

# CONGREGATION SHIR HEHARIM

(Song of the Mountains)



The Brattleboro Area Jewish Community

---

May 2008

NISSAN / IYAR 5768

---

## FROM YOUR SHALIACH TZIBUR

I hope all of us had a joyous and meaningful Passover.

Here's a reflection that might help keep the Passover spirit with us a bit longer. Rabbi Alan Ullman, who visited with us last month, offered a thoughtful commentary on the third of the Four Questions: "On all other nights we need not dip our herbs even once; why on this night must we dip them twice?" When, however, we look at the original Aramaic, the word "herbs" which does appear in the Aramaic in the second question, does not appear in this third question. What else then could that third question mean, the question about dipping twice? Rabbi Ullman offers an intriguing suggestion.

In the Exodus from Egypt and the wanderings toward Israel, our ancestors had to cross or "dip" into two bodies of water, first the *Yam Sof*, the Sea of Reeds (or in common usage, the Red Sea) – separating Egypt from the desert, and then, much later, the Jordan River – separating the desert from the Land of Israel. The first dipping or ritual immersion, was designed to rid us of our "*chometz*," to rid us of the experience of slavery in Egypt, to empty us as we entered the wilderness. The second dipping, by contrast, was designed to rid us of our wilderness -- of our emptiness -- permitting us then to be filled with sweetness, with the milk and honey of *Eretz Yisrael*.

What a fascinating concept! And isn't this an idea that we can carry with us back into the world after the Passover? The concept of the double dipping allows us to reflect meaningfully on the question of our *chometz* – sometimes referred to as the "extras" in our lives as opposed to the essence. What are the "extras" we are carrying around that need to be

washed out, that require some purification of ourselves? (Our Torah portions from Leviticus, at this writing, interestingly, are filled with prescriptions for purification.) Might our *chometz* have to do with unresolved personal guilt, or perhaps with excessive creature comforts in the presence of deprivation? If yes, an immersion might be in order. And conversely, what that is truly meaningful might fill up the emptiness in our lives, what might replace the wilderness? Of course we always have suggestions for that in our congregation!

And finally, what symbol might keep us conscious of these choices that need to be made continually in our lives? A wonderful symbol is the stream running on our own property, and the opportunity we may have in the near future to use it as a *mikveh*, to be able to immerse ourselves periodically as did our ancestors at the *Yam Sof* and at the Jordan River, to cleanse ourselves of our *chometz*, and, at times, to cleanse ourselves of our wilderness.

B'Shalom,  
Jim

## WARNING OF ANNUAL BAJC MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Monday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30 pm  
at the synagogue

Agenda includes annual reports,  
election of trustees, vote on the  
proposed budget

## FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Dear friends,

Much of what I have written over the past few years has related to organizational matters – what BAJC is planning to do and or what it has already implemented. This time, I wish to kvell a bit about two programs in which BAJC has been involved.

As we know, the Brattleboro area is not immune to the economic and human woe that is becoming more widespread in our communities and in our country. More of our neighbors, friends, and the visitors among us are finding themselves in need of basic services. Various social services provide programs, grants, shelters, medical and social resources, but often they are overwhelmed.

Brattleboro's Shelter was in such a position this past winter. In response to that need, the interfaith community, including BAJC and its Social Action Committee and other volunteers, provided human, spiritual, and musical energy to create an Overflow Shelter. The results have been real and have been important. The Overflow Shelter was open for 74 nights between January 2 and March 31, with 679 bed nights provided. Almost \$24,000 in motel costs was saved to the general community. People who needed shelter in this harsh winter were able to get shelter.

In a similar vein, our Social Action Committee has been very involved in assuring that residents of Morningside Shelter were able to get good food and, perhaps equally important, good companionship when such support is not normally available to them. BAJC volunteered to provide a home-cooked meal the third Friday evening of each month at the Shelter. So far, we have provided this service from November through March. If there is sufficient energy, BAJC can continue to provide this service past the winter, on into the summer months. It depends on volunteers – kids and teens are more than welcome. Money to buy the food is available. We provide folks who cook, who deliver the food, and who share the Shabbat dinner. Folks at the shelter do all the clean up. You can sign up for as few or many monthly dinners as you wish. Judy co-ordinates this program

and would love to hear from anyone who wishes to participate at any level. With enough interest, we will be able to continue this effort into the future.

Expecting only to do the mitzvah of assisting the homeless and the hungry, we accomplished much more. Conversations between those “left behind” in our society and those providing the monthly assistance led to shared stories and common ground. Those who gave received. Those who received gave. BAJC is grateful to those who have donated their time and energy, as well as their days and evenings, to carry out “tikkun olam,”—healing the world, locally, as best we can.

B' Shalom,  
Paul

## LET US KNOW

Please call the BAJC office (257-1959) to let us know of illnesses, hospitalizations, deaths, births, engagements, weddings, college graduations, other simchas and sorrows.

## NOMINATIONS FOR BAJC BOARD OF TRUSTEES

For the past two months, we advertised to the BAJC membership for anyone interested in being nominated to serve on the Board of Trustees. The deadline for consideration was April 12, 2008.

The following individuals have stepped forward and will be nominated at the Annual BAJC Membership Meeting on Monday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30 pm at the synagogue:

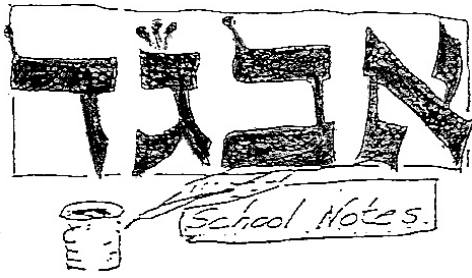
Paul Berch

Marty Cohn

Linda Heimerdinger

Allen Ross

**Support Israel - Buy Israeli Products**



Before I kvell about our students, as I'm dying to do, I must send out a desperate and impassioned plea to the parents:

**PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE SIGN UP TO HELP OUT AT SCHOOL!!!**

You were all wonderful during the first half of the year, washing up after snack and sweeping the floors downstairs, and I need to ask you to do it just one more time before the end of the school year. The sign up sheet is currently empty. Yes, completely empty. What this means in practice is that the same few people sweep up and wash up week after week. These folks are no less tired than the rest of us, and no less eager to get their kids home. Let's give them a break, please.

Now the kvelling:

On Friday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, for the first time ever, students from the Hebrew School led every prayer in the Shabbat Evening Service. This year has been something of an experiment. With a little trepidation, we set some new and ambitious goals: to expose the youngest students to some of the longer prayers and songs, and to ask the middle grades to read them from the siddur. We were prepared to scale back our expectations if necessary, yet time and again I found that I could not overestimate the kids' ability to learn. Oh, there was some moaning when I first assigned the chatzi kaddish, but sometime around week three, suddenly, they were chanting from the Hebrew text. I did my best not to fall off my chair, but instead to appear as if I had expected it all along. Of course, this only increases my ambitions for next year, not only for what we will expect from the students, but also for what they can expect from their school. As always, we will be looking to the parents for ideas and advice. Please, never hesitate to let us know how we can improve.

All the snow and ice we had this past winter (and I do hope it is past!) means that Hebrew school will be meeting on both of our make-up days, June 9<sup>th</sup> and June 16<sup>th</sup>. I like to look at this as an exchange of two dark and cold winter evenings for two lovely spring afternoons, and Hebrew school will take full advantage of the perfect June weather. Our final day, on June 16<sup>th</sup>, will be celebrated with much

singing and fun, and we welcome parents, siblings, and friends to join us.

B'shalom,  
Mara

## **EASY TIKKUN OLAM**

If you all would do your internet searches on Goodsearch.com you will get the same results as you get on Google and BAJC will earn a penny for every click. Those pennies can add up to a nice amount of income for us!

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.

In addition to the personal care items you have been donating to BAJC for the Drop-in Center and Morningside Shelter, please bring recent, interesting magazines to BAJC (or you can deliver the magazines yourself if you're going to the Shelter or Drop-in Center with donations any time). So before you send good magazines to recycling, let them do some good. You can bring them to the shul any Monday or Wednesday afternoon, or leave them (wrapped well in plastic) at the door of the shul.

When you recycle your computer printer cartridges with BAJC, you not only keep them out of the landfill and give them a second life, but you make money for BAJC. In 2007, BAJC earned \$220 for recycling cartridges! Bring your used printer cartridges to the shul anytime it is open, or leave them on the doorstep in plastic bags. Thank you.

## **NOW IS THE TIME TO REGISTER FOR HEBREW SCHOOL**

In order to plan for staff and space for next year's Hebrew school, we need you to register your child(ren)

as soon as possible. If you register before June 16<sup>th</sup> (the last day of Hebrew school for this year), the "early bird" tuition will be the same as it was this year. You can get registration forms from Faith at Hebrew school or she will e-mail or snail-mail one to you. If you know of any new students who might want to register, please tell the parents to get in touch with Faith, or tell Faith to get in touch with them.

## COMMITTEE MEETINGS; FROM THE ORDINARY TO THE HOLY

(adapted from one of URJ's Ten Minutes of Torah)

Since, in Judaism, we believe God is addressed through prayer, we come in a reverent spirit to *tefillot*—"services." We affirm that when we study the sacred writings of Judaism we hear what God has revealed (that is, Torah), we assemble for study in a serious and respectful manner. In what manner should we attend an organizational Board or committee meeting? In context, the answer is clear. We must summon our best sense of ourselves and attend with idealism and high purpose. It would be an exaggeration to say that going to a committee meeting of an organization is equivalent to attending the synagogue for Kol Nidre, but it is not really very much of an exaggeration. Those who work in the labors of tzedakah are supposed to be good Jews, by definition. But another factor is operative--through the deeds of tzedakah, we make something deeper of ourselves. Tzedakah is a call to greatness. Spending your life in Jewish labors, in Jewish organizations and institutions—in the drudgery of it all—changes you. It becomes a way toward being a good Jew. At every turn you are called upon to see the yet-to-be-explored dimensions of your being Jewish.

## SOCIAL ACTION NEWS

Here are statistics from the Overflow Shelter: the Shelter was open for 74 nights between 1/2 and 3/31, providing 679 bed nights. The shelter saved the community over \$23,765 in motel funds and no one froze on our streets this winter. Kudos to all the BAJC folks who contributed in many ways to the Overflow Shelter...a mitvah indeed!

Now even though winter is over (we hope!), is there interest in continuing to provide monthly dinners for the folks at Morningside homeless shelter? The once-a-month dinners have been very well-received and appreciated and will continue to be if we provide them throughout the year. Judy is happy to be the organizer again and will schedule folks for a monthly meal. The dinners would be the third Friday nights in May, June, July, August, and September.

Although no one signed up for the organized group trip to Cuba, BAJC still has a license to travel, valid for any BAJC member who wants to go on a religion-focused trip there. Folks can contact Judy to find out more about this possibility.

## REPORT FROM THE FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

SAVE THIS DATE: AUGUST 17<sup>TH</sup>! The fundraising committee has been meeting to plan a "second annual" summer fundraiser focused on food (naturally!), Israeli films, and an advertising journal. Expect to hear more details about this event in the next newsletter and in a mailing soon. In the meantime, please be thinking of how you would like to advertise in the journal, and what friendly businesses and services you would like to contact for advertising. Believe it or not, the biggest part of the financial success of this fundraiser last summer came from the advertising journal, although the film, food, and fun part was the great social success.

As an ongoing, easy fundraiser, the committee is going to set up containers in the small tool shed near the red barn in which we will collect deposit bottles and cans. You will be able to drop them off anytime, rinsed please, in the containers in the tool shed. This is a fundraising effort, not merely recycling, so only bring bottles and cans that can be turned in for the deposit. Like turning in your used printer cartridges, if each of you brings your deposit bottles and cans to BAJC, we can make some "easy money" for much-needed building and grounds projects.

### Easy Access to Programs for Teens

RJTeen.org, the portal to Reform Jewish teen life, provides easy access to the world of Progressive Jewish high school programs in North America and around the world. RJTeen.org's comprehensive list allows anyone searching for teen programs to find the right fit for summer, spring break, Israel, or other high school programs. Visit the portal today at [www.rjteen.org](http://www.rjteen.org)

### Tamarim – The Netzer Year

The Union for Reform Judaism's new year-long program for recent high school graduates is accepting applications for the 2008-2009 academic year through May 30, 2008. Participants will live in Jerusalem, spend time on a kibbutz and explore Israel. For more info or to receive an application, visit the website at [www.tamarim.org](http://www.tamarim.org)

## YOM HA'ZIKARON and YOM HA'ATZMAUT

Since 1948, Jewish people all around the world have been fortunate to see and celebrate a prosperous and ever-growing Jewish State in Eretz Yisrael. Year after year on Yom Ha'atzmaut (The Day of Independence), together as a worldwide community, we commemorate Israel's Independence, a modern miracle that was thought impossible just 100 years ago. With six million Jewish men, women and children having been ushered heavenward through smokestacks across Eastern Europe while the world either conspired to assist in the murder or simply watched and pretended to be aghast, the State of Israel was born. Natan Alterman, poet laureate of the Zionist movement, wanted Jews to understand what was unfolding. It wasn't just a country that they were getting; it was purpose, salvation. The Jews would not simply have a State; the Jews would be transformed. "The Silver Platter" (the poem on this page) refers to the day when the whole nation assembles to receive the "unique miracle, not at Sinai, but in their homeland." And they are awaiting not Torah, but Statehood. They knew that independence, not religion, is what would save the Jews.

However, as we celebrate this joyous and wondrous occasion, we must remember those men and women who gave their lives for a free and secure Jewish Homeland. It is for that reason that each year we observe Yom Hazikaron (The Day of Remembrance) on the day preceding Yom Ha'atzmaut. For Jews worldwide, Yom Hazikaron is the day that we stop to remember all of the Jewish soldiers, the brave men and women, who gave their lives so that the Jewish State of Israel could become a reality and remain a free and independent nation.

"The State is not handed to a people on a silver platter." -- Chaim Weizmann, first President of Israel

### The Silver Platter by Nathan Alterman

The Earth grows still.  
The lurid sky slowly pales  
Over smoking borders.  
Heartsick, but still living, a people stand by  
To greet the uniqueness  
Of the miracle.  
Readied, they wait beneath the moon.  
Wrapped in awesome joy, before the light. --  
Then, soon,  
A girl and boy step forward,  
And slowly walk before the waiting nation.  
In work garb and heavy-shod  
They climb  
In stillness.  
Wearing yet the dress of battle, the grime  
Of aching day and fire-filled night  
Unwashed, weary unto death, not knowing  
Rest,  
But wearing youth like dewdrops in their hair.  
--Silently the two approach and stand.  
Are they of the quick or of the dead?  
Through wondering tears, the people stare.  
"Who are you, the silent two?"  
And they reply: "We are the silver platter  
Upon which the Jewish State was served to  
you."  
And speaking, fall in shadow at the nation's  
Feet.  
Let the rest in Israel's chronicles be told.

**Crane Lake & Eisner Camp**

Quality nature trails  
Kosher food and safe Jewish environment  
J&J kosher to kosher with kosher  
Preserve Jewish sports events  
Couples based programming  
Immersive Jewish living  
Recreational facilities  
KJCA, sports and activities  
A 24-hour kosher camp

Campers acquire lifelong Jewish memories and friends, increased independence, and a strong Jewish identity

Call Us To Schedule a Summer Tour of Camp  
until June 1st: 201-804-9700  
after June 1st: 413-528-1652

For Directions:  
[www.URJnecamps.org](http://www.URJnecamps.org)

URJ  
CRANE LAKE  
EISNER  
CAMP

ACCREDITED



## ISRAEL TURNS 60 THIS YEAR!

The State of Israel was established on May 14, 1948 - the 5th of Iyar. The BAJC board has formed an ad hoc committee to explore how we can celebrate this milestone. If you are interested in participating on this committee, please contact Marty.



