



Chadashot Ha'am

February 2013

Sh'vat/Adar

A Message from Rabbi Saks

For many, *Purim* is a children's holiday filled with carnival games, costume parades and more than one's fill of hot dogs and *hamantaschen*. As with most things Jewish, though, *Purim* is so much more than childish frivolity. The celebration of *Purim* is rooted in telling the story of the Book of *Esther*, which recounts the Jews' escape from disaster on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of *Adar*, a day chosen when the villain Haman cast lots (*purim* in Hebrew) to determine when to kill the Jews.

The Book of *Esther* is the only book in the Hebrew Bible that does not contain God's name. While one perspective is to see God's hand at play by reading between the lines, the absence of any mention of God allows us to turn the ordinary on its head on *Purim*. The costumes, the parades, the reading of the *Megillah* and even the over-consumption of alcohol are all meant to help things go the way they typically don't, with a lack of formality and an overabundance of frivolity.

In his book *The Jewish Holidays* (which I'd highly recommend as a great resource for understanding all of the Jewish holidays on a deeper level), Rabbi Michael Strassfeld examines the notion that the story of *Esther* is meant to be



farce. The historicity of the Book of *Esther* is questionable on many counts, but its farcical nature is clear. Rabbi Strassfeld writes, "Perhaps the first hint of the story's farcical nature is in the first chapter when the king and his advisers decide they have to get rid of Queen Vashti in order to keep all the wives in Persia obedient to their husbands. What could be more farcical than a group of men issuing a decree that they must be obeyed by their wives?"

The comedic nature of the story and the twists and turns it takes in reaching its dramatic conclusion, where *Esther* reveals herself as a Jew to her bumbling husband, King Ahasuerus, are all features of this first *Purim* parody. Almost halfway through the year from *Yom Kippur*, our most solemn holiday, *Purim* is a time to let loose, to make fun of ourselves and to masquerade as something we are not. Edward Greenstein points out, "It is not often noted that the precedent for masquerading on *Purim* is set by the Scroll of *Esther* itself. *Esther* the Jewess dresses up like a queen, and *Mordechai* takes on regal garb. See the Jews dressing up like Persian royalty!"

Too often, we focus our celebration of *Purim* on the children's enjoyment. But *Purim* is important for adults too.

When was the last time that you let loose? When was the last time you didn't act your age? Remember how good that felt? I hope you'll join us for our *Purim* festivities this year, which awkwardly fall during February vacation. What's the saying? Man plans; God laughs. Well, we can laugh, too, God. We can laugh too. On Sunday, February 24, we'll have a brief *Megillah* reading at 10:00 AM, followed by a *Purim* carnival. I encourage you to come and act your shoe size, not your age.

Chadashot Chai-lights

What's Inside

- 3 Religious School News
- 5 Upcoming Event Notices
- 6 Starry Night Gala
- 8 Donor Gallery
- 9 Monthly Calendar

President's Message - Lisa Pierce

One of the pleasures of synagogue leadership is working closely with our wonderful staff. Most of us know and see the dozens of volunteers who are at Bet Ha'am on holidays and *Shabbat*, and we recognize our volunteers with thanks and praise. Behind the scenes and between *Shabbats*, our paid staff members work magic to help our synagogue run smoothly. Rabbi Saks and Orly Biggie are visible and well known, but some of you may not be familiar with our other staff members. I am devoting my column this month to some brief introductions so you can seek out these folks and add your thanks to mine for jobs well done.

When you walk through the door of our building during the week, usually you will be greeted with a cheerful "Hello!" from **Karen Hindall**, our administrative assistant. Among other duties, Karen manages Rabbi Saks's calendar and hers is often the voice on the other end of the phone when you call. Karen is a member of Temple Beth El and a committee member for Beth El's religious school. Her professional career has been in front desk/administrative assistant positions. Karen is a baker of delicious cookies, an indoor target archer and a resident of Cape Elizabeth with her family. Karen works for Bet Ha'am 20 hours a week, from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM, Tuesday through Friday.

Our bookkeeper, **Teri Berenson**, is probably the best known to many of you, since Teri has worked for our congregation for over 20 years! A native of Portland, Teri is a graduate of Deering High School



and the University of Maine at Orono. Before joining Bet Ha'am, Teri ran the office at Levey Day School for thirteen years and assisted with the bookkeeping at *Shaarey Tphiloh*, where she is a member. She has a daughter and two grandchildren and lives in Scarborough with her dog, Jetta. Teri is typically in the office at Bet Ha'am between 11:00 AM and 2:00 PM, Tuesday through Friday.

Our office team is completed by **Kris Dorer**, our synagogue administrator. Kris oversees all office operations. She manages our custodial staff, our facility, and the synagogue's community and vendor relationships, among other things. Kris's career has been in non-profit and small business management for over 20 years, and she is a former national consultant. She is a local Girl Scout leader, serves on the boards of Community Health Charities of Maine and Camp Ketcha, and is a member of the Governance Committee of the Scarborough Education Foundation. Originally from New York State, Kris lives in Scarborough with her husband and two young children. Kris works for Bet Ha'am approximately 28 hours a week.

We also are lucky to have a wonderful custodial staff. **Chris Skidgel** works for Bet Ha'am full time, on a regular schedule that includes Saturday mornings. Chris is a native Mainer and has been with Bet Ha'am for over five years. He

has owned a Portland restaurant and has also worked in the music and sound industries. He is a member of the Time Pilots, a fabulous local band known for their 80's dance music (See them in person at our Gala event on April 6!). In addition to Chris's work at Bet Ha'am, he is a full-time student pursuing a degree in social work at USM.

On Friday evenings and Sundays, you may also see either **Betty Lane** or **Nathan Plourde** on the job in the kitchen and around the building. Betty and Nate each work between five and ten hours a week taking care of our facility for services and Religious School. Betty has worked for Bet Ha'am for many years in clerical and custodial positions. She is a graduate of USM and has a teaching certificate for grades 7-12. Betty has worked as an Associate Real Estate Broker for almost fifteen years and has two adult daughters. Nate is a South Portland native and graduated from Maine College of Art with a B.F.A. in Sculpture. He is also employed as a Front Desk Manager at Holiday Inn by The Bay, and he just finished a three-month stint as an alumni resident artist with MECA's Sculpture Department.

We are fortunate to have such talented support at Bet Ha'am, and I am so glad to be working alongside each of these people.

Congregation Bet Ha'am

81 Westbrook Street
 South Portland, Maine 04106
 Phone (207) 879-0028
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www.bethaam.org

Rabbi Jared Saks
 Orly Mendelson Biggie, Religious School Director
 Kris Dorer, Synagogue Administrator
 Teri Berenson, Bookkeeper
 Karen Hindall, Administrative Assistant
 Chris Skidgel, Custodian

Executive Committee

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 Lisa Munderback, Vice President
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 Perry Newman
 Jane Snerson
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 Nathan Szanton
 Deborah Tillman Stone

Office Hours:

Tuesday - Friday, 9:00 AM-4:00 PM
 The office is closed on Mondays.
 Building Use: All meetings, events or gatherings must be scheduled with the office.

Office extensions and email addresses:

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From the Religious School Director

Orly Mendelson Biggie



February is a short month and even shorter for the Religious School. There will be only one Sunday session because we will not have Religious School during February vacation or during the Bet Ha'am Strategic Planning retreat.

We encourage students to use this time to practice and improve their Hebrew reading skills. You could use the on-line center (for those students who have registered), the CD from Behrman House, flash cards or books from Religious School.

Since Purim is celebrated during February vacation, we will not celebrate the holiday at Religious School. There are many ways to enjoy the fun and celebrations with your family. We invite you to come to (and help with) the *Megilla* reading and a mini-carnival at Bet Ha'am. You can also fulfill the Purim *mitzvot* of *mishloach manot* (sending gifts of food to friends) and giving *machatzit ha'shekel* (giving half a *shekel* or a dollar). You don't need to be at Religious School to fulfill these *mitzvot*!

Religious School News

Thank you to last month's substitute teachers: Jeff Schwartz, Sarah Szanton, Doug Watts, and Jill Rosenthal.

Grades 3A & 3B will participate in the *Shabbat* service on February 8. A *Shabbat* potluck dinner for the students and their families will begin at 5:30 PM Please RSVP by February 3.

Schedule of Services

Friday, February 8

Family Kabbalat Shabbat 6:30 PM

Saturday, February 9

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

Parsha Mishpatim - Sh'kalim

Friday, February 15

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

Saturday, February 16

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

Parsha T'rumah

Friday, February 22

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

Saturday, February 23

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

Parsha T'zaveh - Zachor

Adult Library News

Thanks to those who made donations to the Adult Library Fund, we have eleven new books on the shelves.

We have purchased the following books from the Jewish Encounters Series:

The Eichmann Trial by Deborah Lipstadt

Marc Chagall by Jonathan Wilson

The Life of David by Robert Pinsky

Benjamin Disraeli by Adam Kirsch

Sacred Trash: The Lost and Found World of the Cairo Geniza by Adina Hoffman

Betraying Spinoza: The Renegade Jew Who Gave Us Modernity by Rebecca Goldstein

When General Grant Expelled the Jews by Jonathan D. Sarna (who delivered the 2011 Harry Spindel Memorial Lecture at Bowdoin College)

We have also purchased the following books by Allegra Goodman, who lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts and will be giving this year's Harry Spindel lecture at Bowdoin on April 11. See details on page 5 :

- *Total Immersion*
- *Intuition*
- *The Other Side of the Island*
- *The Cookbook Collector*

These four books complete our collection of Allegra Goodman's work. We already had *The Family Markowitz*, *Kaaterskill Falls* and *Paradise Park* on our shelves.

