

CONGREGATION SHIR HEHARIM

(Song of the Mountains)



The Brattleboro Area Jewish Community

SEPTEMBER 2008

ELUL 5768

FROM YOUR SHALIACH TZIBUR

I hope that all of you had a healthy summer with at least some time for fun and relaxation. When you read this, we will have entered the month of Elul (September 1) which means that it's time to devote at least part of our attention to preparation for the Days of Awe. In our congregation this traditionally has meant performing Random Acts of Kindness, and sending them along to me so we can read them anonymously and send them heavenward on Rosh Hashanah. It also means beginning to write down our shortcomings for deposit, again anonymously, in "The Box" on Kol Nidre night for reading aloud on Yom Kippur morning.

Let me suggest, however, that this year we do even more – that we think through in advance some of the inner journey, the inner transformation we'd like to take place during these all important days. As we know, there are plenty of reasons to be in the shul on Rosh Hashanah: to reconnect deeply with our heritage, one that also has meant so very much to our families back through the ages; to be "present" with Jews all over the world who are offering the very same prayers; to be present with our own community here in Brattleboro at this most important time of the year. But, since we're going to be spending all those hours in shul, why not allow the experience to be *truly* transformative – to genuinely change aspects of our lives that are sources of darkness and unhappiness, to *choose* life in its very best sense.

In order to help make this happen, it may be helpful, during this month of Elul to do some real prep work. And we might do that by beginning now to ask ourselves some of the central questions.

Here are mine. I'm sure you'll come up with questions every bit as good.

1. What are the blessings we have been given? Part of what we do during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is express gratitude for what is *right* about our lives.
2. What are the gifts, talents, skills that we possess, and how can we focus them on the needs of others in our community, others in the world – more generally on our people's mission of *tikkun olam*?
3. And then the traditional question: What have been our own shortcomings during the past year(s)? - these distinct from our efforts which have failed – a distinction I'll talk about on Yom Kippur.)
4. Who are the persons important in our lives from whom we feel estranged? And – ready for this? – that list can include people no longer living. More on that on Yom Kippur.
5. And finally, going back to those gifts and talents and skills that we possess, how can we use them to address both those shortcomings that we've identified, and the estrangements that darken our lives.

Our High Holiday prayers are truly magnificent. They are capable of taking us into another realm. They connect us with our heritage. But their greater purpose is to help us with these questions, help us bring peace and reconciliation to our own lives, help make us the best persons we can be. May the gifts of Shalom be with us all of us throughout this preparatory month of Elul and then during the Chaggim – the Days of Awe.

B'Shalom,
Jim

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. What a perfect description of BAJC! While many of you have been in a summer vacation state of mind, committees and volunteers have spent countless hours on BAJC activities and projects. Their contributions, individual and collective, have been HUGE!

Let's start with the Buildings and Grounds Committee. If you haven't visited BAJC recently, I urge you to drive by. After years of diligently working through red tape and weeks of exerting much sweat equity, the barn has finally been taken down. Many, many thanks need to be extended to Daniel, Rick and Daniel's crew of volunteers. Were it not for their generous volunteerism and expertise this enormous undertaking would have been quite costly to our congregation. Help is still needed to safely move and store the slate and clean up small debris around the work site. If you have a few hours to spare, please contact Michael, Board member, for specific details.

With the 5769 (2008-09) school year just around the corner, our Hebrew school teachers, Education Director and Education Committee have been meeting to exchange ideas, organize supplies and prepare parent information. Our Hebrew school provides an exemplary Jewish education for our children and this year will certainly continue to uphold this tradition. Parent input and involvement are welcomed and strongly encouraged and I hope several of you will consider joining the Education Committee or becoming parent volunteers this year.

Many months of thoughtful and creative planning by the Ritual, High Holiday Committees and bimah team will help make our High Holiday celebrations spiritually moving and uplifting. But it is also the less glamorous attention to detail and nuts and bolts work of these hardworking groups that will enable our congregation to enjoy a seamless choreography of prayer, song, chanting Torah and time for reflection. I look forward to joining all of you during this time of renewal and atonement.

The Fundraising Committee's hundreds of hours of combined efforts culminated in the intellectually stunning 2nd Annual Israeli Film and Food Festival. Once again, our major fundraising event was a feast for the soul as well as for the taste buds! Not only was the BAJC community treated to four uniquely different films about relationships but the Brattleboro and West Dover communities were also enthusiastic participants. Both events had

outstanding attendance and we all should be proud that BAJC is held in such high esteem by our neighbors and friends.

