



Chadashot Ha'am

January 2012

Tevet/Sh'vat 5772

A Message from Rabbi Saks

I'm writing this article in late December. Last week, along with five other members of our congregation, I attended the URJ's Biennial Convention in Washington, D.C. (Well, really in National Harbor, Maryland, but that's so much less enticing.) The Union for Reform Judaism's Biennial Convention is the Reform movement's North American conference and attracts thousands of Reform Jews to worship, study, sing and socialize together for five days every other year. I attended my first Biennial when I was a senior in high school. Needless to say, I was not a typical teenager.

I wish that more of our teenagers would have an experience like the one I had. My synagogue and NFTY (North American Federation of Temple Youth) were my core community. NFTY was where I was allowed just to be me. I loved hanging around my synagogue and even had a group of friends with whom I attended Friday night services on a regular basis. We dubbed ourselves F.N.O.C., the Friday Night Oneg Club. Like I said, I wasn't a typical teenager. Members of F.N.O.C. are of various political affiliations, live in different areas of the country, and practice Judaism differently now. I'm the only one of that

group who is a rabbi. What we have in common is that our synagogue was a home-away-from-home.



At the recent URJ Biennial Convention, an initiative was launched that will help all Reform synagogues, and Bet Ha'am in particular, I hope, become that home-away-from-home for all of our teenagers. The Campaign for Youth Engagement (www.urj.org/cye) plans

to take on the reality that 80% of *b'nai mitzvah* students in Reform Jewish congregations no longer have a connection of any kind to their synagogue by the time they reach twelfth grade. I don't know if this statistic represents the reality at Bet Ha'am. Many of our teens remain involved in Jewish life at Bet Ha'am. And we need to help many more of them to be engaged after their *b'nai mitzvah*.

As a presenter at the Biennial, Dr. Wendy Mogel, author of *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee* and *The Blessing of a B Minus*, shared that teens are transitioning from being home to being away from home. Synagogues have the opportunity, and I think we have the responsibility, to be the third place where teens can grow and develop into mature and self-reliant adults. The only way to make sure that Congregation Bet

Ha'am is a home-away-from-home for our teenagers is to engage them in the process of crafting their Jewish education after their *b'nai mitzvah*.

In one Biennial session, I learned about the URJ Planning Guide for Teen Engagement, which I hope will be a valuable tool for crafting an even more successful program for our teenagers. The goal of the Planning Guide is to help us facilitate a conversation among our teenagers and their families in order to create a meaningful Jewish experience for them.

Dr. Mogel shared her own Jewish journey with the Biennial attendees. She was raised in a secular Jewish household by two Jewish parents. Her father published the *National Lampoon* magazine and she described her Jewish upbringing as "Jew-ish" at best. She brought her own children to the children's Rosh Hashanah services, but viewed the experience more through the lens of a cultural anthropologist. When she began engaging in Jewish learning, she found wisdom in our tradition about raising children in our times. One example was the Talmud's expectation – better yet, demand – that we teach our children to swim. As Dr. Mogel explained, the obligation to teach our children to swim means that we are raising our children to leave us. If we fail to teach them to swim, literally and

Message from Rabbi Saks *continued*

figuratively, they will drown. We have a sacred obligation to ensure that our children will grow up to be adults who are successful in their Judaism. (You can watch Dr. Wendy Mogel's address, as well as many others from the Biennial, at <http://urj.org/biennial11/webcast/>.)

At the closing plenary of the Biennial, Rabbi Jonah Pesner, Senior Vice President-Elect, challenged the participants with this charge:

"My friends, here's the truth. We can't succeed unless everyone in this room makes this their personal campaign. How will each one of us, leaders in our own communities, make our vision a reality? Because ultimately, there will only be true transformation when our local congregations and communities – yours and mine – succeed in capturing the imagination of the next

generation. So now I ask you, will you make this your campaign?"

I ask the same of you. Will you make this your campaign? Will you help to ensure Bet Ha'am's successful future by working to engage our teens in their Jewish education? How will you help capture the imagination of the next generation?

I look forward to setting out on this journey with you.



Chadashot Chai-lights

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Welcome New Members

Jennifer Winslow &
Brian Brenerman

Randi Greenwald &
Lowell Turnbull

President's Message - Lisa Pierce

For the next generation...

I saw a bumper sticker the other day that said, "Environmentalists Do It For the Next Generation." It made me laugh, not because it was that funny, but because I'd like one that says, "Jews Do It For the Next Generation." We really do. *L'dor vador*. I've always loved singing this prayer at Bet Ha'am. It makes me think of my dad. From time to time over the last several years I have had the pleasure of watching him watch my children at our worship services. I like to catch his eye just to let him know that I get it: this is the stuff that matters. And even if our kids don't get it now, they too will get it someday.

Whether we're talking about me, my parents and my kids, or you and yours, or us and ours – it's the same in Reform Jewish congregations everywhere. I'm writing this article from my hotel room at my first URJ Biennial experience. One thing I've learned this weekend is that our relatively small congregation in Southern Maine is by no means alone. The challenges we face and our hopes for the future are shared by synagogues all over the union.

The convention of Reform Jews is sold out for the first time in its history. There are over 6,000 Jews in attendance, and tonight's session filled the largest ballroom I have ever been in. I have met scores of people and enjoyed hearing their stories. It's always fun to see how many people have a connection to Maine, including the cantorial student I met at services who grew up in Harpswell,



a guy from Texas whose daughter is a biologist in Ellsworth, and the temple president from Orange, Connecticut. I met at a workshop who sends his regards to two of our newer members who moved to Maine from there.

The common thread that has brought all of us here is the desire to gain the tools, connections and ideas to strengthen the Jewish ties of our congregations at home. In workshop after workshop I hear people talking about an intense desire to create more vibrant Reform Jewish synagogues, about engaging volunteers and about developing future leaders. And most commonly, I hear about fostering a more meaningful experience for our children and creating a Jewish home in our communities that our children, grandchildren and their children can be proud of. I hear many conversations about leaving our synagogues stronger than we found them. For the next generation.

All of us will leave this Biennial with more than new tools for the toolbox. We'll leave with energy and inspiration. And we'll each go back to our home congregations with seeds of enthusiasm to help foster new growth. The big lesson I'm taking away is that the best way to inspire others to become involved is to be involved yourself - to take the time to strengthen your own ties to Jewish life and then invite others to join you.

We heard from guest speaker Wendy Mogel, who is delightfully funny. Dr. Mogel offered this bit of wisdom: if we want our kids to study Torah, we need to study Torah. If we want our kids to lead Jewish lives, then we need to lead Jewish lives. They will follow our example. If we only tell them that they should study Torah but do not study ourselves, then that is what they will do as adults and what their children will do, too. If we want our children to enjoy the benefits of a welcoming and engaging Jewish community, then we must welcome others and be engaged. *L'dor vador*. For the next generation.



Congregation Bet Ha'am

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 Chris Skidgel, Custodian

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 Michael Messerschmidt
 Jane Snerson
 Steve Steinbock
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 Joanne Turnbull

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



Our first evening of Religious School in 2012 will be a very special one. Acorn Studio Theater will perform *The Wandering Beggar* by Howard Rosenfield, an adaptation of a story by Solomon Simon. Solomon Simon was born in 1895 in a Jewish *shtetl* in what is now the country of Belarus. His name was Shlomo Shimonovich. Simon was the fourth of eight children

in a family that was very poor. He suffered from rickets and could only move around by crawling until he was almost six. When he was drafted into the Czarist army in 1913, he fled to America. Though he became a more secular Jew, he felt it was essential to assure the survival of Jewish values, culture and traditions for the new generation of Jews in America. He became a devoted "yiddishist," and saw Yiddish as a tool that would ensure Jewish values among secular Jews. His real love was writing. His early writings were in Yiddish and focused mostly on Jewish legends and themes. *The Wandering Beggar* (*Shmerl Nar* in Yiddish) is about a simple Jewish man who accomplished accidental miracles as he wandered about Russian towns.

The production will be on January 8 from 6:00-8:00 PM. It will be a fundraiser for our synagogue and promises to be an entertaining evening. I hope many of you will enjoy the play and support Bet Ha'am.

Religious School News

Shabbat Dinners and Services

Third grade students will participate in the Family Service on Friday, January 13. A potluck dinner for the students and their families will begin at 5:30 PM. Please RSVP by Friday, January 6.

Seventh grade students will lead Friday evening services on January 27. A potluck dinner for the students and their families will begin at 6:30 PM. Please RSVP by January 20.

The last session of the sixth grade Bar/t Mitzvah Family Program is the *Shabbaton* on Saturday, January 21, from 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM. The service will be a learner's *minyan*. We will also be having a potluck lunch during the *Shabbaton*.

Sunday evening program

On Sunday, January 8, we will have a special program for students in grades seven through ten. Acorn Studio Theater will present the play, *The Wandering Beggar*, at Bet Ha'am from 6:00-8:00 PM. We will not be serving dinner that evening. The play is free for students in grades seven through ten.

Schedule of Services

Friday, January 6

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

Saturday, January 7

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

Parsha Vayechi

Friday, January 13

Family Kabbalat Shabbat 6:30 PM

Saturday, January 14

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

Joshua Lodish, Bar Mitzvah,
son of Martin Lodish & Kristin Schardt
Parsha Shemot

Friday, January 20

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

Saturday, January 21

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

Parsha Vaera

Friday, January 27

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

Saturday, January 28

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

Ellen & Julia Stanton, B'nai Mitzvah,
daughters of Peter Stanton
& Sara Freedman

Parsha Bo

**Please join the congregation
in celebration as our students
are called to the Torah as
B'nai Mitzvah.**

Adult Library News

by Donna Landau

1. Soon . . .

Congregants will be able to access the catalog of our collection on the library's laptop.

Congregants will be able to browse the catalog online on the Bet Ha'am website from the comfort of home.

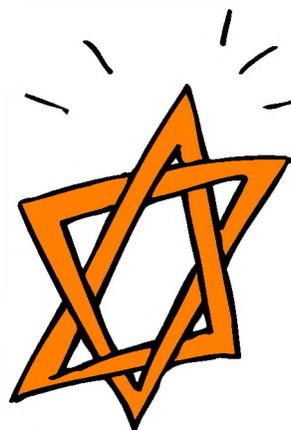
An art show featuring the works of our Religious School students, coordinated by art teacher Alison Noiles, will be on display in the library.

2. If you visit the library on Sunday mornings, you may find a group of knitters who are involved in the Comfort Shawl Project. They are creating cozy shawls for Jewish patients in hospitals and nursing homes. For more information, email Donna Landau, dmlandau@hotmail.com, or Karen Lukas, karenlukas@hotmail.com.

3. Celebrating a *simcha*? Remembering a loved one?

Consider the Bet Ha'am Adult Library in your charitable giving.

4. The library is staffed on Thursdays from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM and on Sundays from 10:00 AM to Noon. To borrow books or apply for a library card at any time the synagogue is open, please follow the instructions on the reading table.



Adult Education Offerings

Soul, Holiness, Sacrifice, and Prayer

Sunday evenings, 6:30-7:30 PM

Join us for a new Adult Education class on January 12, 22, 29, and February 12.

Steve Steinbock will teach this class based on his book, *These Words Upon Our Heart*.

Soul, Holiness, Sacrifice, and Prayer. These are a few of the themes that recur in all religions. Participants will examine the meanings of these words as well as their Hebrew counterparts in order to gain a deeper understanding of Judaism and world religions. The book will be available for sale at the Bet Ha'am book shop.

News from the URJ Biennial

by Lynn Urbach

In December I had the privilege of joining several Bet Ha'am members and Rabbi Saks at the URJ Biennial in Washington, DC. This was my first Biennial, and what an exciting event it was. Living here in Maine it is hard to imagine the enthusiasm that comes with a gathering of about 6,000 Jews, all committed to engaging in dialogue about Reform Judaism. I went to sessions on many topics, including how to bring the enthusiasm of kids at Jewish camps into our religious school, how to reach out to Jews and interfaith couples who are not currently members of our congregation, and how we define Judaism.

The session on how we define Judaism, led by Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, was particularly interesting to me. Is Judaism defined by being a religion? Well, that does not really encompass it. Sigmund Freud saw Judaism as a race. But that is certainly not a satisfactory definition. A civilization? No, that does not describe it either. Rabbi Hoffman is a professor at HUC-JIR and his conclusion is that Judaism is an ongoing conversation. To learn more about his ideas, check out his newest book, *One Hundred Great Jewish Books*.

The Adult Education Committee always welcomes your ideas as to what opportunities you would like us to provide. Feel free to email Lynn Urbach at lurbach1@maine.rr.com with any thoughts and ideas.



URJ Biennial Shabbat Dinner, December 16, 2011.

Top row: Lisa Pierce, Rabbi Jared Saks.

Bottom row: Elizabeth Rosen, Sherri Carignan, Kirk Boettcher.

URJ Biennial in Washington, DC

by Sherri Carignan

How successful do you think Golda Meir and Noah would have been at one another's jobs? I am pretty sure they both would have been failures because they had very different leadership styles and skills that were better suited to their own situations. This is not the kind of question I usually ponder on an average Thursday afternoon; however, being at the URJ Biennial Conference is not an every day experience.

Let's just take my first ten minutes after arrival at the hotel. Six of us from Bet Ha'am travelled to Washington, D.C. Before we reached the registration desk, I got big hugs from Rabbi Richie Address (my high school teacher and friend of Bet Ha'am), along with my high school rabbi. After getting our room keys, I ran into Rabbi Larry Milder (formerly of Bangor and now of the American Hebrew Academy), who handed me his phone so I could say hello to his wife. Later that afternoon I spoke with Rick Recht who told me that his concert at Bet Ha'am was special to him, in part because he reconnected with his Maine relatives.

Our delegation consisted of Rabbi Saks, Kirk Boettcher, Lynn Urbach, Lisa Pierce, Elizabeth Rosen and me. We

coordinated our learning sessions so we could share all the information and insights that we gained with each other and the rest of the congregation. We started one session by singing a *nigun* and swaying to get into the mood of summer camp and ended the session with small group discussions about how we can help our students love religious school learning like they love camp learning. We attended sessions on Israel, education, leadership, and Torah study, and we all listened to lots of great music.

We had the opportunity in both morning and evening sessions to hear speakers who were inspiring, thought-provoking and funny. Wendy Mogel was hysterically funny. Nancy Brinker, the founder of the Susan G. Komen Foundation, was optimistic and inspiring. Natan (Anatoly) Sharansky spoke about how important it is for Diaspora Jews to travel to Israel and for Israeli Jews to travel to other countries to more fully experience our Judaism. Sharansky was presented with one of the recently translated and published Torah commentaries in Russian. Theodore Bikel received an award and sang songs in English, Yiddish and Ladino. At Biennial, the

speakers attend workshops and walk the halls just like everyone else. Some of us were even lucky enough to be their students as they taught classes.

We also heard from elected officials, and not just any old elected officials. Jewish Congressman and House Majority Leader Eric Cantor spoke about Iran and Israel.

And on Friday, we left our bags in our rooms and headed through security into the ballroom to hear and see President Barak Obama alongside 5,000 other Reform Jews from around the world. You can listen to his speech by clicking on the link below.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/12/16/remarks-president-71st-general-assembly-union-reform-judaism>

You don't have to be the rabbi, president or even on the Board of our congregation to attend a URJ Biennial Conference. You just have to want to participate in Jewish learning and culture for four days and, hopefully, bring new ideas in your area(s) of interest back to the synagogue. The next Biennial is in 2013 in San Diego; please talk with one of us if you would like to learn more.

Social Action News

The Bet Ha'am winter clothing drive has been a big success. During Rabbi Saks's installation weekend in November, members of the Confirmation Class joined Rabbi Joel Soffin in bringing a large number of coats, boots, hats and other items to State Street Church's free clothing closet. Thanks to all who contributed. A box remains at Bet Ha'am for additional donations.