The Library Committee generally meets the third Thursday of the month from 1:00-3:00 PM. Please contact the office to confirm the meeting time if you are interested in attending a meeting.

The next meeting of the Social Action Committee will be on February 28 at 6:30 PM

All are welcome.

Join Us for a *Shabbat* Meditation Service

Judaism has a long tradition of meditative practices. Our ancestors and sages knew that cloaking prayer in diverse forms offered opportunities to encounter The Divine.

Please join Jane Sloven, Sharon Newman, and Joseph Py for a Meditation Service at 6:45 PM on Friday, March 1. We will chant *niggunim* and *kirtan*, experience a guided meditation and sit together in silence. Our service will end at 7:25 PM so those who wish to attend the Friday evening *Kabbalat Shabbat* service can do so.

Harry Spindel Memorial Lectureship
in Judaic Studies and
Contemporary Jewish Affairs

Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine
Kresge Auditorium
Visual Arts Center

Thursday, April 11, 2013
7:30 PM

Guest Lecturer, Allegra Goodman



Mark your calendars for Bet Ha'am's

Megillah Reading and Purim Carnival

Sunday morning, February 24
starting at 10:00 AM.

Games, Food, and Prizes

*Costumes encouraged.
Fun guaranteed!*





Starry Night

Please join Congregation Bet Ha'am for a fabulous party in honor of long-time Board member Ken Lehman for his community leadership.

Saturday, April 6th, 2013 from 6pm to 11pm
Congregation Bet Ha'am, 81 Westbrook Street, South Portland

Featuring
Dancing with 80's rock band Time Pilots
Silent Auction ~ Dinner ~ Cash Bar

All proceeds to benefit Bet Ha'am and the Lehman Fund for Gardens and Grounds.

Tickets are \$75 per person, tables of 10 are available.

Call the Bet Ha'am office at 879-0028 for tickets.

WWW.BETHAAM.ORG

TIME PILOTS
When Kicked When Healed Kicks When Not



Call for Auction Items

We are currently accepting donations for the silent auction.

Do you have a vacation home you are willing to make available?

Do you have expertise or talent you would like to share or new merchandise to donate?

Would you be willing to coordinate a class basket for your child's Religious School class?

To be a part of the auction, please contact Deb Stone at Deborah@lmstone.com or Sherri Carignan at carignan@maine.rr.com.

Tikkun Olam: Protecting our Environment - both Globally and Locally

By Rachel Mason Burger

For me *Tikkun Olam* is an important Jewish value that encompasses not only welcoming the stranger, feeding the hungry, caring for the sick and sheltering the homeless, but also, and crucially, caring for the environment that God created for our survival and the survival of all living things.

We are taught that God declared, "Look at my works! See how beautiful they are, how excellent! For your sake I created them all. See to it that you do not spoil and destroy my world, for if you do, there will be no one left to repair it." (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13) Caring for the earth may seem intangible to some of us. We can make it tangible by realizing that each person is responsible for 21 tons of carbon pollution that will not disappear for a hundred years.

The issue of tar sands is a local and tangible threat to our communities. News stories have announced that Exxon plans to pump this very thick, toxic substance through an old pipeline (under very high pressure) to South Portland. Transporting tar sands through pipelines creates a threat of spills into the environment. Tar sands are heavy, consisting largely of clay and sand, making cleanup incredibly difficult. The pipeline that would be used crosses the Crooked River, which leads into Sebago Lake, six times. A spill could endanger our fresh water supply, pollute Casco Bay, and endanger our fisheries. Exxon plans to burn off some of the toxins from the tar sands near Bug Light in facilities with 70-foot chimney stacks and then ship the product to other countries for further refining. This process could affect the health of those living near these facilities.

We can take action to protect our communities, the air we breathe, the water we drink and the planet earth for which we are responsible. On January 26, some of us joined in a protest march and rally from Monument Square to the Maine State Pier. What better way could there be to celebrate *Tu b'Shevat* than protesting the potential destruction of the Canadian Boreal forests and the threat this pipeline would bring to our environment?

On March 11, there will be a City Council workshop at the South Portland Community Center. South Portland residents can express their concerns about the renewal of Exxon's permit to build the chimney stacks and pump house for the tar sands project. City Council members will be considering whether to allow Exxon to proceed. If you live in South Portland, I hope you will participate, express your opinion and help to protect our environment.

