



Chadashot Ha'am

October 2014

TISHRI/HESHVAN 5775

A Message from Rabbi Saks

You may have noticed both at this time of year and around Passover, that Bet Ha'am observes some of our holidays for a different number of days than other Jews you know. The holidays of *Sukkot* and Passover, weeklong festivals in the *Torah* text, are observed by Reform congregations for seven days. These holidays are observed by Orthodox and Conservative congregations outside of Israel for eight days. Other holidays are also affected by this custom, including *Shavuot*. Because we are about to celebrate the holiday of *Sukkot*, I thought I would share with you why our calendar is different than our Orthodox and Conservative friends and neighbors.

There are some who might think that Reform Judaism truncated the observance of these holidays, producing some sort of a Judaism-light, but those folks would be mistaken. Reform Judaism, in observing for seven days during both *Sukkot* and



Passover, restored the original Biblical commandments for the length of these two harvest festivals. The *Torah* is clear that both *Sukkot* and Passover are to be seven-day festivals, with holy day

observances on the first and the last days. It wasn't until the rabbinical court in Jerusalem, centuries ago, that these holidays became eight-day festivals.

Here's what used to happen: Each month, the rabbinical court in Jerusalem would gather the evidence of witnesses of the sighting of the new moon, when a sliver of the moon first appears in the sky. The court would then light signal fires to announce that the new month had begun, and the Jews in the area would know to begin counting the days of that month. When the signal fires for *Tishre* (when *Sukkot* falls) or *Nisan* (when Passover falls) were lit, the Jewish communities would know to count to the fifteenth day of those months and then celebrate those holidays.

A group called the Cutheans, a sect that opposed the rabbis, engaged in what might have been the first phishing scam. They made signal fires at the wrong times to throw people off and to discredit the rabbinic authorities; all of a sudden the rabbinic system of announcing the new month was no longer secure. At this point, the rabbinical court began sending out messengers to relay the message that the new month had begun. This worked well for communities within the Land of Israel, but for those farther away, like the Jewish communities in Babylonia, the journey was long and news of the beginning of the month was sometimes unreliable. In order to assure that they were observing the holidays on the correct dates, the communities outside Israel began to observe two holy days at the beginning and end of these festival weeks, making both holidays eight-day observances.

Even today, Jewish communities within Israel

(continued on page 4)

President's Message - Lisa Munderback

CONGREGATIONAL
FORUM - SUNDAY,
OCTOBER 26

Please join me at an important forum on Sunday, October 26 to allow members to share their views on a draft proposal regarding the roles of members. We felt that having something clear in its perspective would allow for clear responses. The Board is hopeful that the responses will give us the additional information we need to make a thoughtful and informed decision about a final policy.

The forum will be conducted at two times to accommodate as many people as possible. Please feel free to come to either or both sessions. The morning session will be from 10:15 - 11:45 AM. There will be a half-hour break for pizza and cookies, and the afternoon session will be from 12:15 - 1:45 PM. Co-facilitating with Rabbi Saks will be Gary Stern, a skilled facilitator who helped us with our Strategic Plan.

When faced with questions that people have such strong and diverse opinions and feelings about, it is unlikely that everyone will be completely satisfied when a



decision is made. I hope, however, that each member will feel he or she has been heard and respected. Our goal is to move forward as a congregation in a positive way.

I encourage you to read the draft, take time to ponder it and come to the forum to share your thoughts as well as to hear the thoughts of others.

DRAFT POLICY

MISSION STATEMENT

The Congregation is a Reform Jewish congregation that fosters a love of worship and learning. It is a caring community that welcomes a diverse membership committed to the Congregation and to Jewish life and values.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Congregation is to promote the fundamental and enduring principles of Judaism and to ensure the continuity of the Jewish people; to enable its members to develop a relationship with God through communal worship, study of Torah, and

assembly; and to apply the principles of Reform Judaism to the values and conduct of the individual, the family and the society in which we live.

ISSUE

Congregation Bet Ha'am has many member families who consider themselves "interfaith," that is, one spouse is Jewish and the other identifies as of another faith or no faith. Most are raising their children to be Jews and are in other ways committed to the congregation. Non-Jewish members contribute financially to the synagogue through the family's dues payments.

