

CONGREGATION SHIR HEHARIM

(Song of the Mountains)



The Brattleboro Area Jewish Community

December 2007

KISLEV / TEVET 5768

FROM YOUR SHALIACH TZIBUR

Chanukah is the Festival of Dedication, and Paul and I have decided to devote our columns this month to this subject from two different perspectives.

The image of Chanukah that will haunt me for the rest of my life is of Poland in December 1995 at a commemoration Louise and I helped organize to mark the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Our first evening there was also the last night of Chanukah and, on an impulse, we decided to take our Chanukiot to the gates of the camp – the site of the infamous sign, “Arbeit Macht Frei.” Right there, juxtaposed against the barbed wire, we lit our candles. It was a mesmerizing image, the light against the darkness. We could barely breathe. And then, suddenly, ten seconds of the lightest possible rain – as a blessing from those we had come to remember.

That to me was the stuff of rededication. But we don't need to do anything remotely that dramatic to stimulate rededication at the time of this festival. The Chanukah story itself is sufficient. And if we need more of a challenge, what better than that posed by Rabbi Levine at the dedication of our new shul – that unique challenge facing American Jews: keeping our people alive and vibrant despite the absence of glaring and overt anti-Semitism.

Let me suggest that as families and as individuals we do some rededicating of our own at Chanukah this year – keeping in mind that this festival is not just for kids. Perhaps a commitment to light the Shabbat candles together each week. Perhaps a commitment to take on one new challenge of adult Jewish learning, either independently or together with others in our flourishing adult education program. Perhaps a

commitment to place a tzedakah box on the kitchen table, to fill it each evening with our loose change, to contribute to it more plentifully before Shabbat and on the festivals, and then to decide together with loved ones next Chanukah where our gifts can best contribute to “Tikkun Olam.”

I wish you all a joyous festival, and hope to see many of you at our gala Chanukah service and party on Friday evening December 7.

B'Shalom,
Jim

DECEMBER ADULT ED

Torah Study, led by Marty Cohn at the shul on December 8th and 22nd, from 10:00 to 12:00

The Basics of Yiddish, taught by Sylvia Morey, continues at the shul on Wednesday evenings from 7:30 to 9:00.

Re-learn to Read Hebrew continues on Thursday evenings at 5:00 at Faith's house, for those who may have started this class before but not finished it, or for people who would like to review the decoding process.

Singing is Like Praying Twice at the shul at 7:00 on December 13th

Riddles in Torah (The DaVinci Code of Torah): Pre-registration is required for this Shabbat afternoon class, December 22nd from 2:00 to 4:00 at the shul; taught by Rabbi Alan Ullman, founder of the School for Jewish Studies, dedicated to teaching Torah to adults. Register for this class by December 17th by calling 257-1959 and leaving a message on the adult ed voice mail or by e-mailing info@bajcvermont.org.

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

I have often wondered why we really need a reminder of the need for (re)dedication at this time of year. After all, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur were not that long ago, when we reflected on our successes and failures and dedicated ourselves to trying to do better. We did so individually in the privacy of our hearts; we did so as part of a community. Why does Chanukah speak of dedication again? Why does our Spiritual Leader, Jim Levinson, write of our need to reach in our hearts to find a way to refocus and rebuild, when High Holidays were just a few months ago.

The answer, I believe, lies in human nature. Much of my day job involves working with people in crisis, often at the intersection of various forms of substance abuse and the criminal justice system. When the crisis is acute and the person has been charged with a crime or has been jailed or has been involved in a serious act of misconduct, it is relatively easy to appreciate the need to make change, to dedicate oneself to dealing with the collection of problems at hand. Many do make significant changes, often motivated by the fear of jail, the fear of losing family and friends, and the fear of appearing before a judge. In some respects, it is easier to make changes, when the alternative is right in front of you. However, as I discuss with many clients, it is often harder to maintain progress a few months later, when the fear of jail or of the judge has receded.