The Social Action Committee has learned that Portland Adult Education (PAE) has an urgent need for tutors to help English language learners. The time commitment is as little as an hour a week and no experience is needed. To find out more, please contact Moey Burchenal, PAE's volunteer coordinator, at burchm@portlandschools.org.

The next meeting of the Social Action Committee is January 8 at 10:00 AM at Bet Ha'am. All are welcome.

ACORN
productions



THE WANDERING BEGGAR

by Solomon Simon
adapted for the stage by Howard Rosenfield
directed by Harlan Baker

Sunday, January 8, 2012
6 p.m.



§10 per person donation suggested
Congregation Bet Ha'am
81 Westbrook St., So. Portland, ME
www.bethaam.org 879-0028

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):

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

Bet Ha'am Donor Gallery

We thank our generous contributors

Annual Fund

- In honor of Lisa Pierce and Rabbi Saks by Ben Grant & Caroline Eliot
- In memory of Faith Moritz's father by Susan Lieberman & Stephen Frantz

Rosalyn S. & Sumner T. Bernstein Scholar in Residence Fund

- Wishing Roz Bernstein a quick and easy recovery by Jeremy Moser & Laura Kittle
- Hoping Roz Bernstein improves day by day by Alan & Fran Schneit

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

- In memory of Harold Zagorin by Bernard Zagorin and family
- In appreciation of Rabbi Saks's assistance during a difficult time by Sharon Ash Tancredi
- In honor of Rabbi Saks on his installation by Jeremy Moser & Laura Kittle
- In honor of my grandson, Michael Michaelson, becoming Bar Mitzvah by Susan Michaelson
- In appreciation of High Holy Day services by Susan Michaelson

General Fund

- In honor of everyone who helped guide me to becoming Bat Mitzvah by Josie Pierce
- In appreciation by Laura Kittle & Jeremy Moser
- In loving honor of Mel & Caryl Goldstein by Roberta Fishman
- A loving thank you to Carole & Ed Friedman by Roberta Fishman
- In memory of Harold Zagorin by Joanne & Ray Oransky
- In appreciation by Andrew & Siriwan Strauss

- In honor of the engagement of Lisa McAlister & JD Lichtman by Barbara & John Lichtman
- In honor of Lizzy Lemieux becoming Bat Mitzvah by Susan Michaelson
- In appreciation of High Holy Day services by Jane & Ken Brodsky
- In honor of Tyler Richman's Bar Mitzvah class by David Inger & Leora Rabin
- With gratitude to Paul Rothman & Sam from Ethan Pierce and family
- In honor of Lizzy Lemieux's class by David Inger & Leora Rabin
- In memory of Ronald Moritz by Barbara Prowell
- In appreciation of the Caring Committee and Rabbi Saks by Faith Moritz & Janet Jones

Religious School Library Fund

- In honor of Elizabeth Lemieux becoming Bat Mitzvah by Barry & Arleen Weiss

Zecher T'zaddik L'vrachah

- Condolences to the family of Harold Zagorin, a founding member of Bet Ha'am
- Condolences to Rachel & Piotr Stamieszkin on the loss of Rachel's father, Robert Bronstein

January 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2 Office Closed	3	4 Morning Minyan 7:00 AM	5	6 <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 7:30 PM	7 Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM
8 Social Action Committee 10:00 AM <i>The Wandering Beggar</i> performance 6:00 PM	9 Office Closed	10	11 Morning Minyan 7:00 AM	12	13 Third Grade dinner 5:30 PM Family <i>Kabbalat</i> <i>Shabbat</i> Service 6:30 PM	14 Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM <i>Josh Lodish</i> <i>Bar Mitzvah</i>
15	16 Office Closed	17 Board of Directors Meeting 6:30 PM	18 Morning Minyan 7:00 AM	19	20 <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 7:30 PM	21 Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM
22	23 Office Closed	24	25 Morning Minyan 7:00 AM	26	27 Seventh Grade dinner 6:30 PM <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 7:30 PM	28 Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM <i>Ellen & Julia Stanton</i> <i>B'nai Mitzvah</i>
29	30 Office Closed	31				