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THIS MONTH

- 8/31–9/1 – Max Aronson Bar Mitzvah
- 9/8 – Selichot Program
- 9/9 – 1st Day of Hebrew School & Hebrew High School
- 9/9 – Cemetery Visits
- 9/12–14 – Rosh Hashanah
- 9/21–22 – Yom Kippur
- 9/27 – Wayside Soup Kitchen



“For last year’s words belong to last year’s language and next year’s words await another voice”

—T.S. Eliot

From *Four Quartets 4: Little Gidding II* (1942)

T E M P L E B E T H E L shop FAR SEPTEMBER 2007 ELUL 5767/TISHREI 5768

WELCOME HOME

Our Israel itinerary read, “DAY TWO: Monday, July 16, 2007 – A Warm-Personal WELCOME HOME!” After a day of travel from Portland to Tel Aviv, I wasn’t sure that “Welcome Home” made much sense. In some ways, it is hard to think of Israel as home. After all, they speak many different languages from the ones we speak – Hebrew, Arabic, Russian, maybe even Amharic, just to name a few. And though much of the countryside reminds me of my native state, California, it’s a little hotter and a lot more exotic. So...“home?” I had to think about that.

And then, only a few days after returning from Israel, I traveled to California – home – to be with family. “Home?” My room is filled with computer equipment – barely just being developed when I went to college. Of course my 8th grade poster from our final dance is still on the wall, and so are the posters to the Pete Seeger concerts, and a few other pictures and posters that seem eternal, but this isn’t the room I left thirty years ago. While our house seems smaller, the neighborhood houses have all become larger. The street is no longer filled with children, only SUVs and construction trucks. So...“home?” I wonder what this means.

And then, I came back to Portland. “Home?” My home for almost 13 years, I have seen neighbors come and go, houses have changed color, trees have fallen, and now my house is emptier without my companion, Molly. And while I have autonomy over what happens in my house, and I am comfortable and familiar with my surroundings, I am also reminded that I, along with many of my neighbors and friends, am “from away.” So, am I “home” yet?

The United Synagogue of Conservative

Judaism (USCJ) proclaims an initiative created in 2005, “Home for the Holidays, Project Reconnect.” This is a program to welcome previously affiliated youth and young adults to our congregations when they are away from the shul with which they were affiliated. In other words, though they may not be “home” with their families, they can be “home” at another Conservative shul. So, ultimately, what is “home?”

In my favorite book about baseball (!), Bart Giamatti ponders the concept of “home plate”:

Home is an English word virtually

.....
R A B B I
CAROLYN BRAUN

impossible to translate into other tongues. No translation catches the associations, the mixture of memory and longing, the sense of security and autonomy and accessibility, the aroma of inclusiveness, of freedom from wariness...Home is a concept, not a place...

...to go home may be impossible but it is often a...compelling dream. To attempt to go home is to go the long way around, to stray and separate in the hope of finding completeness in reunion... In baseball, the journey begins at home, negotiates the twists and turns at first, and often founders far out at the edges of the ordered world at rocky second...

Why is home plate not called fourth base? As far as I can tell, it has ever been thus.

—from *Take Time For Paradise* (pp. 91 and 93)

In the final analysis, Israel is “home.” I can’t adequately explain it in words, but though we may speak different lan-

see **Home** *page 15*

TEMPLE BETH EL

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Shofar

Lisa Berman, Editor
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"Our vision is to be an embracing, supportive and vibrant community which observes Judaism in the Conservative tradition and which is devoted to the perpetuation of Jewish values and culture. Temple Beth El honors the diversity of its members and is committed to their spiritual growth."

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Congregants are encouraged to make regular attendance at Temple Beth El a part of their lives.

DAILY SERVICES

Monday through Friday 6:50 AM
Saturday and Jewish Holidays 9:30 AM
Sunday and Secular Holidays 8:30 AM

FRIDAY EVENING SERVICES

First Friday Evening, September–June 7:30 PM
Remaining Friday Evenings 5:30 PM

"Do not separate yourself from the congregation."

—Hillel, Pirkei Avot, 2:5

CLOSURES

The Temple Beth El office will be closed on Monday, September 3; Thursday, September 13; Friday, September 14; Thursday, September 27; and Friday, September 28.

Temple Beth El Hebrew School will be closed on Wednesday, September 12; and Wednesday, September 26.

ANNUAL HIGH HOLIDAY FOOD DRIVE

The Temple Beth El Sisterhood invites all Temple members to participate in the Annual High Holiday Food Drive. Please fill a shopping bag with nonperishable, unopened food items and personal products and bring it with you to Kol Nidre Services, or place the bags in the designated area anytime after Yom Kippur. It is important to check the expiration date on all food items. The food and personal items will then be distributed to Project FEED. Please note that this appeal is separate from the monthly food drive to benefit the Preble Street Resource Center. You can also help by donating the dollars you would have spent to feed yourself and your family on Yom Kippur. For a list of needed items please contact the Temple. Please make your check payable to TBE Sisterhood Food Drive and drop it off at the Temple office or mail it to: TBE Sisterhood, 400 Deering Ave., Portland ME 04103.



Temple Beth El is a member of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.



Funding for Temple Beth El Religious School has been generously provided by the Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine, through its Annual Campaign.

TEMPLE BETH EL HIGH HOLIDAY SERVICES

It's September and we are of course preparing for the High Holidays. Below is a list of services; you will notice that much of the schedule is the same as past years but there have been a few changes. First, we will meet for Tashlich at the intersection of Baxter Boulevard and Dartmouth Street on the first day of Rosh Hashanah at 5:30 PM. Second, please note that we will start Yom Kippur evening services at 5:00 PM, beginning with Yizkor. Please call the Temple Office if you have any questions.

