jim was calling on us to lead the Shma on Rosh Hashanah. However, it takes more than this to throw the kids of Shir Heharim Hebrew School, already buzzing along in their studies as if there never had been a summer vacation.

This year, among other things, we are going to focus on Shabbat both at the synagogue and at home. When I was growing up, we spent Friday evenings in the car escaping New York City. I was a university student when I was given card with the candle lighting times and the blessing written on it. I thought, "How easy! All I have to do is light a pair of candles!" And it is absolutely that easy. Now that I have a family, we sometimes light at the "correct" time, but usually the candles are lit when we're ready for Shabbat, having finished the day's activities and ready to relax and enjoy the beginning of the weekend. It's a wonderful feeling, and lighting candles intensifies the reminder that it is time to leave the week behind and enjoy what is to come. And a little wine doesn't hurt either.

Never afraid of setting the bar high, we are going to attempt to achieve total at home Hebrew School Shabbat participation. This can be as simple as lighting that pair (or more) of candles on Friday evening, or as elaborate a celebration as your family can conceive. Hebrew school teachers are standing by to assist you. Candles and the blessings are available at the shul for a token fee, and the Kiddush in transliteration (as well as in Hebrew) is available too.

At shul, the classes will take turns hosting Friday night services throughout the year. The first of these will be on November 9th when Kita Aleph (Judith's class) and Kita Dalet (Mara's class) will be leading the service. Of course, everyone is welcome to attend, so please save the date and start thinking about a delicious vegetarian dish to bring for the potluck after the service!

L'shanah Tova,
Mara

A LETTER FROM A RABBI TO "ONCE-A-YEAR-JEWS"

Question of the Week:

I am a "once-a-year Jew." I go to shul for the High Holydays, having not shown my face the entire year, and then disappear till next High Holydays. Do people like you think I'm a hypocrite for coming to shul once a year?

A Rabbi's Answer:

Funny, I feel the opposite. I am in awe of once-a-year Jews. I think you are more in touch with your soul than I am.

I go to shul every day, observe Shabbos, keep kosher, enjoy horseradish on my gefilte fish - all the things that Judaism expects of me. But that's because I know what they mean. I have been privileged to learn the meaning of Jewish practice, the power of Torah, and I have seen the positive transformation real Judaism can achieve in a person. It's no surprise that I observe - who wouldn't if they knew what Judaism was all about?

But I look at the once-a-year Jews, who mostly have little or no Jewish education, don't know the meaning of the prayers, are not sure whether they believe or not, and still they come. Why? What are they doing in shul? What brings them?

There is only one explanation. It's their soul. They have a Jewish soul, so they come to shul.

I on the other hand may have other reasons to come to shul. My mind tells me to go, my habits force me to go, I go this week because I went last week. But for the once-a-year Jews, there is no external reason to attend shul. The drive comes from deep within; their Jewish essence tells them to go.

The High Holydays season is the one time of year when the Jewish essence comes out of the closet. Jewish souls make a bold and loud statement: "Whether I understand it or not, I am Jewish, and I belong in shul."

So please don't feel funny coming to shul. Maybe you'll be inspired to become a once-a-month Jew, or even once-a-week. But even if not, just by coming you remind us of the power of the Jewish soul.

Good Shabbos and a Sweet New Year,
Rabbi Moss

FALL OFFERINGS FOR ADULT EDUCATION



Please register for classes by calling 257-1959 and leaving a message on the Adult Ed voice mail, by registering online at our website (www.bajcvermont.org), or by contacting Andi. There is a fee for classes for people who are not BAJC members, beginning at \$18 and increasing for longer courses. All classes will meet at the shul at 151 Greenleaf Street.

Celebrate Sukkot Outside by Exploring Judaism's Nature Traditions. Sunday afternoon, Sept 30th. First, Sukkot for the *Shretleach*, beginning at 2:00 for families with young children up to ten, will search the beautiful land of BAJC for *Shretleach*, (Yiddish for the little people—elves, gnomes, and fairies). We will search and hear stories about the *Shretleach* and will build a tiny six-inch sukkah for them. Parents will be introduced to blessings and contemplative nature traditions. The second part of the program, **Exploring Judaism's Forgotten Nature Paths**, begins at 3:45 for adults and mature children. The two-hour session will teach Judaism's ancient environmental wisdom, including blessings for the gift of the natural world, while exploring BAJC's land and sampling Judaism's contemplative nature practices with activities, deep listening, and old-fashioned text study. David Arfa, a Jewish environmental educator and professional storyteller, will teach both sessions.

Kabbalah Study. Three Tuesday evenings: Oct 16th, 23rd, and Nov 6th from 7:30-9:00, will trace the flowering of Kabbalistic thought and practice in Jewish history, examine mystical passages and interpretations in the Torah, and refine understanding of Jewish liturgy. The aim of these sessions is to try to understand why we're alive and what happens to our soul after death. Taught by Michael Knapp, Ph.D., whose passion for Jewish mysticism and meditation began when he was sick and scared in Sierra Leone, West Africa in the late 1980's and has been part of his life ever since.

T'filah: Understanding the Language of Prayer. Three Sunday evenings: Oct 7th, 14th, 21st from 7:00 to 8:30. Discover the meaning of specific Shabbat prayers by examining their literal translation and their historical origin. Taught by Ari Reis, a Jewish educator who provides interactive, creative, and stimulating programs for students of every age, ability, and background.

Bringing Two Different Backgrounds into One Relationship: The Gift of Meeting Each Other's Needs. Nov 4th, 11 am –1:00 pm. A forum to discuss the issues that arise in partnerships where the members have different religious backgrounds. We will discuss the differences individuals bring to a relationship and the gifts we give each other when we communicate our needs in an open and honest manner. Facilitated by Kathy Bloomfield, program ambassador for the Northeast Council of the Union for Reform Judaism outreach department and a certified URJ Outreach Fellow trained to assist individuals with their transition into Judaism.

The Basics of Yiddish. Six to eight Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 9:00, beginning Oct 3rd. Students will learn the basics of the universal Jewish language: the letters, a glossary of words, basic grammar, and sentence construction, and will become familiar with beloved Yiddish sayings from the humorous to the heartfelt. Taught by Sylvia Morey, who spoke Yiddish before she spoke English and who has read and studied many of the great Yiddish writers.

Monthly Events — these are “drop-in” sessions that do not require prior registration.

Singing is Like Praying Twice: held on the second Wednesday evening of the month at 7:00, beginning October 10th, led by Andi.

Torah Study, usually held the second and fourth Saturday of each month (please check calendar), 10:00–12:00, led by Marty.

Israeli Film Club, on the fourth Sunday of every other month, 4:00–6:00 p.m., beginning on October 28th. More information will follow about the films.

Free! A Weekly E-newsletter of Jewish News

Want to receive a weekly update of news of the Jewish World? Now, as a benefit of our congregation's membership in the Union for Reform Judaism, you can receive a free subscription to the Weekly Briefing, an e-mail of news about the Union and the greater Jewish world. Produced in cooperation with *JTA: The Global News Service of the Jewish People*, the Weekly Briefing is delivered to your inbox every Friday. To subscribe, go to <http://www.urj.org/subscribe>.

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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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.)