It has been the unwritten policy of the synagogue not to invite these members to be lead teachers, Board members or other leadership positions, although our congregation's by-laws are inclusive with regard to rights and responsibilities.

The Congregation's Strategic Plan includes goals to become a more inclusive and welcoming congregation and to study the role(s) of our non-Jewish members.

(Proposal continued on page 3)

Congregation Bet Ha'am

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 South Portland, Maine 04106
 Phone (207) 879-0028
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 TTY available
 www.bethaam.org

Rabbi Jared Saks

Orly Mendelson Biggie, Religious School Director
 Kris Dorer, Executive Director
 Teri Berenson, Bookkeeper
 Karen Hindall, Administrative Assistant
 Chris Skidgel, Custodian

Executive Committee

Lisa Munderback, President
 Andrew Kosak, Vice President
 Tom Rosen, Treasurer
 Nathan Szanton, Secretary
 Lisa Pierce, Past President

Board of Directors

Julia Bailin
 Lee Broder
 Mylan Cohen
 Howard Glass
 Ben Grant
 Samantha Johnson
 Erin Koepf
 Martin Lodish
 Jeremy Moser
 Jane Snerson
 Steve Steinbock
 Lee Tabenken

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:

Rabbi Saks, Ext. 100
 ravsaks@bethaam.org
 Orly Biggie, Religious School Director, Ext. 102
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 kris@bethaam.org
 Teri Berenson, Bookkeeper, Ext. 103
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 Chris Skidgel, Custodian,
 chris@bethaam.org

(President, continued from page 2)**PROPOSAL**

Understanding that clarification is needed, the Board proposes the following policy as consistent with our mission and purpose:

Bet Ha'am invites any individual who subscribes to our mission and purpose to meet with the Rabbi and become a member in good standing. Any member in good standing who has the qualifications to fill an open volunteer position is eligible to be considered for that position. Our professional staff will maintain descriptions of the qualifications and expectations for leadership and teaching positions.

Potential volunteers for leadership, regardless of faith, will be evaluated on an individual basis for skills, abilities, and adherence to our mission and purpose. Potential volunteers for committee chairs will be evaluated by the Nominating Committee and Rabbi and approved by the President prior to appointment. Potential volunteers for Board membership will be evaluated by the Nominating Committee and Rabbi, and members will elect Board members at the Annual Meeting. Mid-year appointments will be evaluated by the Rabbi and Nominating Committee and voted on by the Board. Potential volunteers for teaching positions will be evaluated on an individual basis for skills, abilities, and adherence to the mission, purpose, and goals of the congregation's Jewish religious education program. These evaluations will be conducted by the Rabbi, the Religious Education Director and members of the Education Committee.

Affirming our commitment to remaining a Reform Jewish synagogue and ensuring the future of the Jewish people, we further establish that a majority of the members of our Board of Trustees and a majority of our teaching staff will be Jewish. Given the representative nature of the position, the Board President (and therefore Vice President/President-Elect) will be Jewish.

Recognizing that it takes dozens of capable volunteers to support our congregation and synagogue, we are committed to helping all of our volunteers grow in their relationship with Judaism and develop new skills. We celebrate and are grateful to all individuals who share their time and expertise.

Schedule of Services for October

Wednesday, October 8

Erev Sukkot Service 7:30 PM

Thursday, October 9

Sukkot Morning Service 10:00 AM

Friday, October 10

Family Kabbalat Shabbat 6:30 PM

Saturday, October 11

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

Parashah for Chol HaMo-eid Sukkot

Wednesday, October 15

Erev Simchat Torah and
Consecration 6:30 PM

Thursday, October 16

Simchat Torah Service
with Yizkor 10:00 AM

Friday, October 17

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

Saturday, October 18

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

Parashat B'reishit

Friday, October 24

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

Saturday, October 25

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

Riley Iris, Bar Mitzvah, son of Amy and
Stefan Iris

Parashat Noach

Friday, October 31

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

Saturday, November 1

Torah Study 9:00 AM

(Rabbi Saks, continued from page 1)

observe seven days of *Sukkot* or Passover, regardless of the denomination to which they belong. Outside of Israel, only the Reform community reverted to the biblical custom of observing seven days of *Sukkot* and Passover, doing so in the mid-nineteenth century. Modern technologies, even then, allowed Jews all over the world to be sure of the day when the new Jewish month begins.