■ Wednesday, September 12, Rosh Hashanah Eve • 7:30 PM

■ Thursday, September 13, Rosh Hashanah First Day

Main Sanctuary:	Kol Yeladim: (ages 5 & under) Rooms 1A & 1B • 10:00 AM – 10:45 AM
Shacharit (Morning) Service • 8:30 AM	
Torah Service • 9:20 AM (approx)	Family Service: (families with children ages 6–12) Rooms 4 & 4A • 10:00 AM – 12:00 NOON
Sermon • 10:50 AM (approx)	Tashlich: Dartmouth St/Baxter Blvd. • 5:30 PM
Musaf • 11:15 AM (approx)	
Ma'arive (Evening) Service • 7:30 PM	

■ Friday, September 14, Rosh Hashanah Second Day

Main Sanctuary:	Kol Yeladim: (ages 5 & under) Rooms 1A & 1B • 10:00 AM – 10:45 AM
Shacharit (Morning) Service • 8:30 AM	
Torah Service • 9:20 AM (approx)	Family Service: (families with children ages 6–12) Rooms 4 & 4A • 10:00 AM – 12:00 NOON
Sermon • 10:40 AM (approx)	
Musaf • 11:00 AM (approx)	
Shabbat Service • 5:30 PM	

■ Friday, September 21, Kol Nidre • 6:15 PM

■ Saturday, September 22, Yom Kippur (Please note change in Yizkor time.)

Main Sanctuary:	Kol Yeladim: (ages 5 & under) Rooms 1A & 1B • 10:00 AM – 10:45 AM
Shacharit (Morning) Service • 8:30 AM	
Torah Service • 9:20 AM (approx)	Family Service: (families with children ages 6–12) Rooms 4 & 4A • 10:00 AM – 12:00 NOON
Sermon • 10:50 AM (approx)	Discussion/Learning in Small Sanctuary • 4:00 PM – 4:45 PM
Musaf • 11:10 AM (approx)	Healing Service in Rooms 1A & 1B • 4:00 PM – 4:45 PM
Yizkor • 5:00 PM	
Mincha • 5:25 PM	
Neilah • 6:25 PM	
Shofar blowing • 7:25 PM	

Selichot and Cemetery Services

Saturday, September 8, 8:00 PM,
Havdalah Services & Selichot Program

Sunday, September 9, Cemetery Visits

Rabbi Braun will lead cemetery visits & services:

Mt. Sinai Cemetery at 10:00 AM and Temple Beth El Memorial Park at 11:30 AM.

August Lucky Day Lotto Winners!

These lucky folks will take home \$25. They are already earning back what they paid for their Lucky Day Lotto books. It doesn't get better than that! If you don't have a book yet, call the Temple office today or stop in and buy one. You will be supporting TBE and having fun at the same time!

- Taylor Small
- Richard MacDonald
- Lynne Gass
- Susie Schwartz
- Scott Snyder
- Todd Mellin
- Patty Weber
- Janice Weber

Computer Donations Wanted

The computers that are currently in our classrooms are old, tired, and terribly outdated. We are looking for some newer machines (Pentium 4 or better), preferably with an XP operating system. Remember, donations of this type are tax deductible! If you have a computer that you would like to have considered, please contact the Temple office with specifics.

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IN OUR TBE FAMILY

Mazel Tov

To Kim and Andy Shur on the birth of their son, Mason Levi Shur, born on July 17.

To Kate and Colin Foye on the birth of their son, Joshua Gabriel Foye, born on July 19. Grandparents are Judy and Dan Gatchell.

To Sam and Bette Novick on the occasion of the Aufruf of their son David Novick and Dena Springer on August 18.

To Kenne Ann Dibner, daughter of Charles and Eddy Ann Dibner, who has been awarded the prestigious Erickson Research Fellowship in addition to being accepted into the doctoral program in education policy at Michigan State University. The fellowship is awarded annually to an incoming doctoral student who shows exceptional promise.

Please let the Temple Beth El office know about your simchas so we can share them with the community!

We mourn the passing of:

Ruth Barkin, grandmother of Jeffrey Barkin, on August 13, in New York.

THE YEAR 5768 APPROACHES

As I write this month's column, on this hot, muggy day in early August, it is difficult to imagine that as you read this we will be ushering in a new school year for our kids, the start of the fall season in just a few short weeks, and of course, preparation for the High Holidays. It is an understatement to say that overseeing our synagogue throughout the year as well as preparing for the High Holidays at Temple Beth El is a group effort.

I will not have the opportunity to name all that deserve a thank you in this month's column. However, I do want to highlight the efforts of a few. I extend a thank you to our Executive Director, Liz Rose-Cohen. In addition to overseeing the day-to-day administrative functions of our synagogue and adeptly overseeing the many transitions that have occurred in the office during the last year, Liz has also done a wonderful job coordinating many of the repairs and improvements that are taking place at Temple Beth El this summer. The list of this work is long but just to name a few: the painting of the school wing, small chapel, and main sanctuary; the replacement of the doors leading to the courtyard; and the installation of the new handicap accessible Torah reading table. I also cannot thank enough the wonderful work of Gil Dichter's House Committee and that Committee's almost daily involvement in this repair work.

I also thank Liz for initiating, developing, and implementing our Open House on August 21. This Open House had something for everyone in our congregation. I also thank Jodi Veysey who has provided invaluable support in the office during her first year with us. I hope that you have all had the opportu-

nity to meet Jodi; she has been a wonderful addition to our office.

I want to thank the Ritual Committee led by Judy Gatchell. Not only has the Ritual Committee rolled up its collective sleeves and lined up nearly all of the daveners and Torah readers for a good

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P R E S I D E N T
R I C K F I N B E R G

part of the summer, this Committee has worked diligently to increase the number of congregants who are able to lead various parts of Shabbat services. These

...overseeing
our synagogue
throughout the
year ... at
Temple Beth El
is a group
effort.

efforts will serve our congregation well for years to come. If you have an interest in becoming more involved in our services, I encourage you to please contact Judy. Finally, the Ritual Committee has devoted a significant number of hours coordinating all of the many honors that are provided to congregants during the

High Holiday services.

