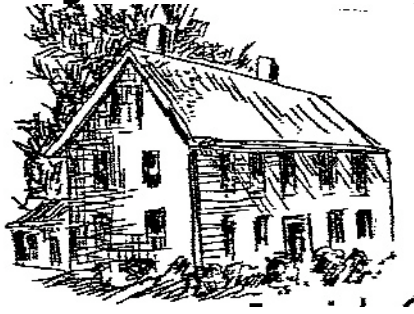


# CONGREGATION SHIR HEHARIM

(Song of the Mountains)



The Brattleboro Area Jewish Community

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October 2009

Tishri / Cheshvan 5770

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## **A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE SUKKAH FROM RABBI JOSHUA BOETTIGER**

What does it mean to be commanded to dwell in a sukkah? Why would this commandment come down to us? If we go inside a sukkah and actually hang out there for a little while, eat a meal, maybe have tea with a friend, maybe roll out a sleeping bag and settle in for a night camping—we become aware of our vulnerability. It reminds us that, as Isaiah and Jeremiah preached, we should trust not in the might and force of humans and the great fortresses they construct, because they won't ultimately protect us. We should trust in the shelter of G-d. It is kind of a paradox, since in the shelter of G-d we get wet and tossed around quite a bit, both literally and figuratively. But the teaching on Sukkot is that this is life, this is who we are—and the more awake we are to this reality, the more we will really be able to participate in our lives joyously. But don't take my word for it—just go to a sukkah as you would go to a stream or a meadow, and sit there and see what happens. To dwell in a sukkah is also to be back in the natural world, literally more in touch with what us around you.

The laws around building a sukkah...demand that if it rains, those in the sukkah should get wet...that stars still be seen when we look up through the roof of branches and leaves...that a storm coming through will render the sukkah unusable. A sukkah announces that we are just passing through this life—that not only are we giving a nod to our literal nomadic ancestry, but we are also being put in touch with our *essential* nomadism.

Lastly, in a very concrete sense, when we sleep out in a sukkah...we are reminded that people live with this kind of vulnerability year-round, worrying each day about shelter, weather, warmth, and well-being. As with any Jewish holiday, there is a central component of justice that drives the whole enterprise...a call to *tikkun olam*.

-- Rabbi Joshua Boettiger, Congregation Beth El, Bennington, VT

## FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Since I have the luxury of writing this column after the second day of Rosh Hashanah services. I can offer sincere thanks to Rabbi Jan Salzman and Kate Judd for leading such spiritually uplifting services. I also thank Julie Strothman for doing an incredible job creating the prayer supplement booklet. And, I thank all the people who participated in the service. As I write this, I am looking forward to seeing you all at Yom Kippur services which, I am sure, will be as spiritually uplifting and meaningful as the Rosh Hashanah services.

My sermon about Hineni "Here I Am," which can be found on the BAJC Web site, was my attempt to solicit help for BAJC. It is my hope that rather than having me call you, you will pick up the phone to call me to offer your talents and time in the interest of the congregation.

Here's what we need: We need a couple of people to be the Adult Education committee. We need a few folks to serve on our Sunshine Committee to reach out to congregants facing illnesses and crises. We need someone to chair our Buildings and Grounds Committee so that our facilities are maintained. And, we need lay leaders to conduct Shabbat services until such time as our Rabbi Search Committee completes its work, and we need ALL of our members to participate in one of the three meetings that the rabbi search committee will be conducting later this month. (See the article elsewhere in this newsletter for details about this.)

If you haven't yet turned in your membership commitment form, we need you to do that as well. Your membership investment (formerly called dues) helps keep Judaism and BAJC alive and well here in Southeastern Vermont.

We also need you to think about contributing to the "Tree of Life" donated by Elliott. Each leaf, which costs \$250, can be used to honor a person or life cycle event, with all the monies dedicated to our building fund.

I will close by sharing the poem *Heenaynee* by Rabbi Rami Shapiro:

Here I am.  
A little bit nervous, a bit self-conscious.  
After all, who am I talking to?  
And what have I done?  
Am I a sinner in search of grace or  
a saint seeking salvation?  
Am I so evil  
or so good  
as to warrant this season of introspection?