It has always been the tradition of Reform Judaism to adjust our observance based upon our experience in the current world. I am a proponent of the notion that Judaism has always been Reform. If Judaism hadn't changed when the Temple was destroyed in the year 70, Judaism would have ceased to exist. So too, the rabbis of the rabbinical court in Jerusalem changed the holiday observance to fit the needs of their time, and the Reform rabbis of the nineteenth century changed that observance back to its historic origins, based upon their modern experience. We are called to engage with our Judaism, to make it meaningful and relevant. Whatever you do to celebrate *Sukkot* this year, make it meaningful.



Religious School News

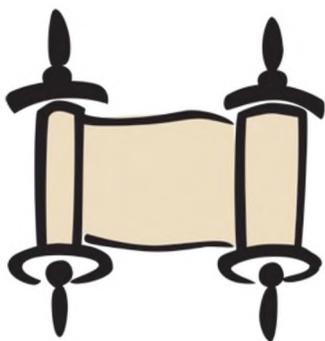
The first session of the second grade Family Connection will be on Sunday, October 19, from 9:30 AM to noon. Parents will study with Rabbi Saks and then have a study session with their children. The theme for the morning will be The Synagogue and the Reform Movement.

Please join us on October 15 at 6:30 PM for our *Simchat Torah* Worship Service and Consecration of our new Religious School students.

Assiya Sessions with Rabbi Saks for students and their parents:

October 19, 11:30 AM to noon
– Grade 5

October 26, 11:30 AM to noon
– Grade 4



From the Religious School Director

Orly Mendelson Biggie



On *Simchat Torah* eve, Wednesday, October 15, we will have two celebrations: the completion and restarting of the *Torah* cycle for the year by completing *D'varim* (Deuteronomy) and starting *B'reshit* (Genesis) and the consecration of our first graders and other new students.

Consecration is a uniquely Reform Jewish ceremony. According to historian Michael Meyer, the ceremony can be attributed to Rabbi David Einhorn, one of the early rabbis of the Reform movement. Rabbi Einhorn's original suggestion was replacing the *Brit Mila* (circumcision) with a consecration ritual that would confirm a young boy's life in the Jewish community.

Today, the ceremony of consecration marks the beginning of one's formal Jewish education. The religious meaning of the word "consecrate" is an association with something holy. Jewish learning and study of *Torah* are sacred tasks. This is why it is appropriate to celebrate consecration with the congregational community on *Simchat Torah*, a holiday focusing on the joy of celebration with the *Torah*.

This year's tenth grade Confirmation class celebrated the beginning of their Jewish education ten years ago, and they will present a mini *Torah* and certificate to each new student. The tenth graders are also making *Torah* covers as a special way to personalize the new students' *Torahs*. This ceremony is a wonderful way to pass our traditions and the *Torah* from one generation to the next.

I hope you can join us for this very joyful holiday celebration of *Simchat Torah* at 6:30 PM on October 15.

Chag Sameach!

From the Executive Director

Kris Dorer



Navigating Our New Web Site and Congregational Software

Bet Ha'am had a busy summer implementing a new email system, new software and our new website. As with any construction or implementation, some pieces went smoothly and a few did not. Though we had a few delays, we now have exciting new technology in place to help serve the congregation better.

Our new software, **Cloud for Synagogues**, is an offshoot of the widely used Cloud for Good and has a sturdy cloud-based platform. We use the software daily for operations, finances and member data. The office is getting busier and busier all of the time, and this software will help to streamline our operations. Our plan is to move all email and communications, including our weekly email and *Chadashot*, to this software at some point.

Cloud for Synagogues also gives us the opportunity to effectively manage more member information, e.g. volunteer interests and special talents. For example, we could access all guitar-playing congregants who live in Falmouth, should we ever wish to do that! We will be asking each member to complete an information update form some time this fall. Please keep an eye out for this form.