It is now a few months after the shock and awe of Kol Nidre. Darkness is replacing light in our daily lives. The promises and pleas we have made in the bright light of Yom Kippur are at risk of being overtaken by time, by the busyness of life and habits, and by the darkness of winter. So we have Chanukah, considered by most to be a minor holiday, a holiday for kids, but perhaps it is much more. Perhaps it is a timely reminder of the promises we made just a few months ago.

For those who wish to dedicate more time, energy and spirit to BAJC, may I urge parents of children in our Hebrew School to join our Education Committee? Your input is vital to the continued growth and success of our school. For those who wish to wrap themselves and their neighbors in the true heart of BAJC, please consider our Sunshine Committee as well as our Social Action Committee and our Membership Committee. To all, a Happy Chanukah. And, please read Jim's column more than once--it really gets to the heart of the matter.

B' Shalom,
Paul

TWO SPECIAL FORWARD-LOOKING GIFTS TO OUR SHUL

Special thanks to Linda and her sister and brother-in-law, Judy and Alex, for a beautiful Star of David stained glass window. It came originally from a synagogue in Jersey City that was demolished and the window was given to Alex, a contractor, for safekeeping. He and Judy have used it in their sukkah, but generously offered it to us, and Linda drove it up from Teaneck, New Jersey. Linda and Judy are dedicating the window to their parents, Jack and Gladys, and are hoping it finds a temporary place in our current building(s) and a special permanent place in our future (Phase Two) building.

Thanks also to Rabbi Jeff Goldwasser and Congregation Beth Israel in North Adams, MA, for a handsome lectern/Torah-reading table for our shul, to Marty and Paul for trucking it up from North Adams, and to Phil for making it mobile by putting it on casters and engineering the top so that we can fit it in and out the door of our building. It is a wee bit large for our current space, but will be perfect for our future (Phase Two) space and, in the meantime, is much sturdier and safer than the table we were using, especially when we have to move to West Village for services.

GOODSEARCH REMINDER

Everything you ever wanted to know from Google, you can learn from Goodsearch in the same one click. If you click on Goodsearch.com and indicate that your charity is Brattleboro Area Jewish Community, we will earn money from every click! (Not so on Google!) We get a penny per click and, if everyone would Goodsearch, BACJ could earn hundreds of dollars a year!

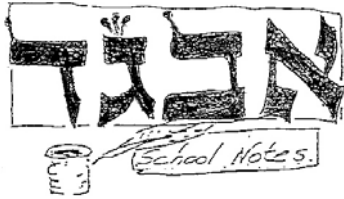
A NOTE FROM GALEN

Dear BAJC,

Thank you so much for **EVERYTHING.** You welcomed me into Judaism with wide arms and big smiles. I'm so lucky to be a part of this community and to know all of you. Thank you again for everything you've done for me.

Peace to you,
Galen





Shalom aleichem,

What a fabulous turn-out for our first Family Shabbat this year, and what a terrific job our students did. Their enthusiasm! Their strange and wonderful reluctance to vacate the bimah once they set foot upon it! I kvelled until I thought I could kvell no more – and yet I get a happy little feeling right now just thinking about those kids doing their thing. Many thanks to Marty, who despite having no previous knowledge of the glorious mayhem of a Family Shabbat, bravely led us forward to a timely rendezvous with our dinner. We are looking forward to other family Shabbats with Hebrew school classes participating, probably in January, February, and April.

I know that I say this often, but I continue to be impressed by our students' ability to focus and learn even as the afternoon fades and, with the return to standard time, full night seems to slam down on us. Now more than ever, we are trying to be vigilant in keeping our children safe at drop-off and pick-up times, and, as you are no doubt aware, we are keeping them in the sanctuary until their chauffeurs claim them. The chauffeurs, I have noticed, have been waiting decorously in the dining room, but you need not. Our group activities begin at 5:25 and you are welcome to join us then, or whenever you arrive, and to bring younger siblings.