Education Director Avis Smith and the Hebrew School committee didn't have much of a summer break as they have been busy with teacher interviews to make sure that our Hebrew School remains a crown jewel of this synagogue. We also thank Avis for all of the additional help she provided to B'nai Mitzvah students this spring and summer. Though Avis is always involved in our kids' education and oversees their B'nai Mitzvah training, Avis graciously took on additional duties with the departure of Cantor Ross at the end of June. With her help, we were able to bridge the gap between the B'nai Mitzvah training Cantor Ross provided and the training that Cantor Marlowe is now providing to kids who will be called

see **Finberg** page15

WE'VE FOUND ANOTHER ONE — CUNEIFORM TABLET SUPPORTS BIBLICAL ID FROM JEREMIAH

It is the year 587 BCE and Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, is poised to lay siege to the city of Jerusalem, where the prophet Jeremiah is roaming the streets, offering God's forecast of both a terrible punishment and an ultimate reconciliation.

The eyewitnesses to this event are known to us mainly from the Book of Jeremiah, but now the identity of one of those figures has been confirmed by a small cuneiform clay tablet in the British Museum. Its translation is being hailed as a significant breakthrough in confirming the existence of, in this case, an important Babylonian official.

The tablet, part of the museum's extensive ancient Near Eastern collection, describes a payment of gold made in the year 595 BCE to the temple of Esangila in Babylon by an official named Nebo-Sarsekim. We know his name from the 39th chapter of Jeremiah, vs. 1-4, where we read, "...On the ninth day of the fourth month the walls of the city [Jerusalem] were breached. All of the officers of the king of Babylon entered and took up quarters at the middle gate — Nergal-sarezer, samgar Nebo Sarsechim the rav saris (head of the eunuchs), Nergal-Sarezer the rav-mag, and all the rest of the officers of the king of Babylon."

Nebo Sarsechim is our man. The title samgar is similar to the Hebrew for a battalion commander or assistant, and the title rav saris, head of the eunuchs, is well known to us from the Book of Esther. In cuneiform script — the oldest form of writing known to civilization — the name is pronounced Nabu-sharrus-su-ukin, and the official so-named is

listed as chief eunuch on the tablet, just as in Jeremiah 39:3.

Dr. Michael Jursa, an Austrian archaeologist and associate professor at the University of Vienna, made the discovery

EDUCATION DIRECTOR
AVIS SMITH

at the museum on July 10 — coincidentally, just two weeks before Tisha B'Av, the commemoration marking the fall of the Temple to the Babylonians a year later in 586 BCE. Jursa is quoted as saying, "Reading Babylonian tablets is often

laborious, but also very satisfying; there is so much new information yet to be discovered. But finding something like this tablet, where we see a person mentioned in the Bible making an everyday payment to the Temple in Babylon and quoting the exact date is quite extraordinary." The museum's press release echoes Jursa's sentiments:

"To find a cuneiform reference to someone connected with these remarkable times is rare, but evidence from non-Biblical sources for the existence of any individual named in the Bible — other than kings — is incredibly rare."

The small (2.13") tablet has been owned by the museum since 1920, but it had never been translated. It came from late 19th century excavations at the ancient city of Sipar, just a mile from present-day Baghdad. Jursa was on a routine periodic visit to the museum to work on cuneiform translation when he made the discovery.

The significance of the find in the ongoing debate over the historicity of

Clearly, some point out, there is historical verification for many events and personalities...

see **Tablet** page 15

PORTLAND CHEVRA KADISHA

*In time of need,
one Jew caring
for another*



JEWISH FUNERAL HOME
PreArrangement Counseling

471 Deering Avenue
Portland, ME 04103
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ANNIVERSARIES

SEPTEMBER 2007

- 1 Jay and Kim Baker
- 1 Carla Marcus and Larry Mohr
- 2 Robert and Jean Aranson
- 2 Jack and Rose Novick (59 years)
- 2 Stu and Marilyn Peller
- 2 David and Betty Small
- 3 Russ and Bea Bornstein (62 years)
- 3 Ray and JoAnn Oransky (57 years)
- 5 David and Gina Elowitch
- 5 Jerry and Susan Fine
- 6 Bernie and Phyllis Givertz
- 7 Jeffrey and Susan Saffer
- 17 Ken and Nancy Levinsky
- 18 Joan and Jeffrey Barkin
- 18 Joshua and Anne Rosenberg
- 29 David and KC Stone

REMNANTS OF HISTORY

by Ben & Judy Bertram

We knew that we would learn a great deal as we made our way through the fabulous museums of Israel. We knew we would enjoy the beaches, food, wine, and companionship of our fellow travelers. We did not anticipate, however, the deep feelings that would be aroused by the remnants of history, the material connection we made with ancient Israel. The journey took us through an array of mind-boggling historical sites in Jerusalem and beyond. After arriving in Tel-Aviv, we made our way to the forest at Neot Kedumim, a beautiful re-creation of the ancient Israelites' "land of milk and honey." We planted trees there, tasted the succulent figs and pomegranates, and anointed ourselves with olive oil. The Song of Songs in the Bible, one of the most beautiful love poems of all time, refers to the tastes and smells the farmers experienced in biblical times:


*Your limbs are an orchard of pomegranates,
And of all luscious fruits...
Fragrant reed and cinnamon,
With all aromatic woods, Myrrh and aloes.*

Our connection to the past intensified as we sifted through the soil in an archeological dig at Beit Guvrin uncovering shards of pottery from the Maccabean period. Although we were not fortunate enough to unearth a phallus (an ancient fertility symbol) as a young girl had months earlier, we were thrilled to feel the remnants of Jewish lives from the first century BCE. The ancient ruins known as Beit She'an taught us about the many civilizations — the Israelites, Canaanites, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, to name a few — who once controlled the area. The broken columns and statues provided physical evidence of the great cities that once stood there. On our trip to Masada we had a similar experience, only now we put ourselves in the position of the Jewish rebels who withstood the siege of the Roman troops led by Flavius Silva for several months. Remnants of the siege gave us a sense of how intensely the Jews led by Eleazar Ben Yair cherished their religious practices and their freedom. The enormous ramp the Romans built to hold their battering ram still stands, even after so much of its sand has been swept away by two thousand years of hot desert wind.