Our new website has received rave reviews! It is certainly a step forward to have a professionally-designed but locally-managed

site. We can keep the site fresh and up to date, and it can be used for promoting events and programs to our congregation, and also to local visitors and those who visit our website from afar. We will be able to accept registration and any fees for events and programs on the website, enhancing the office's processing and response. Within a year, we hope to have an interactive member portal that will allow members to log in securely to manage their accounts, including checking pledge balances, paying dues, and accessing the membership directory.

We encourage you to visit the website frequently to check the event calendar and register for upcoming special events. Beginning this winter, we will feature guest bloggers from the Bet Ha'am community who will share a range of interesting perspectives. The Adult Library catalog will be on the website soon. You will be able to access musical selections for services and there will be photos and ordering information for our Judaica shop.

We invite you to navigate our website and share your feedback. WELCOME!

Welcome New Members

Susanne and Edward Bilotte with their children Jeremy and Carmelo

Have you considered enrolling your preschool or kindergarten age child in a Jewish religious school program?

If so, please join us on Sunday, October 19, for Congregation Bet Ha'am's Religious School Fall Open House.

You and your child are invited to explore our programs for young children. You will have the opportunity to visit the classroom with your child, get to know the staff, meet other families, and ask questions.

If you are considering our Kindergarten program, please come at 9:00 AM. You may remain in the classroom with your child for the entire session, or, if your child is comfortable, you may leave the classroom and join the Adult Learning class that is being offered from 9:30-10:30 AM. (Please see course description for "Ancient Sects and Modern Movements in the announcement to the right.)

Kindergarten meets two Sundays a month, from 9:00 –10:30 AM. Through stories, music, crafts, and activities, children explore Jewish holidays and values and make new Jewish friends.

If your child is between the ages of three and five, please come at 11:00 AM for our *Shalom Yeladim* program. *Shalom Yeladim* parents participate in the classroom with their children.

Shalom Yeladim meets one Sunday a month, from 11:00 AM –noon. Children and parents have fun getting ready for the Jewish holidays with age-appropriate music and activities while making connections with other Jewish families.

If you are interested in enrolling a child in our Religious School, we would be happy to hear from you. Please call the office at 879-0028 or contact Orly Biggie at orly@bethaam.org.

“Ancient Sects and Modern Movements” – An Adult Learning Opportunity

In this mini-course, Robert Morrison, Ph.D., a professor of Religion at Bowdoin College, will first explore early debates in Judaism, beginning with the Pharisee-Sadducee debate. He will explore the Karaite-Rabbanite debate in the second session. These debates were about power in the Jewish community and the nature of Jewish texts. The third session will examine movements in contemporary texts in light of these debates to come to conclusions about the collectivity of Judaism today.

Session Dates:

Sunday, October 19
9:30-10:30 AM

Sunday, November 16
9:30 – 10:30 AM

Sunday, December 14
9:30-10:30 AM

Photo Gallery

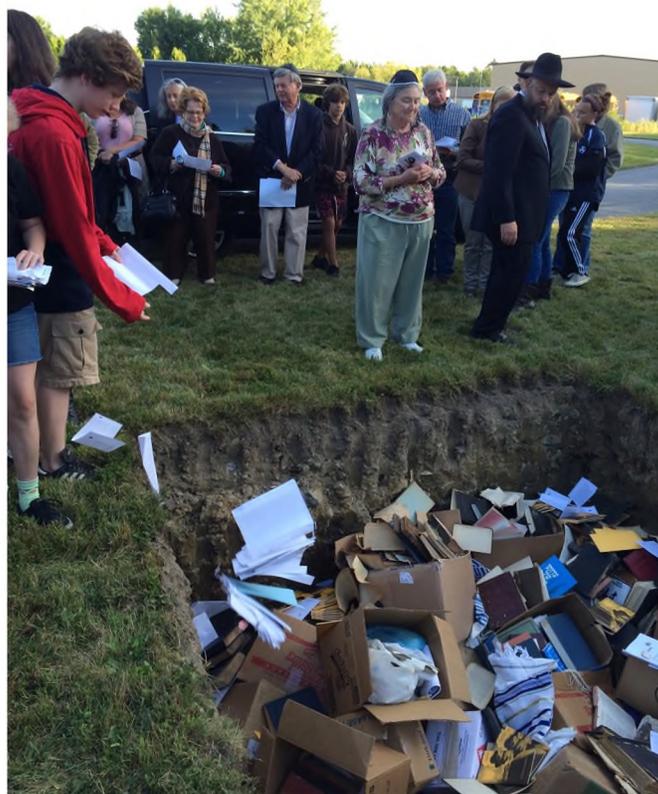
Thank you to the Membership and Marketing Committees for organizing our very fun Burgers and Bytes event on September 14!