The Chanukah count-down has begun! (Yes, it's early again this year.) In addition to the BAJC Chanukah celebration on the 7th, the Hebrew School will hold its own celebration on the 10th during part of our regular class time. Please bring you chanukia (menorah) to either or both evenings, and be aware that we are yet again seeking volunteers, this time for "Latke Duty." A sign-up sheet will be on the bulletin board. Candles, gelt, and other Chanukah essentials will be on sale in the office during Hebrew School hours as well as on Wednesday afternoons. The Hebrew school youngsters and their teachers look forward to celebrating Chanukah together with parents, siblings, and other members of the congregation to light candles and sing together on both the fourth and seventh nights of this joyous Festival of Lights.

B'shalom,
Mara

THEY'RE HERE!

The new Reform siddur, *Mishkan T'filah*, has arrived at last, and a handsome book it is. The siddur's unique design is based on inclusivity and celebrates diversity, offering several prayer choices within each service. Each individual prayer is actually a two-page spread, with the right-side page offering the traditional prayer in Hebrew, in transliteration, and in faithful translation, while the left-side page contains related alternative prayers and freer inspirational readings and commentary. The prayer leader will select one of the readings from the two-page spread, then move on to the next page. There will be choices that are new and choices that are traditional and familiar, and sometimes there will be a mix of both the new and the familiar in a service. The English language liturgy and commentary is gender-neutral, and every prayer in Hebrew is transliterated, making the prayers accessible to everyone. There are prayers for weekdays, Shabbat, festivals and special occasions, and blessings for the home and synagogue. In addition, there are more than fifty pages of Hebrew songs at the end of the book, all transliterated!

Although most of the books have already been dedicated, the bookplates are not yet ready. They will be placed in the books as soon as possible. In the meantime, there are still a few books that remain to be dedicated. If you wish to donate a book in honor of or in memory of someone, or if you wish to donate book even without honoring anyone or any special event, you can do so for a donation of \$36 to the prayer book fund.

In a very special "sh'hechyanu moment" for our congregation, the *Mishkan T'filah* will be introduced at the Shabbat service on December 1st at 10:00. Come join us to begin this journey of exploration together. Even if we use only the most familiar prayers that day, you will have a chance to look at others in the book and to begin to think about how we can best use the new book to create new levels of spirituality and participation.

RJISRAEL DOT ORG

Are you interested in visiting Israel but really don't know where to start? Look no further than RJIsrael.org, the portal for Reform Jewish Israel programs. Whether you are interested in a teen or high school program, a post-college year traveling in Israel, or a long term travel opportunity for the entire family, RJIsrael.org is the place to start.

CHANUKAH O CHANUKAH!



Our congregation's Chanukah celebration will take place on December 7th, with our Kabbalat Shabbat service beginning at 6:00. For this, the fourth candle of the holiday, bring your menorahs and candles so we can say the blessings, light the candles, and sing together before having a brief ma'ariv holiday service. Potluck latke dinner will follow the service at 7:00. Please bring cooked latkes, enough to feed ten people (ten *hungry* people!), and/or salads, and finger-food desserts. Latkes can be warmed in our oven. Applesauce, sour cream, coffee, tea, and juice will be provided.

When you light your candles at your home this season, you can join with Reform Jews across the continent in marking the holiday in very special ways, teaching your children that the holiday is not simply about presents, but about their role in the world today.

Ner Shel Tzedakah: on the sixth night (Sunday, December 9), donate the value of the gifts that might be exchanged (or the gifts themselves) to organizations that assist the poor. One possibility: the **Nothing but Nets** project. Learn about the lessons to be gained at http://urj.org/csa/projects/nershel_tzedakah/

Israel at 60: As we approach the 60th anniversary of Israel's founding, dedicate the candle lighting to deepening your family's connection to Israel, reading the following out loud:

Chanukah is about miracles. Every night when we light candles we recite the blessing, "...who performed miracles for our ancestors in those days at this season." Tradition focuses on *pirsum ha-nes*, publication of the miracle, which we accomplish by putting our candles in a window or some other highly visible spot. The dreidel proclaims *nes gadol haya sham*, "a great miracle happened there." It's all about miracles.