The remnants of history took us back to recent events as well. The Holocaust, we often say, was too horrific to grasp, but we try to grasp that horror by thinking about how many people died. Yad Vashem gave us new ways to grapple with the past. The beauty of the place seemed misplaced at first, until we thought of how important it is that we cherish life as the gift that was taken away from so many. The site includes remarkable works of art and a beautiful but sorrowful shrine to the dead children. Photos, postcards, and personal mementos such as a father's

monogrammed watch enabled us to imagine the lives of particular human beings. Our guide asked us to leave Israel with at least one child's name close to our hearts. We will never forget those names.

We also took in the remnants of heroic lives in the form of powerful narratives as we paid homage to settlers buried at Kinneret Cemetery by the Sea of Galilee and the heroes buried at Har Herzl military cemetery. Toward the end of the trip we gathered on the rocky shores of Tel-Aviv, where, on Tisha B'av, Rabbi Braun led a moving reading from the Book of Lamentations and we thought about the remnants of the Temple. Throughout the trip the Rabbi was a spiritual and intellectual leader, asking us to think about how the past shapes our lives in the present. The thought-provoking discussion of this tragedy was no exception.

As one might expect, there was far too much to absorb in such a short trip. We have a lot more to learn, a lot more fragments to collect so that we can have a more complete picture, a more detailed grasp of the past and present. Someday soon we will go back, learn new names, plant more trees, eat more figs, sing more songs, and perhaps unearth an unbroken vase from ancient times that will stand as a symbol of a better future. 



Jon Freedman at Kotel.

We did not anticipate...the deep feelings that would be aroused by the remnants of history...



TBE Travelers at Mount Olive. **Back row, L to R:** Norm Wilson, Tom Berman, Jon Freedman, Adam Arens, Greg Goldman, Judy Wilson. **Middle row, L to R:** Marjorie Berman, Lisa Berman, Gloria Canter, Jodi Freedman, Lisa Arens, Ben Bertram, Judy Bertram, Elaine Rosen, Michele Riley. **Front row, L to R:** Rebecca Canter, Becky DeLois, Rabbi Carolyn Braun, Yisraeli "Issy" Hertzog

Tikkun Olam News: Save your Shaw's receipts to benefit Project FEED!

We have learned that Shaw's is now supporting Project FEED through collecting Shaw's receipts and returning a portion of the total spent at Shaw's to this worthwhile program. Please bring in your Shaw's receipts to the Temple office or send them directly to Project FEED at Woodfords Congregational Church, 202 Woodfords St., Portland, ME 04103.

Project FEED, located in the basement of Woodfords Congregational Church, is an emergency food depot for people who are in a crisis situation and unable to find help elsewhere. Project FEED serves clients Tuesday through Friday (except holidays) from 1:00–3:00 PM and is staffed completely by volunteers who interview clients, assist clients with food choices, restock the pantry, prepare literature for client use, and assist in record keeping for the pantry. Founded in 1975, Project FEED is an interfaith effort which was begun by local faith and lay leaders who recognized a need in Portland for an emergency food pantry. Project FEED is supported by 25 churches and 2 synagogues, including Temple Beth El. Learn more about how you can help Project FEED at our Tikkun Olam Fair on November 4 (see below).

We are continuing to collect food and personal care items for the Preble Street Resource Center. They have told us that they have been running low on kitchen staples such as beans, rice, pasta, and canned tomatoes, and have requested these items, for which they are deeply appreciative. Please bring in any of these food items or a toiletry item each time you come to the building. Towels in good condition and

white socks are always welcome as well.

The fourth Thursday of the month continues to be the evening, from 5:00 to 7:30 PM, during which Temple Beth El members join with Bet Ha'am and other community members to serve dinner at the Wayside Soup Kitchen. For further information, please contact Harlan Baker at 772-9640, or just show up at the soup kitchen on the 4th Thursday of the month.

The Tikkun Olam Committee meets Sunday mornings approximately monthly, and we welcome new members. For more information, call Barbara Peisner at 797-6651, email bpeisne1@maine.rr.com, or just show up at a meeting...we'd love to have you join us! 🕊

■ SAVE THE DATE!!!

On November 4, the Tikkun Olam Committee will be sponsoring a Tikkun Olam Fair from approximately 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM. The Fair will be a fun way to learn about various opportunities for Tikkun Olam in our community. We will be inviting many charitable organizations in the Portland community to let us know about their work and how people could participate in helping them. If you are involved in a non-profit group which needs volunteers and would like your group to participate, please contact Barbara Peisner. We will also be doing a hands-on Tikkun Olam project. More information about the Tikkun Olam Fair will follow. 🕊



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Thanks to the following individuals:

- Barbara Dichter for her many hours of weeding and planting.
- Judy & Dan Gatchell and Ross Goldberg & Rorie Lee for sponsoring the kiddushes in July.
- Lynn Goldfarb for cleaning the kiddush cups, candlesticks, and other silver items cherished by TBE.
- Rabbi Braun for leading the TBE trip to Israel.
- Linda Jacobs for her help with the Temple accounting during the office transition.
- Rachel Muscat for helping in the Hebrew School this summer.
- Ellen Froncek for her donation of books and materials to the Hebrew School.
- The Shalom Committee, the Early Childhood Education Committee, the Adult Education Committee, the Hebrew School Committee and Teachers, the Board, and Staff for their help with and participation in the First Annual Temple Beth El Open House.
- Betsy Weber & Phil Levinsky for playing piano at the Open House.
- Fran Jacobson for securing the Ark & Torah Reading Table for the Small Sanctuary; Harris Gleckman for bringing the new Ark and Table to Temple Beth El; and the Brotherhood for funding all aspects of this project.