Religious School students participate at the recent community book burial.



Jane Snerson and Lynn Urbach celebrate their many years of teaching at Bet Ha'am!



Rethinking the Sex/Gender Paradigm

On Wednesday, November 5, from 8:00 – 11:00 AM, The Alexander Cairns Symposium at Maine Medical Center is presenting a program entitled "Rethinking the Sex/Gender Paradigm," with featured speaker Rev. Marvin M. Ellison, Ph.D. Bet Ha'am member Dr. Jerry Olshan will be a panel member in the discussion part of the program.

Here is an excerpt from the program brochure:

"Two concurrent dynamics are at work in urging health care professionals to rethink prevailing wisdom about sex and gender: developments in medical knowledge and fresh insights from social justice movements, including the women's movement, the LGBTQ rights movement and the emerging transgender revolution. What do we now understand constitutes 'normalcy' in terms of human sexual development, gender roles, sexual identities, and family patterns? What are the best practices that are respectful of human diversity and responsive to the complexities of human sexuality? What sources of expertise are available to help navigate these troubled and often troubling waters?"

The symposium is open to the public and will be held in the Dana Center Auditorium at Maine Medical Center on 22 Bramhall Street in Portland. Please contact Kasey Bromee in the Spiritual Care Department at bromek@mmc.org or 662-2951 for registration information. Registrations are due by November 1.

You Can Still Support Bet Ha'am's Annual Food Drive!

Though we completed our collection of grocery items on Yom Kippur, you can still make a cash donation to our food drive. Cash donations allow agencies to buy up to eight times the amount of food that you could purchase with the same amount of money.



Please make your checks payable to Congregation Bet Ha'am.

You can write "High Holy Day Food Drive" on the memo line if you'd like. Please return your envelope to the Bet Ha'am office. We will send the money donated to both local food pantries and global agencies addressing hunger.

Thank you!

Zecher T'zaddik L'vrachah

- Condolences to Susan Lieberman and Stephan Frantz on the loss of Susan's father, Richard Lieberman
- Condolences to Tom and Elizabeth Rosen on the loss of Tom's father, Edward Rosen



Featuring Bet Ha'am members Alan Davis, Emma Scott and Peter Scott and their friends

SPRUCE ROOSTER

Saturday, November 1
6:30 to 8:30 PM

at Congregation Bet Ha'am, 81 Westbrook Street, South Portland
FMI call 879-0028

Join us for an evening of old time squares and contras

All ages welcome!
No experience required!
No partner necessary!

Cash Bar, Live Music, and Home-Baked Pie

\$10 adult/\$5 child



That's SQUARE dancing and ROUND pies!

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
- Rabbi Berkowitz Open Door Fund
- Building Capital Campaign
- Rabbi Cohen Fund for Worship & Learning
- Rabbi Goldfinger Fund for Israel Travel
- Lehman Fund for Gardens & Grounds
- Religious School Library Fund
- Rosalyne S. & Sumner T. Bernstein Scholar in Residence Fund
- Rabbi Jared H. Saks and Kirk J. Boettcher Artist in Residence Fund
- Rabbi Sandmel Education Fund
- Tutor Fund
- Youth Fund