Where was the miracle? To find the answer and to read the rest of this story please visit www.arza.org/chanukah, and go to www.urj.org/educate/parent to download the newest Jewish Parent Page on Chanukah for activities, readings and prayers to share with your entire family this Chanukah.

FEED THE HUNGRY--SOCIAL ACTION PROJECT

Judy has had a wonderful response to the appeal for preparing and serving a meal at the Morningside Shelter once a month. Paul Kepkerra, the Morningside Shelter director, is excited to have us and appreciative of our volunteering! So far we have volunteers for November through March, although there is still room for additional cooks and servers each of those months. Helping in this way would be a perfect mitzvah project for our b'nai mitzvah young people, as a group or individually with their parents. So far, Judy, Jacob, Emma, Sue, Lynn and family, Andi, Carol and Brett, Emily, Vikki, Janet, and Elisa have volunteered to cook and serve. People who have signed up to cook but cannot afford to pay for all the ingredients out of their own pockets can buy what is needed and save the receipts to give to Judy or Faith. Generous donations from Burt and Joanne, Marty and Yael, Faith and Abe, Paul and Sharon, and Julie can be used to reimburse people for expenses.

Volunteers will be cooking and serving a hearty dinner meal for the 20 residents of the shelter and staying to eat with them on the third Friday night of the month. Meals can be cooked right at the shelter or brought from home. The residents will provide the clean-up crew. The director is looking forward to meeting our volunteers and showing them around a little before they need to start cooking or anytime for a visit. If you haven't volunteered yet or made a donation yet, there is still time to do either or both. A mitzvah like this is a wonderful opportunity—we can nourish our neighbors while enriching our own lives by doing tikkun olam--healing the world--at least a local corner of it.

FRIDAY NIGHT IN THE GROOVE

Hazzan Steven Berke (Temple Beth El), Cantor Elizabeth Berke (Heritage Academy, and Rabbi Micah Becker-Klein (Springfield JCC Education Director) will lead a musical, interactive, and energetic service utilizing both new and familiar melodies. This experience aims to deepen your spiritual awareness and to put you in touch with your Jewish *neshama*. The services will run from six to seven p.m. Mark the following dates on your calendar now: December 21st, January 25th, February 22nd, March 21st, April 25th, May 23rd, at Temple Beth El, 979 Dickinson Street, Springfield, MA. Call 413-733-4149 for information.

THE NEW PRAYER BOOK

By Laurie Goodstein, *NEW YORK TIMES*
September 3, 2007

Religious denominations have learned that rewriting their prayer books can result in rebellions from their worshippers, both those wedded to tradition and those hoping for dramatic change.

Now the nation's largest Jewish movement, Reform Judaism, is adopting a new prayer book that was intended to offer something for everyone — traditionalists, progressives and everyone else — even those who do not believe in God. The changes reveal a movement that is growing in different directions simultaneously, absorbing non-Jewish spouses and Jews with little formal religious education while also trying to appeal to Jews seeking a return to tradition.

Traditional touches coexist with a text that sometimes departs from tradition by omitting or modifying some prayers and by using language that is gender-neutral. References to God as "He" have been removed, and whenever Jewish patriarchs are named (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), so are the matriarchs (Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah). The prayer book took more than 20 years to develop and was tested in about 300 congregations. "It reflects a recognition of the diversity within our community," said Rabbi Elyse D. Frishman, the editor of the prayer book. "We have interfaith families. We have many visitors at b'nai mitzvah ceremonies. There are even those who come to Shabbat worship each week who don't believe in God."