Happy Holidays

Libby Blotner

Wishing you a year of Peace, health and joy

Carol and Stu Gilbert
& Family

L'Shanah Tovah

Michael, Rena,
Rachel & Alana Becker

L'Shanah Tovah

Dan and Judy Gatchell
Kate, Colin, Connor, Sam
& Joshua Foye

A Year of Sweetness

Elaine Rosen

Happy Holidays to All

*In Memory of my
beloved Husband, Arnold*

Phyllis Brynes

L'Shanah Tovah

Phyllis and Dan Dunitz

We wish you a sweet New Year

Judy and Norm Wilson
& Family

A Happy and Healthy New Year

*To Alan, Karen, Justin
and Brandon Lerman*

Abraham Benjamen

Wishing you a year of blessing and peace

Rabbi Carolyn Braun

A Year of Sweetness and Good Health

Debbie, Joshua, and Lauren Kanter

Happy Holidays

Kim and Andy Shur
Frederick and Mason

May you be inscribed in the book of life

Doris and Stan Pollack
& Family

Wishing you a year of health and happiness

Barbara and Gil Dichter

L'Shanah Tovah

Lynn and Matthew Goldfarb

L'Shanah Tovah

Sue and Sid Steinkeler,
Jenny and Andrew,
Jill and Jared Silverstein

May you be inscribed in the book of life

Vilean Taggersell and Robert, Renata,
and Caleb Levine

May you be inscribed in the book of life

Myron and Ilene Berman

L'Shanah Tovah

Roberta and John McMahon

Kindle the Lights for Peace in the Entire World

Pearl E. Gerber

Happy Rosh HaShana

Charles Young

A Year of Sweetness

Patty, Ross, Harrison,
and Arianna Weber

L'Shanah Tovah

Shirley and Murray Rosen

Happy Rosh HaShana

Ben Marcus, Anita Bernhardt,
Hannah and Nathan Marcus

Wishing our Beth El Family a Year of Joy and Good Health

Fran and Mel Stone

L'Shanah Tovah

Sara, Paul, Rachel, Claire and Emily
Muscat

A Year of Sweetness

Adele and Richard Mack & Family

A Year of Sweetness and Peace

Joy Krinsky and David Kemmerer
Samuel and Tova

Happy Holidays

To my Family in Portland

William Krinsky

L'Shanah Tovah

Carolyn Turcio-Gilman
and John Riley

A Year of Sweetness

Bruce and Ellen Ruben

Happy Holidays

Bonnie and Jim Klein

Covenant: A Call to Wholehearted Relationship

by Janine Collins, D'var Torah

Shavuot: the time in the cycle of our tradition that not only celebrates but commemorates standing at Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah or, as we will read shortly in Ex. 20:1, "*kol ha d'varim* — all the words." We arrive at this time in the cycle of Festivals having just finished the Book of *Va-yikra*. *Va-yikra* is often thought of as a book of laws. However, a book of laws suggests that the substance of *Va-yikra* is that of a contract with God. Given its place after the book of Exodus, it seems more appropriate to think of *Va-yikra* as the substance of the covenant between Adonai and the people Israel. In fact, the opening verses of *Va-yikra* parallel God's calling to Moses in the opening verses of today's parsha.

In *Va-yikra* v. 1 and 2 we read: *The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying: Speak to the children of Israel and say to them:*

Ex. 19:3 reads: *The Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "This shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel."*

In each case, we hear of Adonai calling to Moses to speak to the children of Israel and, in essence, it is Adonai calling to Israel through the intermediary of Moses. Through Moses, we are called by God.

In *The Women's Torah Commentary*, Rabbi Shoshana Gelfand writes of *Va-yikra* as "The Book of Relationships." She maintains that *Va-yikra* is a how-to manual for "creating and maintaining relationships between people and God." If this is the case, then the sacrifices and other details of observance must be considered in light of what they reveal about how to be in that relationship. Therein lies the distinction between contract and covenant.

A contract suggests an agreement of understanding between two or more

parties but does not necessarily serve to define or develop relationship. A contract generally states that one gets "x" for "y" or that one party will get "a" and the other will get "b" or that one party will do "a," if the other does "b." It is usually sought out as confirmation of the conditions for a needed service or desired item. It is by nature conditional. It expires and can be terminated if one party fails to meet an obligation as stipulated. In some instances, a contract can be made null and void by simply destroying the physical surface on which the contract has been written. Not so with a covenant.

A covenant is not conditional but relational. A covenant may indicate that "x" will result in "y" or that by doing "a," "b" will happen. However, a covenant is more than the words written on a surface. The idea is that all parties of the covenant have an understanding of the nature of the relationship. A covenant, as such, does not expire or become void if one party struggles — or even fails — to maintain that party's responsibilities. There may be consequences for how one acts or does not act but the covenantal relationship does not change. It can not be terminated or destroyed. A covenant is binding — in the sense of binding one party to the other. Again, the text of *Va-yikra* underscores this point. As the Book of *Va-yikra* comes to a close, Adonai reflects on a list of consequences just enumerated — those involving expulsion from the land — and adds:

I will remember My covenant with Jacob...My covenant with Isaac...My covenant with Abraham...I will not reject the people or spurn them, annulling My covenant with them: for I Adonai am their God. (Lev. 26:24 & 44)

In its most basic form, a covenant is

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a pledge – a promise from one party to another. To understand how this fits with standing at Sinai to receive the Torah, we must first look at how the story of the Exodus from Egypt begins, that is, when Elohim calls to Moses to lead the children of Israel from slavery. In *Ver-era*, Ex. 6:2 reads:

God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the Lord," "אני יהוה."

