

August, 2019 Newsletter



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B'nai Portland



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Thoughts From Rabbi Laura

September - the great determiner of sides. You are either a parent, rather joyful that school is restarting, or the students and teachers, in recovery mode from the shock of the completion of summer so soon. Either way, no matter how much we wish for the long warm days of summer to persist.... we all know, especially in Maine, that it could snow at any moment..... Perhaps that is why summer is so special and treasured to us. As someone who has taught for over 30 years, I always think of September as the start of something. School, Autumn, Jewish Holidays..... which leads me to the next topic... the HIHO's. Service information is found in the newsletter, and we are happy that so many people will be honored with an aliyah because of life cycle events. As usual our services are open to all, and we are very family friendly. There is no charge to attend, but we ask for an \$18.00 per person donation. If you are interested in learning what B'nai Portland offers there is a list showing the different classes and community events. Bring friends - hope to see you there. Shana Tova!!

~ Shalom, Rabbi Laura

Upcoming Shabbat Services

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| September 13 th | 6:30 pm |
| Simchat Torah | October 18 th 6:30 pm |

High Holiday Services

| | |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Rosh Hashanah | September 30 th 9:30-12:00pm |
| Kol Nidre | October 8 th 6:30-7:30pm |
| Yom Kippur | October 9 th 9:30-1:00pm |

***Shabbat Services and High Holiday Services
will be held at the Lunt Auditorium in
Falmouth (74 Lunt Rd, Falmouth, Maine).***

***Services will begin promptly at the
stated times.***

All are Welcome - Please Join Us!

Why is community so important?

Jews have gathered together in prayer and celebration for millennia. We have a strong sense of presenting as a united front and understand that life can have both ups and downs, and both are made better by sharing it with others. B'nai Portland is a unique community because we genuinely care about each other, and we strive to continue to build on the relationships that draw us together.



We, as a community, strongly believe our lives are enriched when we help others in need, and when we help other congregants deal with struggles they may encounter. If you are interested in learning what makes us so special, please read through our upcoming events section and give us a try..... I think you'll be pleased.

The Month of Elul

Elul is the 12th and final month in the Jewish calendar. It marks the period of soul-searching leading up to the High Holidays. Elul connects the past year with the coming year - a time when we reflect on where we stand and where we should be going.

It is called "the month of repentance," "the month of mercy" and "the month of forgiveness." On Rosh Chodesh Elul, Moses ascended to Mount Sinai for a third 40-day period until Yom Kippur, when he descended with the second tablets (*luchot*) and God's word of joyful, wholehearted forgiveness. These were days when God revealed to the Jewish people great mercy. Since then, this time has been designated as a time of mercy and forgiveness, an opportune time for *teshuvah* - repentance.

The four letters of the name *Elul* are an acronym for the phrase in "Song of Songs" (6:3): "*ani l'dodi v'dodi li* - I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me." 'I am to my beloved' - we approach God with a desire to return and connect. 'And my beloved is to me' - God reciprocates with Divine expressions of mercy and forgiveness.

After Elul comes Tishrei - the first month of the Jewish calendar. Rosh Hashanah (the head of the year) is celebrated on Tishrei 1. This year, Rosh Hashanah begins on the evening of September 29th.

The two days of Rosh Hashanah usher in the Ten Days of Repentance (Aseret Yemei Teshuvah), also known as the Days of Awe (Yamim Noraim), which culminate in the major fast day of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The Days of Awe represent the climax of the longer process begun during Elul when the shofar is traditionally sounded at the conclusion of the morning service. The shofar's sound is intended as a wake-up call to prepare for the Tishrei holidays. One week before Rosh Hashanah, special petitionary prayers called Selichot are added to the ritual. Rosh Hashanah itself is also known as Yom Hadin or the Day of Judgment, on which God opens the Books of Life and Death, which are then sealed on Yom Kippur.

PJ Library & PJ Our Way - What Is It???

PJ Library is a program that sends free Jewish children's books to families across the world every month. We know that something magical happens when parents sit down together to read with their children. PJ Library shares Jewish stories that can help your family talk together about values and traditions that are important to you.

A program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, PJ Library is made possible through partnerships with philanthropists and local Jewish organizations. Families with kids ages 6 months through 8 years old with Judaism as part of their lives, are welcome to sign up. PJ Library welcomes all Jewish families, whatever your background, knowledge, or family make-up, or observance may be. Learn more about [PJ Library](#).

Kids across the United States can continue their PJ experience by signing up for PJ Our Way, the next chapter of PJ Library for kids ages 9-11. Kids are eligible to enroll when they turn 8½ through the day before their 12th birthday. Each month kids go to the PJ Our Way website to choose which book they would like to receive from a selection of age-appropriate books with Jewish themes. Learn more about [PJ Our Way](#).

Shabbat Torah Study

Last year, we trialed a study group for Torah and a celebration of Shabbat. It has really caught on and we have had a great time.

Once a month we will gather at someone's home and a volunteer discusses and delivers a Torah commentary for the upcoming portion. (The Rabbi has resources and is available for help). A little Q&A, and then a fabulous meal follows. If you would like to host a Friday Shabbat meal or be included in this gathering, please contact Rabbi Laura for more information.

The meals are pot luck, so there is minimal burden on the host.

Hebrew School

Classes are offered with the understanding that all learning should be fun. Students learn about Judaism, and how to read Hebrew, in a warm, loving, and encouraging environment. Ethics, Jewish rules of community service, and Jewish games are part of how we learn about our ancient culture. Grades 2- Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Tot Class

This is a once a month class geared to children K-1. Classes focus on our holidays and practices and art work is created to show what they have learned and talked about. Classes are usually an hour, but sometimes the younger ones need some play time at the end because its end of day, and an hour is a little too long, so sometimes we do Hebrew color twister, or Hebrew letter memory matching and BINGO.

What's Happening at B'nai Portland this fall?

Teen Group Confirmation Class

This is for students nearing and after Bar/Bat Mitzvah. It is a once a month class held in the evening. It encourages teens to interact with other Jewish teens in Maine.

We do community service projects, with which your child can earn hours toward their public school requirement. We learn about Jewish presence in the world and how we as people got to where we are. We do a small section on Holocaust. The lessons are taught with the principle that we are responsible for what goes on around us, and how can we best create a world of tikkun olam - repairing the world.

Please Join Us!

Conversion Classes

This course is a 2 year commitment. It focuses on Jewish Ritual Practice and how to create a Jewish home. Basic Hebrew reading is learned, stories and ideas from Torah are discussed, and questions are encouraged throughout the process. At the end of 2 years, a Bet Din (questioning panel to welcome the newly chosen Jew) is held, a term paper is written to answer why this was the path chosen, a Hebrew name is taken, and a mikveh ceremony (ritual dunking in moving waters) is held.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah

As a student approaches age 13 (or really any age after) they study to lead us in a prayer service. B'nai Portland encourages the student to do as much of the service as possible, so those who are highly capable can lead the entire service and those who are challenged may chant a couple of lines of Torah. From this experience, each student gains a rich level of knowledge and personal growth.

Adult Hebrew Classes

Want to learn to read better? Read well already, but want to learn some basic language?

Please contact Rabbi Laura for more information about any of these groups and classes or to join!
rabbibnaiportland@gmail.com

UPCOMING PJ LIBRARY & PJ OUR WAY FAMILY PROGRAMS

Play with PJ - Open Playdates

Fridays, twice monthly September-May, 10:45-11:45 AM (see our website for specific dates)

JCA - 1342 Congress St., Portland

Celebrate seasons, holidays and friendship with free PJ Library play dates! We welcome 0-3 year-olds and their caregivers to join us for free play in our community hall followed by stories and songs. Families are welcome to bring a lunch or snack and hang out after play time, then join in for Shabbat with the Goldman Family Preschool at 12:15 PM.

Jonah and the Whale Live!

Sunday, October 6th - 3:00-5:00 PM

JCA - 1342 Congress Street, Portland

Suggested donation - \$10 per family

Join us and our friends from the Children's Museum & Theatre of Maine as we gather in the belly of the whale! Hear the story of Istar, a humpback whale who lived in the Atlantic Ocean and have the opportunity to go inside an inflatable 45-foot, life-size humpback whale.

Community Giving Day

Co-sponsored by Congregation Bet Ha'am, Temple Beth El, Klahr Jewish Family Services and PJ Library

Sunday, October 20th - 10:00 AM-12:00 PM

Congregation Bet Ha'am - 81 Westbrook Street, South Portland

Kindness matters! Gather with us as a community to learn from and do activities with local organizations that help people experiencing poverty, homelessness and food insecurity.

Shalom Baby Shower

Sunday, November 17th - 9:30-10:30 AM

JCA - 1342 Congress Street, Portland

Mazel Tov! PJ Library invites families who have welcomed a new child in the past year to join us to celebrate your newest family member! Please join us for a nosh and some playtime. Meet other new parents and receive a welcome gift for your child. RSVP to Andrea at 772-1959 or pjlibrary@mainejewish.org so we can have your child's gift ready.

Tzedakah Celebration with PJ Library & Klahr Jewish Family Services

Wednesday, December 18th - 5:00-6:30 PM

JCA - 1342 Congress Street, Portland

Join us for a potluck dinner and family tzedakah (righteous giving) party celebrating the end of this year's Hanukkah Lights program and the power of giving in our community! We will share dinner and tzedakah-themed activities together. Please bring a favorite dairy/vegetarian dish to share (no meat please). Donations will also be collected for those who have sponsored a family or child through Hanukkah Lights.

Sparkle Havdalah: a Drag Queen Story Hour

Saturday, January 11th - 5:30-7:00 PM

JCA - 1342 Congress Street, Portland

Co-sponsored by Congregation Bet Ha'am, Temple Beth El and PJ Library

Wear your sparkly best or just come as you are, as we say goodbye to Shabbat and celebrate what makes us each unique and special. We will enjoy a potluck dinner (dairy/vegetarian, no meat please), a story, crafts, music, a costume parade, Havdalah (marking the end of Shabbat), and fun. This event is FREE, family-friendly and all are welcome.

Tu B'Shvat Eco-Celebration

Sunday, February 9th - 3:00-5:00 PM

JCA - 1342 Congress Street, Portland

Learn about the importance of caring for the earth, enjoy songs and stories about eco-friendly themes, and create recycled crafts in this celebration of sustainable living! This event is FREE, family-friendly, and all are welcome.

For more information Contact: The Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine

Andrea Krasker Gavin akraskergavin@mainejewish.org (207) 772-1959 <https://www.mainejewish.org/>

Simchas & Sorrows

Mazel Tov to Shari & Scott Redan on Sloane becoming Bat Mitzvah.

Mazel Tov to Zak & Angela Sclar on Rylee becoming Bat Mitzvah.

Please let B'nai Portland know of any simchas or sorrows so we can share them with the Congregation.

***B'nai Portland
welcomes Brittany
Reich, our newest
board member!***

If you are interested in becoming a Board Member, please contact us for more information.



L' Shanah Tovah
Have a sweet year!



In honor of Patrick Martin's birthday by Hilary & Joe Goodman.

In honor of Patrick Martin's birthday by Laura & Mike Boenisch.

If you would like to honor or remember someone, please consider making a tax deductible donation to B'nai Portland. All monies received are used towards programming and activities.



What Are the High Holy Days?

If the year is a train, the High Holidays (aka High Holy Days) are its engine. A delicate blend of joy and solemnity, feasting and fasting, prayer and inspiration make up the spiritually charged head of the Jewish year.

The High Holiday season begins during the month of Elul, when the shofar is sounded every weekday morning, a clarion call to return to God in advance of the sacred days that lay ahead.

The two day holiday of Rosh Hashanah is the head of the Jewish year, the time when God reinvests in us as we hallow God through prayer, shofar blasts, and celebration. A week later, the High Holidays reach their crescendo with Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). We neither eat nor drink for 25 hours. Dressed in white, we pray in the synagogue - united as One People, children of One God.

But it does not end there. The otherworldliness of the High Holidays is then channeled into the festive holidays of Sukkot and Simchat Torah, which bring the annual fall holiday season to a most joyous conclusion.

Check out our website at
www.bnaiportland.com

Thanks to Rich Brooks and **FLYTE MEDIA** for their donation and help creating our site!

Contact Rabbi Laura at:
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