### Some of Israel's achievements:

Independence: 1948 - The establishment of a Jewish Democratic state, Israel.

Demographics From 600,000 citizens in 1948 the population grew to 7,150,000 in 2007.

Education: 24% of Israel's work force has an academic degree, the third highest rate worldwide.

Security: The Israeli Defense Force is one of the strongest armies in the world. Israeli security at airports and flights is the best worldwide.

Science and Technology: Four Israeli scientists have received a Nobel Prize. Israel is one of eight countries worldwide, which can send satellites into space. Israel has become one of the major centers of the high-tech industry.

Culture: In 1966 the Israeli author Shay Agnon received the Nobel Prize in literature. Israel ranks second in the world in the number of books published in relation to the number of citizens.

## MAY ADULT EVENTS

In addition to some ongoing courses, here are classes scheduled for May. "A Wild Earth Torah" on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 10:00-12:00, taught by David Cohen, and "A History of Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism" on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1:00-3:00, taught by Tom White. Both these courses require pre-registration and will be offered only if there is adequate registration.

Monthly drop-in events: "Singing is Like Praying Twice" at 8:30 am on May 3<sup>rd</sup>; Rosh Chodesh from 4:00-6:00 on the 4<sup>th</sup>; Torah study at 10:00 on the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 31<sup>st</sup>. "Nina's Tragedies" at Israeli Film Club at 4:00 on the 25<sup>th</sup> is a teenager's coming-of-age story set in an Israel where sex and relationships are more important than anything else. Straddling the line between dark comedy and deep drama, it continues the run of recent Israeli films that are mostly apolitical -- and mostly worth shouting about. The film, with its disarming dry humor, an engaging ensemble cast, and remarkable music, won 11 Israeli Academy Awards.

## CLEAN-UP, GREEN-UP

Plan to spend all or part of Mothers Day, May 11<sup>th</sup>, pleasing your mothers by doing what they always want you to do: CLEAN UP! We need lots of people to come to the shul starting at nine in the morning to get the grounds spruced up for spring. Bring rakes, shovels, clippers, loppers, gardening tools, wheelbarrows; wear gloves, hats, old clothes, bug spray, sunscreen. The heavy snows this winter, and the frequent gale-force winds, have left us with a lot of cleaning up to do! In addition, we have to empty out the falling-apart brown barn, as well as sort out things stored in the red barn to get rid of everything we don't need. Please plan on spending at least a couple of hours helping make our grounds look presentable.

And, you'll still have time to shower and take Mom out for dinner!

### ***Think Summer, Think Adult Study Retreat***

Make your plans the Summer Adult Study Retreat this July 8-13 at the beautiful Franklin Pierce College in Rindge, New Hampshire. You will be part of a warm and welcoming community of serious adult learners, Reform Movement scholars and spiritual leaders for a refreshment of mind and spirit.

For more information please call Rabbi Joan Glazer Farber at 212-650-4086 or e-mail [jfarber@urj.org](mailto:jfarber@urj.org).

## 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

Paul Berch  
Sandra Brodsky  
Martin Cohn  
Linda Heimerdinger  
Michael Knapp  
Bobbe Ragouzeous  
Joe Rosen  
Faith and Abe Schuster  
Jeff Teitel  
Randy Terk

### Officers

President: Paul Berch  
Vice-president: Linda Heimerdinger  
Treasurer: Randy Terk  
Secretary: Laura Berkowitz

Email: [info@bajcvermont.org](mailto:info@bajcvermont.org)  
Office phone: 802-257-1959  
Office hours: 3:30-6:30 pm  
Mondays when Hebrew school  
is in session, or by appointment

Newsletter editor: Faith Schuster  
Newsletter design & production:  
[martin@cohnpr.com](mailto:martin@cohnpr.com)  
Newsletter deadline: 15th of each  
month  
Webmaven: Julie Strothman



Brattleboro Area Jewish Community  
PO Box 2353  
Brattleboro, VT 05303  
[www.bajcvermont.org](http://www.bajcvermont.org)  
[info@bajcvermont.org](mailto:info@bajcvermont.org)



### 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 5768. 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.)