As in today's text and the beginning of *Va-yikra*, the story begins with God speaking to Moses. Moreover, it is here that Elohim identifies the nature of the covenantal relationship; the substance of which is ultimately to be revealed at Sinai, for Elohim does not just say, "I am the Lord" but rather: *I am the Lord And I appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty But by My name the Lord was I not known to them.*

And also I have established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage wherein they were strangers.

And also I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage and I have remembered My covenant.

Say therefore to the children of Israel:

I am the Lord and I will release you from the burdens, of Egypt; and deliver you from their bondage, and redeem you with arm outstretched, and with great judgments.

And will take you to be My people, and I will be your god and you shall know that I the Lord am your God who releases you from the burdens of Egypt.

And I will bring you to the land, concerning which I swore with uplift hand to give To Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it you for a heritage.

Adonai has not forgotten the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – the promise to be their Elohim. However, it is here that the importance of knowing is made explicit.

It is here that we realize Adonai's intention of a covenant that is more than a promise – made than something that binds Adonai to the children of Israel. The covenant is to bind Adonai and the people, one-to-another. "I will be your Elohim" (Ex. 6:7) and "you will be my people." (Ex. 19:5) In the words spoken to Moses, Israel is assured of the promise of covenant but, more than that, Israel is called to be in covenantal relationship. Israel is called – through covenantal relationship – to know Elohim as Adonai. Simply put, it is one thing for Elohim to be "יהוה," it is another thing for us to know: "אני יהוה אלהיכם."

So, how does today's parsha, and the reading of the Book of Ruth at the time of Shavuot, inform us about how we come to this place of knowing? I believe that each reveals a way of understanding; that is, a way of knowing and a way of coming to know. As part of the story of the journey through the wilderness to Sinai, the parsha helps illustrate the process of wrestling, struggling, and finding one's way to the place of knowing. The Book of Ruth, in a somewhat allegorical way, teaches us about being in that place of knowing. The two texts illustrate and teach not just by their individual content but also through the way that the content of each stands in tension.

First, is the tension in regard to experiencing Adonai's presence – the Shekhina. The Shekhina is often illustrated with the image of wings as a protecting and sheltering presence. In the parsha, the children of Israel are reminded by Adonai that they have been brought into that presence when (in Ex. 19:4) Adonai instructs Moses to tell them:

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Me.

The image of being borne on eagle's wings as a mother eagle bears her pre-flight young suggests that the children of Israel may be aware that Elohim has brought them out of slavery – they have seen what was done to the Egyptians –

but do not yet experience themselves as being in Adonai's presence; that they are borne on the Shekhina. At this point, the children of Israel lack an internal sense of knowing and must be given an understanding of themselves in relation to Adonai. Through the image of eagles' wings, they are helped to understand Adonai as refuge and shelter. Before "kol ha-d'varim – all the words" can be spoken, the children of Israel must be told that Adonai's expectation that they will "שמרתם – guard" Adonai's words are in relation to Adonai as one who will guard them.

Ruth, as her story reveals, already know this. Her actions and choices demonstrate it and she is acknowledged as having placed herself under the protecting presence of Adonai when Boaz wishes her blessing by saying:

May you have a full recompense from Adonai, the God of Israel, under "כנפיו – whose wings" you have sought refuge! (Rt. 2:12)

Unlike the children of Israel, who must be acted upon, Ruth acted of her own volition.

Similarly, there is the example of Moses versus the examples of Naomi. Moses was the reluctant prophet called by Adonai to a task that he did not choose and for which he believed himself to be unprepared. Moses' response to being called was one of, "Who, me?" Moses required reassurance and signs not only to accept being called but also throughout his life as leader of the Israelites. Only by challenging, arguing, and negotiating with Adonai – and by being in the position of having a special relationship with Adonai – does Moses learn to take on the role of one who reveals Adonai to others. This is most apparent when Moses demands that Adonai reveal something of Adonai's character if Adonai expects Moses to trust in Adonai and to lead the people in Adonai's name.

Naomi, on the other hand, reveals

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KOL YELADIM NEWS

Kol Yeladim is a positive, fun, and educational introduction to the joys of Judaism, Shabbat, and the holidays for children ages 0-5 and their families. We are pleased to announce our new facilitator for the coming year, Amy Brier. Amy is an experienced and creative early childhood educator. This year's programs promise to be exciting and fun.



at 10:00 AM each day. We will celebrate Simchat Torah on Friday, October 5 at 10:00 AM and Shabbat on October 20 at 9:30 AM. Programs for the remainder of the year will consist of Friday night family services and dinners, Shabbat services, and celebrations of various holidays. For more information contact Kim

We will start the year off with services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Shur at ashur@maine.rr.com or (207) 232-0356. 


FROM SUFFERN TO PORTLAND: THE UNTOLD STORY OF TBE'S NEW ARK AND TORAH READING TABLE

by Liz Rose-Cohen

This summer the Temple Beth El Brotherhood secured the donation of an Ark and Torah Reading Table for the Small Sanctuary. The Ark and Table come to us from The Reform Temple of Suffern-Shir Shalom in Suffern New York. While attending a Bar Mitzvah at Shir Shalom in May, Fran Jacobson learned the Temple was planning a merger with another shul this summer and inquired about the Ark and Table. Shir Shalom agreed to donate the items if Temple Beth El could arrange for the moving.

Back in Portland, David Lewis met with the Ritual Committee to show them pictures of the pieces and gain permission to use them in the small sanctuary. The Ritual Committee was of course pleased with the acquisitions and asked the Brotherhood to move ahead. The Brotherhood, happy to pay for the moving of the items, found themselves in need of a mover. Various members of the Brotherhood investigated possibilities but found no clear answer. Then one fine morning, TBE member Harris Gleckman was in town saying Kaddish for his mother, and heard the morning minyan mem-

bers talking about their moving dilemma. As most know, Harris, Riva and family now live in Chappaqua, New York. "Suffern!" Harris exclaimed. "I live quite near Suffern." So Harris, already in the moving business with Rafi headed back to college in the fall, declared he would secure a van and drive the Ark and Table to Portland.