**Save
the
Date!**



Our Bet Ha'am Passover Seder will be held on Tuesday, March 26, at 5:30 P M in the social hall. Enjoy telling the Passover story, singing songs, and eating a delicious meal with your Bet Ha'am friends. More details to follow.

If you are interested in helping to plan or assist with our Seder, please email Erin Koepf at ekoepf@une.edu.

Join the Bet Ha'am Donor Gallery

We invite you to join the Bet Ha'am Donor Gallery today! We have many needs and many ways for you to contribute. If you have an event you would like to celebrate, a person you would like to honor, a *yahrzeit* to remember, or you just want to help support our programs, please fill out the form and send it along with your check to Bet Ha'am. Include an address if you would like an acknowledgement to be sent.

Our Donor Gallery listing should read:

Please acknowledge to: _____

Your name: _____

Check enclosed for \$ _____

Fund choice (please check one):

- _____ Annual Fund
- _____ General Fund
- _____ Rabbi's Discretionary Fund
- _____ Adult Library Fund
- _____ Berkowitz Open Door Fund
- _____ Building Capital Campaign
- _____ Cohen Fund for Worship & Learning
- _____ Goldfinger Fund for Israel Travel
- _____ Religious School Library Fund
- _____ Rosalyn S. & Sumner T. Bernstein
Scholar in Residence Fund
- _____ Sandmel Education Fund
- _____ Tutor Fund
- _____ Youth Fund

Bet Ha'am Donor Gallery

We thank our generous contributors

Annual Fund

- In memory of our parents by Stephen & Elaine Smith
- Julie Meltzer & Jonathan Bender
- Sue Howard
- Daniel & Nancy Ravin
- Gordon Gayer & Elaine Falender
- In appreciation of the Bet Ha'am staff and many wonderful volunteers by anonymous
- Solange Kelleman
- In memory of Barbara Riegelhaupt's father by Kermit Lipez & Nancy Ziegler
- Alan & Marilyn Davis
- Anonymous
- Jill Rosenthal
- Lee Jacobson & Cory Kuhl
- Larry Landau

Capital Campaign

- Daisy Kaplan
- In memory of Annette Goodman's sister, Jackie Bleier, by Wayne & Jo Ann Miller Goodman
- In memory of John Cole's father by Daniel & Nancy Ravin

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

- In appreciation of Rabbi Saks and his kindness by Harry & Margaret Blumenthal
- In appreciation of Rabbi Saks by Barry & Roberta Zuckerman

General Fund

- In appreciation by anonymous
- In appreciation of Rabbi Saks and his kindness by the Glixman family
- In honor of Jane Snerson by Margot & Eric Podtburg
- In memory of John Cole's father by Marilyn & Gerry Sherry
- Good luck in your new home to Jane Snerson by Marilyn & Gerry Sherry

- In memory of grandmothers by Bill & Ki Leffler
- In memory of cousin, Ghetto Spierer, on her *yahrzeit* by Wendy & Bill Sirois
- Anonymous
- Trish & Jim Wasserman
- In honor of grandson, Andrew, on his 13th birthday by Ray & Ginger Spiro
- In honor of grandson, Louis, on his 21st birthday by Ray & Ginger Spiro

Goldfinger Fund for Israel Travel

- In memory of Alan Schneit's father by Charlie & Ellie Miller
- Cathy Stankard

Zechar T'zaddik L'vrachah

- Condolences to the Chaison-Lapine family on the loss of Sara "Sally" Burns
- Condolences to David & Jerri Donn on the loss of David's son, Brian Tripp

FEBRUARY 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 7:30 PM	2 Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Jewish Themed Movie and <i>Havdalah</i> 6:30 PM
3 Grades 1-6 Religious School 9:00AM-Noon Grade 5 <i>Shtetl</i> Program, parents invited 10:15 AM Grades 9-12 Religious School 1:00 PM	4 Office Closed	5 Adult Learning Committee 6:30 PM	6 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM	7	8 Grade 3A & 3B <i>Shabbat</i> Dinner 5:30 PM Family <i>Kabbalat</i> <i>Shabbat</i> Service 6:30 PM	9 Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Jewish Themed Movie and <i>Havdalah</i> 6:30 PM
10 No Religious School Strategic Planning Committee meeting w/ Board 9:00 AM	11 Office Closed	12 Executive Committee 6:30 PM	13 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM	14 Finance Committee 10:00 AM	15 <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 7:30 PM	16 Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM
17 No Religious School	18 Office Closed	19	20 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM	21 Library Committee 1:00 PM	22 <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 7:30 PM	23 Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM
24 No Religious School <i>Purim</i> <i>Megillah</i> Reading 10:00 AM <i>Purim</i> Carnival 11:00 AM	25 Office Closed Membership Committee 7:00 PM	26 Board Meeting 6:30 PM	27 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM Education Committee 6:30 PM	28 Social Action Committee 6:30 PM		