Unlike the Reform movement's last prayer book, "Gates of Prayer," which was published in 1975, the new prayer book has a Hebrew title, "Mishkan T'filah" (which means a sanctuary or dwelling place for prayer). There are four versions of each prayer laid out on a typical two-page spread. On the right page is the prayer in Hebrew, the transliteration of the Hebrew prayer into phonetical English, and a literal translation. On the left-hand page is a more poetic translation of the prayer, followed by a metaphorical or meditative passage reflecting on the prayer, sometimes by a well-known writer. Rabbis who prefer to lead a more traditional service can choose a prayer from the right-hand side of the page, while those who prefer a more alternative approach can choose from the left side.

Steven M. Cohen, a sociologist of American Jewry and a professor at the Jewish Institute of Religion at Hebrew Union College, said, "Historically the Reform movement has seen itself as the movement most

responsive to the changing times," one of the main reasons that its prayer book is periodically revised.

Since 1985, committees of rabbis, cantors and laypeople — about 50 people in all — have been involved in developing the new prayer book. Early versions were tested in congregations, which sent in their feedback. "Yet the authors are prepared for criticism," Rabbi Frishman said. "Some critics will say there is too much Hebrew, and others will say there is too little. Some will undoubtedly find it surprising that there are no italics denoting responsive readings that alternate between the rabbi and congregation, and no notes instructing the congregation when to rise and when to sit," allowing for diversity of practice within the Reform movement. The movement's leaders hope the new prayer book will help revive a worship experience that will bring many more Jews into the synagogue.

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.

NOTHING BUT NETS

As part of its efforts to combat extreme poverty and preventable disease through the world, the Union for Reform Judaism is urging its members to purchase 50,000 insecticide-treated bed nets to fight malaria in Africa through the Nothing But Nets campaign. For just \$10, you can protect an entire family! Log onto www.urj.org/nets and take action today!

Adult Study Retreat

Join Reform Jews from across North America this July 8–13 for the Summer Adult Study Retreat Franklin Pierce College in Rindge, NH. You will connect with adult learners just like you, Reform Movement scholars and spiritual leaders. For more information please call Rabbi Joan Glazer Farber at 212-650-4086 or e-mail jfarber@urj.org.

HANUKAH FUNNIES

1. Buying Stamps for Hanukkah

A woman goes to the post office to buy stamps for her Hanukkah cards.

She says to the clerk, "May I have 50 Hanukkah stamps?"

The clerk says, "What denomination?"

The woman replies, "Oh my. Has it come to this? Give me 6 Orthodox, 12 Conservative, and 32 Reform."

2. Can We Have a Hanukkah Tree?

Admiring the Christmas trees displayed in his neighbor's windows, a child asks his father, "Daddy, can we have a Hanukkah Tree?"

"What? No, of course not." says his father.

"Why not?" asks the child again.

Bewildered, his father replies, "Because the last time we had dealings with a lighted bush we spent 40 years in the wilderness."

3. "Why Hanukkah Is Better Than Christmas"

10. There's no "Kathy Lee Gifford Special"
9. Eight days of presents!
8. No need to clean the chimney.
7. There's no latke-nog.
6. Burl Ives doesn't sing Hanukkah songs.
5. You won't be pressured to buy Hanukkah Seals.
4. You won't see, "You're a Putz, Charlie Brown."
3. No barking dog version of "I had a Little Dreidl."
2. No pine needles to vacuum up afterwards.
1. Latkes are cheaper to mail than fruitcakes.

Hanukkah Songs That Never Quite Caught On:

- Oy to the World
- Schlepping through a Winter Wonderland
- Hava Negilah - The Megamix
- Bubbie Yetta Got Run Over by a Reindeer
- Enough with those God Damn Jingle Bells Already.. Sheez!
- Matzo Man (by the Lower East Side Village People)
- I Have a Little Dreidel (the Barking Dog Version)
- Come on Baby, Light My Menorah
- Deck the Halls with Balls of Matzos
- Silent Night? I Should Be So Lucky

Top Ten Chanukah Holiday Rentals

The figures are finally in. The top 10 movie rental over the Chanukah holiday vacation were:

- 10) Three Men And A Bubbie
- 9) A Few Hood Mentches
- 8) The Cohenheads
- 7) The Rocky Hora Picture Show
- 6) Shalom Alone
- 5) Goyz `N The Hood
- 4) A Gefilte Fish Called Wanda
- 3) The Wizard Of Oys
- 2) Who Framed Roger Rabbi?
- 1) Prelude To A Briss

'Twas the night before Chanukah...

'Twas the night before Chanukah, boychiks and maidels,
Not a sound could be heard, not even the dreidels.
The menorah was set on the chimney, just right,
In the kitchen my Bubbe hut gechapt a bite.
Salami, pastrami, a glessala tay
and zayerah pickles with bagels, oy vay!
Gezunt and geschmacht, the kindelech felt,
while dreaming of tegelach and Chanukah gelt.

The clock on the mantle it sure was a tickin',
and Bubbe was serving a schtickala chicken.
A tumult arose like a thousand bruchas,
Santa had fallen and broken his tuchas.
I put on my slippers, eins, tsvay, drei,
while Bubba was now on the herring and rye.
I grabbed my robe and buttoned my gotkes,
While Bubbe was so busy, devouring those latkes.

To the window I ran and to my surprise,
A little red yarmulke greeted my eyes.
When he got to the door and saw our menorah,
"Yiddishe kinder," he said, "Keneinahora.
I thought I was in a goyisha house,
but as long as I am here, I'll leave a few toys."

With much geshray, I asked, "Du bist a yid?"
"Avada, mein numen is Schloimey Claus, kid."
"Come into the kitchen, I'll get you a dish,
A guppell, a schtickla fish."
With smacks of delight, he started his fressen,
Chopped liver, knaidlech and kreplach gegessen.
Along with his meal, he had a bissle schnapps,
For when it came to eating, this boy was the tops!

He asked for some knishes with pepper and salt,
but they were so hot, he yelled, "Oy gevalt!"
Unbottoning his haizen, he rose from the tisch,
and said, "Your kosher essen is simply delish."
As he went to the door, he said "See you later.
I'll be back next Pesach, in time for the seder."

More rapid than eagles his prancers they came,
as he whistled and shouted and called them by name:

"Now Izzy, now Morris, now Yitzchak, now Sammy,

now Irving and Maxie and Moishe and Manny."
He gave a geshray as he drove out of sight,
"A gutten yomtov to all, and to all a good night!"

"Dictionary"

boychiks and maidels - boys & girls
dreidels - gambling toy, with letters of Hebrew alphabet
on 4 sides.
menorah - candelabra used to light candles. Sometimes
called a Chanukah for the candelabra exclusive to
Chanukah.
Bubbe - grandmother

gechapt -took
glessala tay-glass of tea
Gezunt - well (a good feeling)
geschmacht- secure, comfortable
Chanukah gelt - money, usually given to children as gifts.
kinderlech -children
tegelach -a tasty confection made from flour, honey,
sugar-you get the idea
schtickala - a little

tumult -confusion
bruchas - blessings
gotkes-underwear
yarmulke - little skull cap worn by religious, especially
OrthodoxJews. Pope wears the thing.
Keneinahora-actually 3 words: ken, ayin & harah.
This phrase means there should be no negative
insinuation (literally-no evil eye)
goyisha house - non-Jewish house
"mein numen is Schloimey Claus" - "my name is ... "
knaidlech-matza balls
kreplach-dough stuffed with meat. Similar to wantons. But,
we were around before the Chinese. They got it from us.
We boil them. They fry them.
fressen - eat, devour
gegessen-was (were) eaten
gevalt - holy sh*t (you may substitute something more
appropriate, but this is what it means.
geshray -cried out
yomtov – holiday

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.)