On the morning of Sunday, August 12, Harris arrived in a U-Haul and was greeted happily by the morning minyan. The Torah Reading Table is already in use, and the ark will be reassembled soon with the help of Ross Goldberg. Thanks to all for their work on this project. 

July Service Leader and Torah Reader Honor Roll:

Rebecca Canter

Hedy Cohen

Barbara Dichter

Bob Fried

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Linda Jacobs

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Covenant *continued from page 10*

something of Adonai just by being. Naomi is “pleasantness” and “delight.” Her very presence makes one aware of the character of Adonai. I see her as one who reveals the Shekhina — that embracing, ever-present nature of Adonai. I believe that Naomi is a reflection of the Shekhina that Ruth comes to know. It is in this way that Naomi reveals Adonai to Ruth. Naomi is such the bearer of her name that her return to Bethlehem stirs the people of the town with excitement. The people meet her with surprise after so many years, but she is immediately recognizable to all despite the harsh circumstance that she has experienced. She implores the people, “Call me Mara.” (Rt. 1:20) She sees her lot, her very being, as *mara* — bitterness. The people around her see only Naomi.

This brings me back to the experience of the children of Israel in the desert versus Ruth. The children of Israel face their uncertainty and harsh circumstances with whining, doubting, and challenging. In *Be-Shallah*, we read of the circumstances just prior to those in today’s parsha. At that point in the story (Ex. 15:22–24), the children of Israel, having just finished rejoicing over their escape at the Sea of Reeds, have set out on their way into the wilderness. They become thirsty and find no water; then coming upon water, they find it bitter and begin their soon-to-be characteristic grumbling to Moses. The name of the place becomes Marah — bitterness. I wonder, however, were the waters bitter or did the shifting attitude of the children of Israel make the waters taste bitter? Upon exploring this question, I found that the text itself leaves this point ambiguous. Ex. 15:23 reads:

but they could not drink the waters of Marah because they were bitter

So, were the waters bitter or were the children of Israel?


Ruth’s behavior raises no such question. She, too, has experienced *mara* but remains wholehearted in her convictions. Ruth has shared in the experi-

ences of Naomi and has witnessed the effect that they have had on her mother-in-law. However, when faced with Naomi’s efforts to discourage her and convince her of Adonai’s harsh dealings, Ruth remains steadfast. When Naomi tells Ruth, *My lot is far more bitter than yours, for the hand of the Lord has struck out against me*, (Rt. 1:13) Ruth pledges herself to Naomi. Ruth clings to Naomi as one party bound to another. However, in words that mirror Adonai’s assurance to the children of Israel, Ruth reveals herself as bound to Adonai by saying, “Your people shall be my people and your Elohim my Elohim.” (Rt. 1:16) In asserting her place with the people and with God, Ruth makes clear that she is not just saying “your Elohim” as in “the God in which you believe.” Rather, she is saying “the God as revealed to you, the people Israel.” In other words, Ruth proclaims, “the people whom Adonai has taken to be Adonai’s people are my people and Adonai is my Elohim.” Ruth has no need to doubt, question, challenge, or struggle. Her sense of knowing comes from a place of self-understanding — of self in relation to God. She is at heart standing at Sinai.

Is this to say that having an innate sense of knowing is better than coming to know through struggle and challenge? No. Neither is it to say that the two ways are distinct from each other. I believe that they are, if not two ends of a continuum, then two sides of the same coin. I believe that it is no coincidence that the one parsha between the end of the reading of *Va-yikra* and Shavuot is one in which we find the people Israel back in the wilderness. Likewise, the story tells us that the bitter waters were made sweet with a piece of wood — so bitter into bitter makes sweet. God knows that we must face our own bitterness before we can know the sweetness of life. The struggle is part of the process. The idea is to face the bitterness of life not by asking why it is so but by deciding what can be done.

To look at this in another way, I use the example of my Hebrew name: *Ya’akova Rut*. I have always realized the tension between the two names but my awareness and appreciation of that tension has grown with time. Jacob and Ruth. Jacob is a man, and Ruth is a woman. Jacob represents the people Israel, and Ruth stand individually. Jacob is approached by God to be in particular relationship, and Ruth approaches God by affirming that particular relationship. Jacob doubts and wrestles with God, and Ruth faces God with certainty. Israel struggles with God through the wilderness, and Ruth places herself under the refuge of God. Just as each reflects an integral part of my experience, each is an integral part of the story.

With freedom comes responsibility but the struggle to accept God’s call and to be God’s people inevitably leads to a place of wholehearted conviction. In the wilderness, the children of Israel move from slavery to freedom — from enslaved individuals to a people of responsibility. After all, it is only after the struggle through the wilderness that all of the people Israel are able to stand at Sinai and say as one, “All the words of Adonai, we will do.” (Ex. 19:8)

Now we, the people Israel, again are at Sinai. In a moment when our rational understanding of time is suspended, we arrive from the wilderness both with full knowledge of God’s covenant and in need of its revelation. In this one moment, we join with God in time, space (or place), and in our innermost selves. In a communal act that draws God near to each individual, we stand as a people. As God’s people, we meet God’s promise with our own — a pledge to be bound by the covenant; all of God’s words, we will do. Therefore, every time we go to sleep, open our eyes, take a breath, use our bodies, put something into our mouths, allow something to issue from our mouths, or relate to another person, we will know: “אני יהוה אלהיכם.” 

KIDS KEHILLAH 2007–2008

by Debbie Kanter

One of the most important reasons children are in Hebrew School is to learn how to lead a service and become familiar with the prayers that will be part of their Jewish lives forever. Their teachers can help them learn how to read or chant a prayer, but without actually participating regularly in a service, the process can seem meaningless.