Bet Ha'am Donor Gallery

We thank our generous contributors

Annual Fund

- Seth Goren
- Daniel Fishbein & Ilene Schuchman
- Anne Babineau
- Jamie & Lee Broder
- Carl Lerman
- Bill & Jodi Welch
- Joanne Turnbull
- Charlie & Ellie Miller, wishing Ken Lehman a speedy recovery
- Alan & Jill Morris
- Charlie & DeeDee Oehrtmann
- Leora Rabin & David Inger
- Mo Mehlsak & Barbara Riegelhaupt
- In celebration of Penny's baby naming by Julia & Dan Bailin
- Naomi Querk in honor of Mitchell Litt
- Erin & Chris Koepf
- Sarah & Nathan Szanton
- Elizabeth Buchsbaum
- Karen & Alan Lukas
- Wilma Rose
- Margaret Cugini
- Sue Howard
- Sam & Debbie Barouch
- Andrew & Denise Mancall
- Daniel & Nancy Ravin
- Michael & Judy Bruenjes
- Gene & Jean Grindlinger
- Toby Rosenberg

Artist in Residence Fund

- Erin & Chris Koepf
- Susan Berkman & Maxine Farber

Berkowitz Open Door Fund

- In honor of Jane Snerson and her kindness with our children by Melissa Montefel
- Daria Rosen

Capital Campaign

- In memory of Michael Barriault by Toby Rosenberg
- In honor of Jane Snerson and her kindness with our children by Lee & Jamie Broder

General Fund

- In honor of cousins Bill & Ki Leffler by Adrienne Sundheim
- Sharon Ash-Tancredi
- In honor of Alexander Riggle's becoming *Bar Mitzvah* by David Inger & Leora Rabin
- Wishing Jane a speedy recovery by Laura Kittle & Jeremy Moser
- In memory of Michael Barriault by Laura Kittle & Jeremy Moser
- In appreciation by anonymous

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

- In memory of parents by Mo Mehlsak & Barbara Riegelhaupt
- In appreciation of Rabbi Saks by Annette & Noel Goodman

October 2014

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
		1 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM	2	3 <i>Kol Nidre</i> Service 8:00 PM	4 <i>Yom Kippur</i> Children's Service 8:30 AM <i>Torah</i> Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Meditation Service 12:45 PM Study 2:00 PM <i>Yizkor</i> 4:30 PM <i>Neilah</i> 5:00 PM Potluck Break Fast	
5 No Religious School	6 Office Closed Membership Committee 7:00 PM	7 Finance Committee 11:00 AM Nominating Committee 4:45 PM	8 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM <i>Sukkot</i> Service and Celebration 7:30 PM	9 <i>Sukkot</i> Worship Service 10:00 AM	10 Family <i>Kabbalat</i> <i>Shabbat</i> Service 6:30 PM	11 <i>Torah</i> Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Youth Group <i>Sukkot</i> Celebration in Falmouth 8:00 PM
12 No Religious School	13 Office Closed	14	15 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM Consecration and <i>Simchat Torah</i> Service and Celebration 6:30 PM	16 <i>Atzeret-Simchat</i> <i>Torah</i> Worship Service with <i>Yizkor</i> 10:00 AM	17 <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service with guest speaker Andy Bernstein 7:30 PM	18 <i>Torah</i> Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM <i>Havdalah</i> /Dessert for Leadership Development 6:30 PM
19 Religious School Open House 9:00 AM Adult Study 9:30 AM Grades 1-6 Religious School 9:00 AM Kindergarten 9:00 AM <i>Shalom Yeladim</i> 11:00 AM Grades 7-10 Religious School 5:00 PM	20 Office Closed	21 Executive Committee 5:30 PM Garden Committee 5:30 PM	22 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM Leadership Development 7:00 PM	23 Education Committee 6:30 PM	24 <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 7:30 PM	25 <i>Torah</i> Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Riley Iris <i>Bar Mitzvah</i>
26 Grades 1-6 Religious School 9:00 AM Congregational Forums 10:15 AM and 12:15 PM Grades 7-10 Religious School 5:00 PM	27 Office Closed	28 Board Meeting 5:30 PM	29 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM Leadership Development 7:00 PM	30	31 <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 7:30 PM	1 <i>Torah</i> Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM