



Bethel-Harrisonburg.org

The purpose of this congregation shall be to worship God in accordance with the faith of Judaism; to cultivate a love and understanding of the Jewish heritage; to strengthen the ties within the Jewish community; to strengthen the bonds of loyalty with the Jewish people everywhere; to bring nearer the Dominion of God on earth through an emphasis on the principles of righteousness and harmony in society at large, and to engage in social action projects in pursuit of social justice and Tikkun Olam (repair of both the human and nonhuman components of the world).

FEBRUARY 2018

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Beth El folks,

For my first offering in the Bridge as your President, I'll combine a brief synopsis of Board activities with a few of my personal observations during this small break in the very cold weather we are experiencing.

First, Men's Club, Sisterhood and SHORTY all reported to the Board that they continue to do their "things" in support of Reform Judaism and Beth El. Second, the Board has decided to continue our practice of communicating a welcome to the parents of JMU Hillel students, to continue our engagement with local inter-faith groups and actions, and to activate our connection to the URJ-RAC Brit Olam project. Briefly regarding this last item, 3 of your lay leaders have signed on to join more than 100 other URJ congregations to do several things in pursuit of Tikkun Olam, including (but not limited to) acting in solidarity with vulnerable communities and building relationships across lines of differences in our local community. Obviously, we will be asking for support of any of you interested and willing to join us in these pursuits.

Before Spring arrives, we have a major event in the planning, namely a fund-raising concert on Feb. 14th at Beth El. Yes, it's going to be on Valentine's Day which is a Wednesday this year. It will take place from 7 PM to 10 PM, with a social hour first and the music beginning at 8 PM. You are encouraged to attend and invite your friends and neighbors to attend. You can get tickets and more details at <https://www.showclix.com/event/valentines-day-concert-at-beth-el-synagogue>. Yes, adult beverages will be available.

Very soon Spring will be upon us and the rebirth that it will bring also signals a time for annual changes in our congregation. A nominating committee will soon be formed to present the Board with a slate of candidates to continue the lay leadership. If you are interested and willing to serve on this committee, please contact me (540-746-3319 or aikconsult@comcast.net). Rest assured, I will be contacting some of you about this directly. ☺.

As I said in both mid-week comments recently, please feel free to contact me with any concerns or compliments about Beth El using the contact information.

B' Shalom.

Andy

FROM THE RABBI'S DESK

Shevat - Adar 5778

Dear Beth El Congregants and Friends,

What a very busy time it has been recently! Unpredictable weather, lots of events on the calendar, and much going on in the community. I hope you have been staying healthy, rested, and calm.

THINGS OF NOTE AND TO COME

A significant event and a highlight in January was the Religious School Shabbat and Consecration service on the morning of the 13th. I am so very proud of the Religious school students for the wonderful job they did, and how well they did it! It was a real pleasure to watch them and kvell with pride! And it was lovely to have six students to welcome to the Beth El Religious school this year as part of Consecration.

January 14th was the Sisterhood sponsored "Hands Only" CPR training, and explanation of the AED equipment (heart defibrillation device) they are trying to fund and install at Beth El. This was an excellent training, and I am sure that others in this series in the year will be equally good. Definitely plan to attend. There was great news as well: the sisterhood is close to funding the purchase of the AED device; they could use a few more donations, but that looks like it will be a reality very soon. Kol Hakavod to them for doing this.

A very sad event was the funeral and shiva minyan on the 17th for Elaine Schreiber. Elaine was a member, and participated with sisterhood. Not long ago she received a difficult diagnosis, and entered hospice care.

January 28th, Sunday, the Men's club is again hosting the Interfaith Brotherhood event. They have invited Pastor Hay and Asbury United Methodist Church to join us this year. Be sure to sign up and attend this fabulous event as we get to know some of our neighbors in the larger community. \$10/person. Les is keeping the list of attendees so be in touch with him.

Looking ahead, February 9-10 is Shorty's ski weekend event. Shorty will lead services on the 9th, and it is always a lively and fun service to attend. Put it on your calendars now!

Watch for information on a dinner and music event at Beth El on Valentine's Day evening (2/14). It should be fabulous.

Purim falls on the evening of the 28th and the day of the 1st. It will be celebrated in the Religious school on March 4th.

CALENDAR

Scheduled Rabbi-led Religious services for the upcoming period are:

Friday, January 26th Shabbat service at 7:30; February 9th, Shorty Ski Weekend Shabbat service; February 23rd, Shabbat service at 7:30; Friday, March 9th, Shabbat service at 7:30; and Friday, March 30th, Passover first seder at Beth El at 6 pm.

IN THE CONGREGATION

[Based on what I have been told and permitted to share. If you wish me to include a notice about someone here, please let me know; if they agree I will be glad to do so. Similarly, if you wish a name removed, please let me know.]

Refuah Shelemah/Mi Sheberach:

Chuck Slott, Marlene and Blaine Brumbaugh, Lynne Landsberg, Dennis Ward, Lenore Price, Dale Brothers, Estelle Robinson, Nicole Rotondi (Sherri Alt's daughter), Joyce Helbraun, Irma Nemoytin, Sam Dailey, Mary Handley, Shirley Gould, Joan Funston, and Elliot Golub.

Baruch Dayan Haemet:

Condolences to Eugene Schreiber, Julie and Thomas Jenkins and family, Ben and Susan Schreiber and family, and Bette Kozak, on the loss of Elaine. May they be comforted from heaven, and may the memory of their loved one be for a blessing.

Baruch Hashem:

Zissel Duda on escaping with only property damage from a fire at her home. May she be safe and protected.

RABBI'S MESSAGE

Topsy Turvy

At the end of the month of February and the start of March we arrive at the holiday of Purim, also called the Festival of Lots. In this instance, the term 'lots' refers to a means for choosing at random, often used in games of chance, along the lines of tossing dice, drawing straws, or picking from a hat. The Hebrew term 'Pur' means lot in this sense, and the plural is 'Purim' or 'lots'. The holiday is so named because the drawing of lots plays a role in the events described that make up the story behind the holiday.

The holiday is based on the tale we read in the book of Esther, one of the five megillot (scrolls) that make up the third section of the Tanakh (Hebrew Scriptures) which is referred to as Ketuvim (Writings).

This book tells of Jews living peacefully in a significant kingdom (uncertain, but probably Persian, and likely following the breakup of the empire consolidated by Alexander the Great. It is thought that the king described in this story may be Ataxerxes II, but that is not certain. Of course, it turns out that historical accuracy is neither important, nor the point.

No matter when or where it is supposed to take place, the story is revelatory of human nature and foibles.

You already know the story (if not, come to a reading of the megillah!).

Trying to keep this article in check, I will simply say that after a plot that is full of twists and turns, farce and drama, tragedy and comedy, things are reversed, the villain Haman is eliminated, Mordecai is elevated to a chief advisor to the king, Esther moves from a passive character on whom the others act to an active participant and leader in the story, taking initiative and bringing

about the action that we follow. These various reversals of fortune are an essential feature of how the holiday is celebrated.

One of the key aspects of this series of reversals is how things that are hidden become revealed, and those things that seem obvious are made unclear, or even invisible. This is hinted at in the very name of the book.

Esther is formed from the root samech-tav-resh: a hideaway, secret hiding place; secret, mystery, unknown, hidden, covered over. It has the meanings, to contradict; to refute; (chemistry) to neutralize, to counteract ; (literary, talmudic) to muss, to make untidy (hair). In essence, Esther is the 'hidden one', the secret or holder of mystery. Her status is not known or revealed to begin, nor do we know anything of her qualities, other than her physical beauty which is mentioned. All else we must deduce from the unfolding of the tale.

In this same sense, too, Esther may stand in as a visible or perhaps near presence, one we can see, even if not know, perhaps as a hint at the truly hidden one, the figure that is never revealed yet always present. The book of Esther is the only book in the Tanakh which does not reference G-d, so G-d is truly secret or hidden in this story. Despite all the reversals and uncoverings, we never 'see' G-d – we can only infer G-d's action in all that takes place.