Question: *How can you help your children achieve our mutual goal of learning Tefillot and feeling comfortable at services?*

Answer: *By coming to Kids Kehillah services!*


Kids Kehillah is a special one-hour service held in the school wing especially for children (and their families) in grades kindergarten through five. It provides an opportunity for your children to practice the songs/prayers they have learned, to become familiar with new ones and to

help lead a family-friendly age appropriate service. It also provides families with an opportunity to meet each other.

This year we will be holding 19 services. The first one on September 29 will be a family Sukkot service.

The remaining services will have a grade assigned to help lead. Each grade has been assigned for three services. Everyone in every grade is certainly welcome each time.

Parents: I know that families have busy/hectic schedules and Saturday morning services may seem like another obligation. Instead think of it as an opportunity to lead by example and to spend time with your family in a relaxed Shabbat setting.

If you do have organized activities scheduled for Saturday at 9:30 AM, please consider blocking off the three dates your child's class will be leading and attending together. 

Kadima Annual Kick-Tush, Kick-Off Sukkah Party


by Natalie Ladd & Steve Berg, Kadima Co-Advisors

Kadima's first event of the '07-'08 school year will be held at Natalie Ladd's house (12 Deepwood Drive, Portland) immediately following Hebrew School on Sunday, September 30 from 12:15 PM – 2:30 PM, rain or shine. We'll decorate the Sukkah, grill kosher hot dogs, play games, and vote on a Mitzvah project. Please dress appropriately.

Remember: ALL Jewish children of Kadima age (Grades 4, 5 & 6) are wel-

come to join us.

Parents: Please plan on transporting your children (or carpooling!) and picking them up on time. If you weren't able to register your child for Kadima on the first day of Hebrew School, please contact Natalie at 878-3477 ASAP to sign your child up for a fun-filled year of Kadima activities.

Kadima is the middle school age affiliate of USY and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. It's also the Hebrew word for "Forward!" 



Kids Kehillah Dates

September 29 – Sukkot Family Service

October 13 – 5th grade leading

October 27 – 3rd grade leading

November 10 – 2nd grade leading

December 1 – 6th grade leading

December 8 – Kindergarten/First grade leading

December 15 – 4th grade leading

January 5 – 5th grade leading

January 12 – 3rd grade leading

February 2 – 2nd grade leading

February 9 – 6th grade leading

March 1 – Kindergarten/First grade leading

March 15 – 4th grade leading

March 29 – 5th grade leading

April 5 – 3rd grade leading

April 12 – 2nd grade leading

May 3 – 6th grade leading

May 17 – Kindergarten/First grade leading

May 31 – 4th grade leading

Please join us!

Join USY Today!

If you would like to be a member of Portland USY please fill out an enrollment application. Also look for a tentative schedule in the mail for this year's upcoming events. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to call or email Rebecca at 272-8680 or rcanter@maine.rr.com.

DONATIONS TO TEMPLE FUNDS

We are grateful for the following gifts to our Temple Funds. Donations not designated for specific funds will be placed in the General Fund.

Donations to a Temple Fund provide a wonderful opportunity to remember loved ones, honor friends and family and continue to bring strength to our Temple Beth El community. We encourage your donations and welcome your thoughtfulness.

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Olivia Solodar & Elliott Wincele, In Honor of Joy Krinsky's outstanding work during her tenure on the *Shofar*

Norm & Judy Wilson, In Honor of Dan & Phyllis Dunitz's 50th wedding anniversary

Norm & Judy Wilson, In Honor of Bobbie Gordon receiving the Hannah Soloman Award

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George & Ruthanne Singal, In Memory of Louis Singal


Alice Teitelbaum, In Memory of Mary Schraer

Donations listed were received at Temple Beth El by July 27, 2007.


Home *continued from page 1*

guages, we all seem to speak the same language whether we are asking for directions, arguing about politics and religion or planting trees. Where else can you buy a kippah that says, "Boston Red Sox" in Hebrew, while walking on a main street (thanks fellow travelers!)? And our homes of origin... well they really are always home — no matter how far we move from them. Yes, the outside may change, but their essence remains constant. Portland? That too is home for all of us who are here now — whether we come for a few months, or several years. And in some ways most importantly, Temple Beth El is home as well — perhaps mostly during the High Holidays, but, really, all year long. Some aspects may change, but the opportunity to reconnect with our spiritual roots, to hear some familiar melodies, to see some familiar faces, and to be with "family"

never changes. May each one of you experience a year of "home:" memory and longing, a sense of security and accessibility, the aroma of inclusiveness and of freedom from wariness. And may we all experience some peace in a world that is in dire need of it.

Rabbi Braun 

Tablet *continued from page 5*


the Hebrew Bible will no doubt be seized upon by both sides. Clearly, some point out, there is historical verification for many events and personalities; other scholars, however, maintain that "absence of evidence is evidence of absence." But at least for this Tisha B'Av season, we have a new, though ancient, eyewitness to the events, which marked the turning point in the existence of Biblical Israel and the loss of the Temple still mourned by Jews to this day. 

Finberg *continued from page 4*

to the Torah for the first time this fall.

Thanks to Patty Weber and Joan Levy for implementing a new Kiddush program that will allow our congregants a way to recognize *simchas* or remember a loved one's *yahrzeit* by sponsoring a nice Friday evening Kiddush following services. This program has added a new level of warmth to our Friday evening experience.

Finally, I thank Rabbi Braun for all she does for our Congregation. Rabbi Braun led a very successful trip to Israel this summer. Our participating congregants have wonderful stories to share with us about their experience in Israel.

As we approach the year 5768, we can be proud that even with significant transition, we will be able to maintain a strong, vibrant congregation. My family and I wish all of you a Happy and Healthy New Year. 

shofar

Temple Beth El

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