And yet here it is, and here I am:  
this time of change and correction,  
this heart of confusion and contrition.  
Oh, if I could change!  
If I could be so sure of myself  
that I no longer had to imagine the slights of others;  
to be so loving of myself  
that I no longer had to ration my loving of others;  
to be so bold with myself  
that I no longer had to fear the bravery of others.  
Oh, if I could change  
there is so much I would change.  
Maybe I will, but it scares me so.  
Maybe I won't and that should scare me more.  
But it doesn't.  
So let me pray just this:  
Let no one be put to shame because of me.  
Wouldn't that make this a wonderful year?  
Heenaynee -Here I am!

B'shalom,  
Marty



## TREE OF LIFE

Elliott, a member of Congregation Ahavas Achim in Keene but a resident of Brattleboro and a friend of BAJC, has donated a Tree of Life to our congregation, to be installed this month. The Tree of Life will be a beautiful addition to our synagogue and will provide a way for people to memorialize loved ones and to honor people and life-cycle events, etc., while raising money for the BAJC building fund. Each of the hundred leaves on the tree can be engraved for a donation of \$250. For more information about this ongoing fundraising project, contact Marty Cohn.

## SUKKOT, SIMCHAT TORAH, AND OTHER OCTOBER SERVICES

We are pleased to have Rabbi Jan Salzman with us to lead services for Sukkot and Simchat Torah, completing the fall holiday cycle. Rabbi Jan will lead a Sukkot Shabbat service at ten o'clock on Saturday morning, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, with a Kiddush and motzi in the sukkah at the end of the service (weather permitting). As most of you know, we usually depend on the Hebrew school kids to decorate our sukkah each year, which they will be doing on October 5<sup>th</sup>, but in order to have the sukkah at least partially decorated in time for the Sukkot service on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, please come by on Wednesday (September 30<sup>th</sup>) and also on Thursday and Friday (October 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>) with branches, cornstalks, sunflowers, gourds, and any other appropriate decorations. Bring cord, staplers and tacks, tape, and maybe even a step-stool or ladder and start decorating!

We will have a Simchat Torah celebration and havdallah service on Saturday evening, October 10<sup>th</sup> at six o'clock. In addition to celebrating, dancing, and singing, we will unroll the whole Torah outside (again, weather permitting) and we will also include a Yizkor service, the second of the four required for the new year. Yael Cohn is hosting a potluck all-apple dessert oneg following the service. Bring your tastiest, most interesting apple dishes!

In addition to these holiday celebrations, there will be two lay-led services: a Shabbat Torah service at ten o'clock on the 17<sup>th</sup>, and a Kabbalat Shabbat service at 7:30 on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. There will also be Torah study on the 17<sup>th</sup> from ten to noon, led by Marty. Start the new year right...become a student of Torah!

## KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON

In addition to the newsletter and frequent e-mail announcements and reminders, and regularly-updated website information, minutes from the Board of Trustees meetings, Treasurer's reports, annual meeting reports, etc., are available to members who request them from Marty ([marty@bajcvermont.org](mailto:marty@bajcvermont.org)). Board meetings are open to the membership but please let a Board member know when you want to attend and, if you wish to speak, please request permission in advance of the meeting.

## COHEN CENTER WORKSHOPS

The Cohen Center for Holocaust studies is offering two exciting and unique workshop opportunities. The fee for each is \$85 and pre-registration is required. For a registration form or more information contact Tom White @ 603-358-2746

**October 9, 2009: Confronting a Difficult Past: Germans Wrestle with the Legacy of Nazism and the Holocaust.** Location: Mabel Brown Room, Young Student Center, Keene State College. German witnesses wrestle with their memories and responsibilities. Registration deadline for this class is October 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**December 11, 2009: Anguished Hope: Holocaust Scholars Confront the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict.** Location: Mountain View Room, Young Student Center, Keene State College., Registration deadline for this class is December 4<sup>th</sup>.



## LESSONS YOU CAN LEARN FROM NOAH

You know...Noah, from the ark:

1. Don't miss the boat.
2. Remember that we are all in the same boat.
3. Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark
4. Don't listen to critics. Just get on with the job that needs to be done.
5. Build your future on high ground.
6. For safety's sake, travel in pairs.
7. Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.
8. When you're stressed, float a while.
9. Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.
10. No matter the storm, when you are with God, there's always a rainbow waiting.

NOTE: The story of Noah (Genesis 6:9-11:32) is read on October 24, 2009.

## **RABBI SEARCH COMMITTEE BEGINS WORK**

Congregation Shir Heharim has been blessed with strong and stable spiritual leadership for the past eight years. Now we are faced with an opportunity and responsibility to select new spiritual leadership. Participation by BAJC members is critical to the success of this endeavor.

A rabbi search committee is preparing to identify qualified candidates for the position of Rabbi/Spiritual Leader. The committee, composed of Paul (Chair), Marty, Julie, Louisa, and Enid, is asking that each member of the congregation assist by letting the committee know your opinions, thoughts and feelings as to the characteristics and qualities that you would like to see in a BAJC rabbi. You can provide input by talking individually with any member of the committee in person or on the phone, or you can e-mail to [search@bajcvermont.org](mailto:search@bajcvermont.org), or write to Rabbi Search Committee, BAJC, P.O. Box 2353, Brattleboro 05303. Additionally, the committee has scheduled three meetings at the synagogue in order to hear your concerns, opinions and questions face-to-face. The meetings are on Sunday mornings between 11:00 and 12:30 on October 18<sup>th</sup>, October 25<sup>th</sup>, and November 8<sup>th</sup>. Please attend whichever meeting best fits your schedule. If possible, call a committee member to let the committee know which meeting you will attend.

## **THE NOSE KNOWS**

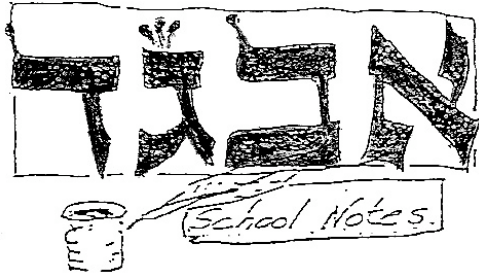
Several people in our congregation have allergies or sensitivities to perfumes that make it uncomfortable or impossible for them to be present at services and other gatherings in the synagogue (and other places as well, of course). We can do our part to make our shul a place where they can be comfortable by declaring it a "fragrance-free zone," just as we have made it comfortable for others by declaring it a smoke-free zone and a *trafe*-free zone. This is a gentle request that everyone, to the greatest degree possible, avoid using perfumes and scented oils, sprays, lotions, shampoos, etc. when you know you will be attending services and other happenings at our shul. Think of it this way: none of us needs artificial sweeteners (fragrances) because we are all sweet enough already, or so we will be if we take into consideration the needs and sensitivities of others.

## **LOTS OF FREE BOOKS!**

While preparing to set up a library in the BAJC office, we have accumulated a selection of books that we can't use in the library, mainly due to limited space or because they are duplicates. The books are stacked in no particular order in the barn. Most have Jewish content, but not all are necessarily books about Judaism. There are books of fiction, history, biography, philosophy, ethics, humor, Jewish living, and more, etc., as well as some children's books. There are hardcovers, paperbacks, boxed sets. You can browse through them any Monday or Wednesday afternoon or any time the synagogue is open or the barn door is up. Take as many as you want. If you're so inclined, make a small donation when you find some treasures, but there's no obligation to do that. If you know any book collector or bookseller who might want to buy some of these books at ridiculously low bargain prices, please let Faith know. In addition to helping yourself to any of the books in the barn, you can get a free copy of *Gates of Prayer* from Faith.

## **TO LIFE! A CELEBRATION OF VERMONT JEWISH WOMEN**

On October 8<sup>th</sup> through November 8<sup>th</sup>, a special exhibit and public education programs at the Paramount Theater at 30 Center Street in Rutland will celebrate the Vermont Jewish Women's History Project with "20 women, 20 stories—in words and images." The opening reception on October 11<sup>th</sup> from 2:00-6:00 includes a lecture by Penina Glazer, Ph.D., of Hampshire College, about the stories in the larger context of American and Jewish history. The following Sunday, October 18<sup>th</sup> features a concert by BAJC's own Phyllis Isaacson at 3:00 at Nourse Hall, Trinity Church, 85 West Street in Rutland. On Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, the series returns to the Paramount Theater for a poetry reading by Judy Chalmer, whose work reflects her own quest to understand her family's Holocaust history. The exhibit and all events are free and open to the public, including Phyllis's concert and talk about her experiences leading the Israel Kibbutz Choir. For more information, go to [www.davarvt.org](http://www.davarvt.org)



I'm writing this before the first day of classes and will begin by introducing myself and expressing my appreciation of being chosen as school director for our community. I'm excited about the opportunity to work as liaison, support the teachers, and tend to the day-to-day details that help create a positive Jewish experience for the students of the BAJC Hebrew School.

I bring with me an assortment of experiences in Jewish education including: working in the new field of Jewish environmental education since the early 90's, running student programs at UMass Hillel, and working as an independent storyteller and Jewish educator for the past 9 years. I've also worked as an elementary school science teacher, high school science and social studies teacher, and community-based environmental educator. I look forward now to learning from the BAJC teachers. Their dedication, love of learning, skill at community building and sense of fun is at the heart of the BAJC School. Please thank them for their service when you get the chance.

We have four classes this year. Our teachers are Jackie, Mara, David, and Kate. Judith will be a tutor available for the school. In past years, Judith has taught the youngest class, but this year there is not a cohort of children in that age group. We look forward to the possibility of her class starting up again next year.

Tutors and aides are vital components of our school. Any parent or community member interested in volunteering, from beginner to veteran teacher, is most welcome. The important qualification is bringing a good listening ear and enjoyment in the company of children. If you can decipher Hebrew letters and vowels- all the better. Please feel free to contact me for more information (or just to say hi) at [school@bajcvermont.org](mailto:school@bajcvermont.org).

Each week, school will open with the elementary age children all together for an activity and snack, and close with the entire school together. I will be leading the opening activities and sharing stories during the closing time each week. Parents and community members are always welcome during

this time. This first week we will travel to Chelm, that town of fools, and visit Schmerel on the eve of Rosh Hashanah.

An early professional experience for me was teaching high school at a small private community school outside Philadelphia. The parents were actively involved with the school board and also volunteered in the classroom. I loved how a sense of ownership that this teamwork gave the school. I look forward to bringing this energy to BAJC.

I am so glad to be part of this community school and the opportunity it provides to explore ways to share Jewish life with our children. With the director position funded for only for six hours per week, running this school definitely requires a team effort, with parents an important and vital ingredient. Please know that your input and time is welcome. I look forward to meeting you and working together over the year.

To a sweet new year,  
David

## NEW CAMPER WEEKEND

Here's a chance for current 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, & 5<sup>th</sup> graders who have not yet spent a summer at a URJ's Eisner or Crane Lake camps to experience an amazing, action-packed weekend. During the Columbus Day weekend, prospective campers will get a taste of the camp community and *ruach* as they sing, play, create, dance, hike, and celebrate Shabbat together. The deadline to register for this exciting weekend is October 1, 2009.

Families will have the opportunity to tour Eisner and Crane Lake Camps at the beginning and end of the weekend, when they drop kids off or pick them up. The \$100 fee for the weekend will be applied to the overall tuition of any family that registers for either camp on or before January 1, 2010. Please note that space is limited. If you have any questions about the event, contact Greg Kellner, one of the Assistant Directors, at (201) 722-0400 or via e-mail at [gkellner@urj.org](mailto:gkellner@urj.org).

## 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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e-mail: [info@bajcvermont.org](mailto:info@bajcvermont.org)

Office phone: 802-257-1959

Office hours: 3:30-6:30, on

Mondays when Hebrew school  
is in session, or by appointment

Newsletter editor: Faith Schuster

Newsletter design and production:

[martin@cohnpr.com](mailto:martin@cohnpr.com)

Newsletter deadline: the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month

Webmaven: Julie Strothman



## 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 5770. 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.)