Far from the simple tale beloved by children, this is a story that is both sophisticated and deep when examined closely, and we can learn much from it – about the story, about human nature, about power and leadership, and about ourselves. This timeless tale speaks across the ages and resonates today. May your reading of the Megillat Ester be fruitful and full of meaning.

Chag Purim Sameach [Happy Purim, Festival of Lots],

Rabbi Joe Blair

CONTACTING THE RABBI

Rabbi Joe may be reached by email at RabbiJoeB@hotmail.com. He reads email regularly, **except** on Jewish Holidays or Shabbat, when he does not use the computer at all.

His cell phone number is 925-272-8563 (925-2-RAVJOE). Please note this number. **PLEASE CALL** if you have any urgent messages or **in case of an emergency**.

Please let Rabbi Joe know if you or anyone you know is ill or would want a call or visit for any reason. You are also invited to contact Rabbi Joe to arrange an appointment to meet or speak. The rabbi will be happy to set a time to speak with you, so that he can offer you his full, undivided attention.

Telephone messages left at the Congregation number are not checked regularly. Please use the cell phone number noted – 925-272-8563.

Tevet - Shevat 5778

Leadership

Rabbi: Joe Blair

President: Andy Kohen

Vice President: Ruth Berger

Treasurer: Peter Kohn

Secretary: Phil Renick

Corresponding Secretary: Cindy Baron

Trustee: Lester Mintzer

Trustee: Andy Kohen

Trustee: Ron Ornstein

Past President: Kim Gutterman

At large member: Amanda Friss

At large member: Gale Clemons

Sisterhood President: Sherri Alt + Rebekah Greenfield

Men's Club President: Lester Mintzer

Religious School Principals: Dara Hall + Liz Webb

Bridge Editor

Elliott Golub

Elgolubret@comcast.net

540-289-5336

YAHREZEITS

02	Emmanuel Loewner	1894	Member
	Harry Weiss		
	Morris Myers		
04	Helen Margulis Simon		Fred Simon's Mother
	Saul Perlman	2010	Milton's Brother
05	Fannie Wise	1877	Member
	Pauline Peck		Beverly Zindler's Mother
06	Rae Trubitz		Mark Trubitz' Mother
09	Fannie Goldsmith	1933	Member
	Hortense Wise		
	Harry Moodnick	1982	Ann Mintzer's Brother
10	Jennie Auerbach	1987	Suzi Trubitz' Grandmother
	Ada Robinson	1975	Member (Josh Robinson's Mother)
12	Abel Miller	1945	Member
	Hannah Nusbaum	1937	
13	James Moneyhun	2003	Hillary Krohn's Son
14	A J Goldenthal		Member
	Rosella Wender	2003	Member
15	Fannie Loewner Ney	1946	Member (Eddie Ney's Grandmother)
17	Gloria Simon	2011	Dale Brothers' Mother
19	Ruth Frankel	1975	Dave Frankel's Mother
20	Lillie Hirsch	1956	Member
	Anna Rodbell		Herb Rodbell's Mother
	A J Goldenthal		Marilyn Goldenthal's Husband
21	Adolph Wise	1928	Member
22	Emanuel Klingstein	1971	Member (Cap)
24	Charles Moore		Cleda Frankel's Father
	Milton Mitchell		Jerry Minskoff's Brother
25	Julia Hirsch Canning	1945	
	Samuel Loewner	1894	Founding Member (Made the Ten Commandment Tablets above the Torahs.)
	Herman Heller		
	Sydney Nathanson		
	Joseph Strauss	1983	Mark Strauss' Father
26	Ida Fielder	2002	Arnie Kahn's Mother-In -Law
28	Sam Lane	2007	Stuart Liss' Uncle

DONATIONS

[To the Yahrzeit Memorial Fund](#)

Eddie & Margee Greenfield-Ney In memory of Gerald Greenfield (Margee's Father).

Michael & Maureen Goldberger In memory of Sadye Goldberger (Mike's Mother).

Michael & Nancy Clayman In memory of Harry Clayman (Mike's Father).

Arnie Kahn & Elly Swecker in memory of Lester Kahn (Arnie's Father).

In Memory of Alan Gould

Shirley Gould

In Memory of Elaine Schreiber

Eugene Schreiber

Bill & Leslie Ney

Eddie & Margee-Greenfield Ney

In Memory of Syra Weiss

Esther Minskoff

In Memory of Joshua Robinson and in Honor of Estelle Robinson

Carol & Louis Schep

[To the General Fund](#)

The Gorkitz Foundation

In Honor of the Bris of Jason Black and special thanks to Rabbi Joseph Blair and Dr. Phil Renick.

Dave & Diana Black

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL / SHORTY

The New Year started off perfectly because our students did a marvelous job leading Saturday morning Shabbat services on January 13th! Thanks so much to Morah Madeline for her organization, Moreh Ron for his music, and Rabbi Joe and all of our teachers and students for their hard work in preparation! We consecrated a number of new students and enjoyed a delicious Kiddush luncheon organized by several sisterhood members. I know the parents and congregants were just as proud as I was of our amazing students!

We have much to look forward to. On January 28th, we will enjoy a Tu Be'Shevat seder at 11:00 during religious school with all of our preschool and religious school families. February will be a busy month of instruction, and on March 4th we will celebrate Purim. We hope to see you there!

L'shalom,

Dara

SHORTY

Our big ski weekend event is just around the corner! Please join us as we welcome youth and their advisors from many other synagogues for services on Friday, February 9th at 7:30pm. Our youth will stay for a shul-in at Beth El that evening and we will enjoy ourselves at Massanutten on the 10th.

Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month

By Rabbi Lynne Landsberg

Traditionally, the Jewish community commemorates the Sabbath before Purim with a special reading that begins with the word *zachor* — “remember.” The passage reads, “Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey after you left Egypt — how undeterred by fear of God, he surprised you on the march, when you were famished and weary and cut down all the stragglers in your rear” (Deuteronomy 25:17-18).

It is especially fitting that Shabbat *Zachor* falls this year during the month of February (2/24), which the Jewish community has designated as Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month. The Hebrew word in Deuteronomy that we translate as “stragglers” — *ha-necheshalim* — appears only once in the entirety of the Bible. To explain its meaning, the medieval commentator Ibn Ezra suggests that its Hebrew root may have a meaning similar to a more common Hebrew root that means “to be weak.” As such, he took *ha-necheshalim* to mean “those who did not have power to walk.” Similarly, Rashi (11th century) understands it to mean “those who lack strength,” though he adds that this is “on account of their sin.”

Who were “the stragglers in your rear”? They were the slow, the weak, the enfeebled — the invalids. Perhaps in ancient times, these people were, in fact, considered *invalid* human beings and so the Israelites abandoned them, leaving the stragglers on their own to struggle at the rear of the Exodus.

Though today we do not connect disability with sin, the invalidation of people with disabilities remains a modern bias. Where are the “stragglers” today? Unfortunately, our society — including many Jewish communities — continues to leave them behind.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau about 20% of the population have some sort of disability. While there are no firm statistics on the percentage of Jews with disabilities, there’s no reason to believe that the proportion is very different in our community. Within our midst exist Jews who are hearing- and vision-impaired, Jews with intellectual disabilities, Jews with cognitive or psychological disabilities — Jews who need more than ramps and designated parking spaces to meet their needs.

Many rabbis and synagogue presidents report that they don’t have congregants with disabilities who require special accommodations. And in one troubling way, they may be correct — these Jews are often *not* present within our synagogues because they perceive they are not wanted there. How many of our synagogues, nationwide, have sign-language interpreters or Braille prayer books? How many offer service programs or congregational bulletins in large print? Only a select few synagogues provide religious school classes designed for children with special needs; even fewer have such classes for adults. Fewer still offer any programs, trips or religious services at all designed to include people with *all* types of disabilities.

Civil rights begin at home — in our synagogues and in our communal institutions. All Jews must make conscious efforts to break down the physical, communicative and attitudinal barriers that separate individuals with disabilities from our community. It is time for members of all Jewish Movements to come together to help our congregants, indeed *all* Americans, recognize that people with disabilities are *people* first — people with unlimited potential, not to be defined by their disabilities.

Hasidic master the Yehudi HaKadosh said, “Good intentions alone not accompanied by action are without value. The main thing is the action, as this is what makes the intention so profound.” This February, the 10th annual Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month, let the Jewish community come together to begin a fully committed and educated process of welcoming Jews with disabilities.

Rabbi Lynne Landsberg is the former Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism’s senior adviser on disability rights and founder and former chair of the Committee on Disability Awareness and Inclusion of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

What is an Exemplar Congregation in the URJ and Why is Beth El an Exemplar Congregation?

First, an Exemplar Congregation is the designation given to only about 40 congregations nationwide that have met the criteria of welcoming and being accessible to people with disabilities.

Second, under the presidency of Eric Kramer, Beth El applied for and received the designation as an Exemplar Congregation just a few years ago. He compiled information from many longstanding congregants and archival records about the many ways in which Beth El is welcoming and accessible and when and how that came to be true. We installed the inside and outside ramps to facilitate wheelchairs about 15 years ago and had been making special devices for the hearing impaired available for those attending services for a few years before that. When it was decided to reconfigure part of the building to add a unisex lavatory about 12 years ago, it was simultaneously decided to make it handicap accessible. About 15 years ago, through the generosity of the Stein family, we had the electric lift installed in the sanctuary leading from the synagogue floor to the bimah. Shortly before that, the Board authorized the placement of the handrails on either side of the steps leading up to the bimah. In recent years, the Board has authorized payments to a sign language interpreter to enable a completely hearing-impaired person to participate in our worship services.

Please note that my descriptions above are not precise with respect to the timing and that I may have overlooked something that truly is an accessibility accommodation. I prepared this brief account at the suggestion of Rabbi Lynne Landsberg whose article also appears in this issue of the Bridge and who rightfully pointed out to me that many newer congregants likely have no knowledge of the ways and timing of Beth El taking concrete actions to accommodate those with disabilities.

L'Shalom
Andy Kohen

Automated External Defibrillator

The Sisterhood will continue to accept donations till the beginning of February to buy an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) for Beth El Congregation.

The device can save a life from a cardiac arrest before EMS can arrive. The American Heart Association advises it be available in places where people gather such as Temples and Churches along with schools, stadiums, convention halls, etc.

The device is \$1090 and the metal case for mounting is \$155. Total needed = \$1245.00

We have collected \$756 from 6 personal donators, our Hanukah 50/50 raffle and the Men's Club who donated exactly half the total cost!!!!

Please send in your donations to:

Beth El Sisterhood

P.O. Box 845
Harrisonburg VA 22803

FEBRUARY 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
9:30amRELIGIOUS SCHOOL and Tu B'Shevat Seder (18)					7:30pmLAY SERVICE	
5:30pmInterfaith Dinner						
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9:30amRELIGIOUS SCHOOL (19)					SKI WEEKEND (SHORTY)	SKI WEEKEND (SHORTY)
1pmWORKDAY (Classrooms)						
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9:30amRELIGIOUS SCHOOL (20)			Valentine's Day		7:30pmMEN'S CLUB SHABBAT	
			7pmCONCERT - Fundraiser			
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
9:30amRELIGIOUS SCHOOL (21)	Presidents' Day				6:30pmFAMILY SHABBAT (child service)	
12:30pmSHORTY MEETING	7pmBoard Meeting				7:30pmRABBI SERVICE	
25	26	27	28	1	2	3
9:30amRELIGIOUS SCHOOL (22). Gutterman Snack			Erev Purim		7:30pmLAY SERVICE	