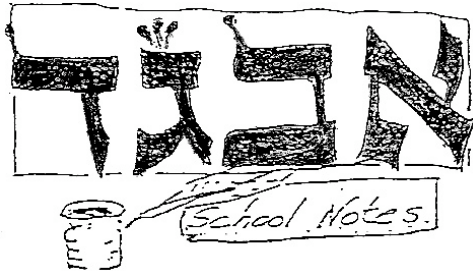
The rewards gleaned from service to BAJC are numerous. I imagine if asked, each participant would identify a different highlight. And yet, I'm sure most would agree that the greatest pleasure in getting involved is the friendship one develops with fellow volunteers. This summer's flurry of activity is a testament to the vibrancy of our BAJC community. As we enter the new year, I invite all of you to consider adding your talents, creativity and energy to a committee that matches your interest. When we build new connections with one another, BAJC becomes richer.

May the New Year bring much happiness to you and your families.

B'Shalom,
Linda

BOOKS ON THE MOVE

They say that books have wings on which a reader can fly, but books aren't supposed to have wings on which to fly right out of our shul!! We are missing MANY of our chumashim (Torah/haftarah books), and they probably have flown to some of your houses where they have been used to study and learn Torah portions. There are more than twenty missing books, and we really need to have them fly back onto the shelves in the sanctuary (no questions asked!). Please search for them and return them as soon as possible. (Best place to look: in your child's room if that child was in a b'nai mitzval class in past years!) While you are searching, if you find a copy of *Gates of Prayer* you may keep it but, if you don't want it, you can return it and we will donate it to a congregation that is still using that siddur. If you don't have a copy of *Gates of Prayer* but would like one to keep, let Faith know. If you want to have a personal copy of the new *Mishkan T'filah* siddur to keep and use at home, you can order one from Faith for \$36, but please DO NOT take a siddur from the shul! If your child was in this recent b'nai mitzvah class and still has the untransliterated version of *Mishkan T'filah* the class used as its textbook, please make sure it is returned. We have a limited number of that particular siddur and we need them all for the next class. Also, we still have a few new *Mishkan T'filah* that have not been dedicated. If you would like to donate to the prayer book fund, please let Faith know. It's \$36 for a bookplate dedication, which can be in honor of a special person or event or in memory of a loved one.



As of the writing of this column in August, only 23 children, from 17 families, are registered for Hebrew school. We're guessing that there are at least 25 more students out there, including some new ones. If you haven't already registered your child(ren), please do so immediately by contacting Faith. If there are financial problems at this moment, we can talk about arrangements for tuition, but school starts on September 8th and it is imperative that we know before then who our students are!

Once we have our students registered, we're asking parents to sign up for one serve-the-snack-and-clean-up day for each child you have in school. Dates will be posted on the bulletin board on September 8th. It's basically an hour on Mondays starting at 3:30, and/or a half-hour after the kids leave at 3:45 to sweep up and put things in order as needed. We are also interested in having "steady aides"—people who can commit to assisting a teacher on a regular basis, but NOT in your own child's class, for all or for half the class time, every Monday. Very little knowledge of Hebrew is required...just basic letter recognition and the ability to sound out words. It would also be helpful to have a "class parent" for each class, to help the teacher with communication to other parents in the class and/or to assist with special projects or events.

To volunteer, or if you have any questions or need more information, please contact Mara (who will be School Director, Laura (who is chair of the education committee) Bobbe (committee member and BAJC secretary) or Faith (BAJC administrator)

HIGH HOLIDAY PARTICIPATION

The summer newsletter had a "High Holy Days Planning" form asking for your participation in the services. It's not too late to send that form in or, if you've tossed it, there's another one in this newsletter. Just as a reminder, here are some of the things that you might be interested in: for an aliyah on either holiday day or for one of the other Torah honors (e.g., hagbah, glilah, carrying the Torah in procession), let Abe know right away. For reading a small portion of the service in English, or if you can be a greeter for one or more of the four services, let Marty know. If you can help set up at West Village Meeting House, let Faith know. Also, if you can lead a children's service on either or both holiday mornings, please let Marty know.

As you know, the high holiday services are quite costly for BAJC. Although we don't charge for tickets and we don't turn people away for any reason, we very much depend on donations to support the services. As a reminder to members, membership in the congregation includes ONE seat for individual and seasonal members and TWO for family members. For additional seats for adult family of members, we suggest a \$50 donation for one holiday or \$90 for both. For all other guests, we ask a donation of \$100 per person for one holiday or \$180 for both. Checks can be sent in advance of the holidays to BAJC, PO Box 2353, Brattleboro 05303.

BAJC's Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services will be held once again this year at the West Village Meeting House. Erev Rosh Hashanah services on Monday evening, September 29th, will begin promptly at 7:00; Rosh Hashanah services will resume at 9:30 on Tuesday morning. There will also be second day services beginning at 9:30 on Wednesday, October 1st. For Yom Kippur, the Kol Nidre service will begin at 7:00 on Wednesday evening, October 8th and services will continue at 9:30 on Thursday morning. The Yizkor service should begin about 11:30 and Ne'ilah will begin at 6:00 in the evening.

CLASSIC PEANUTS

By Charles M. Schulz



JOINT BACJ/AHAVAS ACHIM SELICHOT SERVICE IN KEENE

On Saturday evening Sept 20 at 7:30 PM, we will be holding our third annual Selichot (translation is "forgiveness") service with the Congregation Ahavas Achim in Keene. The service will be held this year at the Keene congregation (directions below). Let's have a good presence at this service most importantly because the service further broadens our congregational worship experience, but also because we value these inter-congregational opportunities.

These prayers represent for us a kind of culmination of the self-examination and preparation we've been doing throughout the month of Elul. As this mood of repentance becomes more urgent, Selichot, or penitential prayers, are added, usually in the early morning, to the Shacharit service. Sephardic Jews actually offer these prayers throughout the month of Elul. Ashkenazim begin on the Sunday before Rosh Hashanah – sometimes starting at midnight on Saturday night. (We'll be less severe and begin at 7:30!) The original tradition was to recite the Selichot prayers on four different days, corresponding to the four days on which sacrificial animals would be examined for defects or blemishes during the time of the Temple in Jerusalem – and suggesting that we require similar self-examination prior to Rosh Hashanah.

It has become a practice at such services to combine the prayers of liturgical poets, the Payitanim, (some of these expressing the sadness that comes when we are distant from God and our desire to change and repent) with the study of particular prayers or Biblical verses and with actual prayers from the High Holiday Machzor.

Directions: Take VT-9 (crossing into NH) for 13 miles. Turn LEFT on Whitcombs Mill Rd. Turn RIGHT onto Arch St. Turn left onto Hurricane Rd. Turn RIGHT onto Hastings Ave. Congregation Ahavas Achim is 84 Hastings Ave.

ROSH HASHANAH BLESSINGS

Special blessings for a sweet new year, for wine and for bread.

Special Blessings for a Sweet New Year

Pick up a slice of apple, dip it in honey, and say:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-eitz.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
בורא פרי העץ.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the tree.

Then add:

Y'hi ratzon milfanecha, Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei avoteinu v'imoteinu, shetchadesh aleinu shanah tovah um'tukah.

יהי רצון מלפניך יי אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו
ואמותינו שתחדש עלינו
שנה טובה ומתוקה.

May it be Your will, Eternal our God, that this be a good and sweet year for us.

Eat the apple dipped in honey.

Your family also may want to enjoy challah dipped in honey. Some families include a pomegranate as a treat before the meal. It is said that the number of seeds in the pomegranate reflects the number of good deeds that you will do in the coming year. Enjoy your holiday meal!

Kiddush The blessing over the wine

Lift the cup(s) of wine and say:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
בורא פרי הגפן.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine

HaMotzi The blessing over the bread

Uncover the challah and say:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, hamotzi lechem min ha-aretz.

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם,
המוציא לחם מן הארץ.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Eat the challah.

BIG FUNDRAISING

While all the expenses are not in yet from the Israeli Film and Food Festival, we can declare it a huge success. Both theaters were almost sold out and everyone enjoyed the films and the food and the opportunity to socialize. The program book and donations grossed close to \$9000 and the ticket sales over \$4300. The net to our operating budget will be in the neighborhood of \$9000--a very nice neighborhood indeed!

As you can imagine, raising this amount of money took tremendous effort and required many hours of planning and execution by a large number of people, along with the support of our congregation, the Deerfield Valley summer people, and area businesses. We thank the following people for their parts in making the festival a success: the fundraising committee Faith, Marty, Susan, Sandy, Debbie, Norma, Linda, Vikki, Bobbe; and Amie, Ben, Ashley, Hilda, Esther, Yael, Abe, Marianne, Adam, Jacob, Julie, Leonard, David, Jackie, Susan.

SMALL FUNDRAISING

While tremendous effort went into the second annual Israeli Film and Food Festival this summer, there are small things that we can be doing on an ongoing basis and also at particular times to put much-needed money into our operating budget. Deposit cans and bottles can be left in the two containers in the little shed to the right of the barn. So far, we have raised \$40 from that source, but it could be hundreds of dollars each year if you all leave your rinsed deposit bottles and soda cans in the shed. We have earned \$240 from printer-cartridge returns. You can leave them in the shed also, or bring them to the office. (Cartridges that already have been refilled or re-manufactured are not good for us; although we can recycle them, there's no pay-off.) As a courtesy for our members, we have yahrzeit candles available for seventy-five cents each, less than the supermarkets charge (if they even have them), so buy yours from BAJC for Yom Kippur and for yahrzeits. Later on, there will also be Chanukah candles for sale.

Occasionally, we get donations of merchandise to sell, sometimes new, sometimes gently used. Right now, we can offer a beautiful blue-patterned queen-size quilt set, two plain-paper fax machines with phones (one Brother, one Sharp), and a family membership at the Brattleboro Museum and Art Center. These items will go to the high bidder for

each; submit your offers to Faith by phone or e-mail, with \$20 as the minimum bid.

NEWSLETTERS; BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

If you are not a member of BAJC and wish to receive our newsletter, please send us a check for \$36 for the year. If you don't want to subscribe, you can keep up with BAJC news and events on our website: www.bajcvermont.org or, better yet, become a member and get the newsletter as a member privilege.

If you wish to have names memorialized in the *Book of Remembrance* we use for Yizkor services on Yom Kippur, Shemini Atzeret, Pesach, and Shavuot, please send the names and a check for \$6 per name as soon as possible, but no later than September 10th. If you had names in the book last year, we will print the names again as per last year unless you let Faith know of any changes. You can send a check any time this month.

LET US KNOW

Please call the BAJC office (257-1959) or Faith (464-2632) to let us know of illnesses, hospitalizations, deaths, births, engagements, weddings, college graduations, other simchas and sorrows.

SJBC

The Significant Jewish Books Club will meet at the shul on September 24th for a potluck supper (vegetarian/dairy), discussion of *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*, and selection of a book for our November meeting. New members are always welcome. Contact Esther for more information.



SUMMER AND THE SYNAGOGUE

By this time, many of you have seen the changes summer has brought to our shul. Michael and the rest of the building and grounds committee have been working to move us toward having a physical space that reflects our thriving Jewish community. We hired painters (including our own Zev) who painted the building sparkling white and repaired or replaced the shutters, painting them a beautiful Israeli blue. The building looks bright and welcoming and, somehow, young!

The next thing you notice is that the dangerous old broken-down brown barn is GONE! It took an incredible effort and a surprising amount of funding to secure the necessary permits from the state to allow us to make our space safe by taking down that building. Although we were sad to take down a structure that dated from the late 1700's, it needed to be done for the safety of the children and all of us who use the property. When we began to get bids from contractors to do the demolition work, Rick came forward to say that he and others thought that it was a job we could do ourselves, just as we did the interior demolition in the shul. Daniel Savel said he would take the barn down, no charge! He and a crew of young interns from his farm in Westminster West did the job, volunteering an incredible 200+ hours of intense labor, a most wonderful financial and spiritual gift! There were many more hours of labor by Daniel himself and additional hours, especially in the clean-up process, from Michael, the whole Gordon family Susan, Harvey, Abe, Chris, Clark, and son Will, and others. The building and grounds committee, the Board, and the entire congregation applaud their efforts and say *today rabbah v' yasher koach* to Daniel and to everyone who contributed to this project, and we shout the traditional Hebrew saying we use to congratulate ourselves and others when completing an important task together: *Chazak, chazak venitchazak* – Let us go from strength to strength.

For those of you who would still like to help, there is more work that needs to be done on the site of the barn, mostly to get rid of some of the wood, stack roof slates in the red barn for storage, pick up nails, move some of the beams that we hope to be able to use in constructing our new someday shul, rake the area clean, etc. You can go over there any time to do any of this work! You can contact Michael but the work doesn't need a person-in-charge; it just needs kids and adults who are willing to spend an hour or two to help make the area cleaner and safer.

While you're at our shul as fall approaches, take time to enjoy the flowers and to thank Jackie Gould for planting, watering, and caring for them. The grounds around the shul look quite beautiful, but assistance is needed to keep it that way. Stop by any time and pull some weeds or edge some of the flower beds or mulch some of the planted areas. If you'd like to join the garden committee, call Jackie (257-1810) and tell her what you can do and when. On the committee or not, let's all pitch in to keep our lovely home looking good!

While we're grateful for all the outside accomplishments this summer, we also give special thanks to Johnny Lee, Andi, and Marty for conducting Kabbalat Shabbat and Torah services during the summer months. It is, after all, what goes on INSIDE the synagogue that is of primary importance, and we are blessed to have lay leaders that can help us to observe Shabbat in community.

SAD BUT TRUE

Sad to say, there is no "sparkle fairy" with a magic wand that keeps our shul clean. Thus it falls upon each and every person using the building at any time to be responsible for cleaning up after himself/herself/themselves. This means picking up scraps from the floors, or sweeping; washing, drying, and PUTTING AWAY all utensils and dishes used; wiping up in the bathrooms; using the mop on any spills that occur; stacking chairs and folding tables; and, most important of all, getting rid of all garbage and recycling. There is no one to pick up after you, and there is no garbage collection! You must take your garbage and recycling with you when you leave!

There are mops and brooms behind the cellar door in the kitchen and cleaning supplies under the sink. There are plastic bags in the second drawer to the left of the sink; towels in the third drawer, and re-usable plastic bags hanging in the bag holder on the cellar doorknob. Leave a note on the counter (or let Faith know) when supplies need to be replaced. Please also remember to turn out lights and, in colder weather, turn thermostats down to 65. At night, make sure the timer for the outside spotlight is set so it turns off in ten minutes or less after you leave.



HIGH HOLY DAYS PLANNING

The High Holidays commence this year at sundown on Monday, September 29th. It is not too early for us to begin planning now for this most important event of our Jewish year. As you know, we are a very participatory congregation, and we need to know in which parts of the Holidays you would like to participate. Marty Cohn (246-1435 or martin@cohnpr.com) is chairing the High Holidays Committee. If you let Faith (464-2632 or schuster@sover.net) know what you would like to do, she will send your name on to him or to the appropriate person helping him with the arrangements and someone will contact you about your participation.

- Are you a Kohan who would like the traditional first Aliyah? yes no
- Are you a Levi who would like the traditional second Aliyah? yes no
- Would you like to be considered for one of the Torah honors? yes no
If yes, which one? (eg. (aliyah, hagbah, glilah, carrying a torah in procession) _____
_____ Which date? _____
- Would you like to read a small portion of the service in English yes no
If yes, which service? Monday night 9/29 Tuesday 9/30 Wednesday,
10/1
 Wednesday night 10/8 Thursday 10/9
- Can you lead a children's service? yes no
If yes, which one: Tuesday 9/30 Thursday 10/9?
- Can you be on call to provide transportation for people in the Brattleboro area who might need rides to the services? yes no
- Do you want to blow shofar on Yom Kippur? yes no
- Will you help set up at West Village? yes no If yes, which one:
 Monday morning, September 29 Wednesday afternoon October 1
 Wednesday afternoon October 8 Thursday evening, October 9

NAME: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

Please send this form before September 8th to BAJC, PO Box 2353, Brattleboro 05303, or contact Faith or Marty by phone or e-mail.

BAJC MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to provide a context and structure for people to be Jewish together in a rural environment. This 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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Office phone: 802-257-1959
Office hours: 3:30-6:30, on
Mondays when Hebrew school
is in session, or by appointment

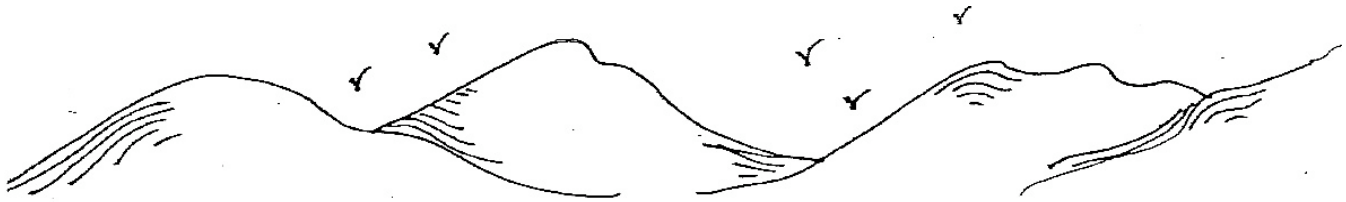
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NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTIONS

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 5769. 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.)