



קירוב

The Bulletin of Congregation B'nai Israel

Elul 5768

September 2008

*Judaism for Today
In a Warm and Caring
Environment*

FROM THE RABBI

Dear Friends,

As the summer draws to a close, there is no rest for the Jewish soul. We just came from the SummerFest, a wonderful outward expression of our commitment to Judaism and to B'nai Israel. Yet, breathe deeply and...back to work: it is time to begin our inward expression of that same commitment – the High Holidays will be arriving any given day now. Or, actually, on a certain given day: this September 29th *Rosh Hashanah* begins, and it all gets more spiritually significant from then on: *Yom Kippur*, *Sukkot* and all the way to *Simchat Torah*.

Once I saw a cartoon that expresses our tradition's double take on this season: a man stood in a crowded street with a placard hanging from his shoulders: Repent now! And avoid the hustle and bustle of *Yom Kippur*.

In many of our traditional texts, our rabbis keep warning that we should repent every day of our lives. I can only speak for myself and for a few others who are willing to admit it, whose names will remain anonymous, that the moment I hear "repentance" or *teshuvah*, my brain's (maybe my soul's, who knows) reaction is: me? *Teshuvah*? Repentance? What do I have to repent for? Honor your father and mother – check. Do not commit adultery – check. Keep the Shabbat – check. Do not murder – check. Do not give false testimony –

check. And the list goes on, and so do the checks. After all...I'm a good person, aren't I? And I have to do this every day?! Who are you kidding?!

But if I am actually able to stop that train of thought, and really think, I'll find many things I'd have done differently in the past. I'll remember the times when my less pretty side took over, when I exchanged angry words with someone, when I actually gossiped, or diminished others, or caught myself acquiring yet another superfluous thing, or pretended not to hear the need of someone, or spent more hours in front of the TV than Law and Order actually merits. That is why one of the names of *Rosh Hashanah* is *Yom Hazikaron*, the Day of Remembering – we have to drop the I-am-actually-ok-and-nothing-can-tell-me-different attitude and acutely remember our less-ok side – otherwise perfecting ourselves is not possible. And if you are hanging out in this world, there is one thing you can take for granted: you can be better, you can perfect yourself.

Our sages admit that if we did not have the repentance season in the calendar, people would always leave it for...you guessed it...next Monday. The moment to begin, according to tradition, is now. But, just like any fitness and weight loss program, we think tomorrow is better – and we never do it. That's why, eventually, the rabbis established that the *teshuvah* project should begin a month before *Rosh Hashanah* and extend through *Yom Kippur*, a period of 40 days, during which we are to blow the *shofar* every morning, Sunday to Friday. The benefits are similar to

undertaking a long-term, head-on-your-shoulders, easy does it, weight loss program: it is not too hard, and the effects will probably last longer.

A second option is to begin your spiritual work on *Rosh Hashanah*, and do the right thing for only ten days, just as young men and women in this country do during the week before their prom, dieting and exercising to fit into their newly-bought finery. But the question of what to eat and drink and whether to continue to exercise after the dance remains. Some will seize the opportunity and continue to do the right thing, but not the majority, for whom the process will be repeated when next year's prom rolls around.

A third option is the one-day-boot-camp approach. For many people this also works. The high of being able to fast and stay in the synagogue for eight hours, to think and review the year propels many to change their lives. For others, however, the process stops as they cross the synagogue threshold. The moment they arrive, they see themselves as faking it – they have never been connected to this whole thing, why begin now?

During *Rosh Hashanah*, we read the story of Hagar and Ishmael, their banishment from Avraham's house and their rescue, by an angel, from the middle of a desert. Ishmael, later, will become an evil character. And many should ask – why did God save Ishmael, if he will become evil? The answer is found in the text of the Torah itself. The angel says to Hagar: *what is your trouble, Hagar? Do not fear, for Gød has heard the voice of the child, according to where he is now* (Genesis 21:17).

This unusual expression *according to where he is now* teaches us the idea that judging happens according to a person's behavior and mindset, regardless of the past or future. A person is judged *according to where s/he is now* not according to what s/he will do in the future.

When it comes to *Rosh Hashanah* and/or *Yom Kippur*, many people feel like hypocrites, or at least insincere. They haven't thought at all about *teshuvah*, they feel disconnected from the tradition, maybe even guilty about it. And the prayers and the theology of those days do not help at all if one has not worked on them beforehand. But there is a chance that one will break through and remember – remember that the Hebrew words and the God language can be worked on later. What is important to remember is that we can be perfected *according to where we are now* – and the earlier we begin, the easier it will be to get the hang of this project called perfecting ourselves, or *teshuvah*.

Now, back to work!

Warmly,
Rabbi Nelly Altenburger

CBI EVENTS & CLASSES

Mondays at 8:30 A.M. Torah With Modern Commentary

High Holy Day Schedule - see page 4

Sunday, October 12th at 11:00 A.M. Women's Group Meeting/ Brunch

Save the Date: November 9th from 2:00-4:00 P.M. Philip Gelber's one man Art Show at the Ridgefield Library - details on page 5

**Religious School: Tuesdays 4:00- 6:00 P.M.
Sundays 9:30-12:30 P.M.**

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

I am writing this just hours after our third annual Jewish SummerFest has ended. To say that it was a huge success would be a gross understatement. I am immensely proud of the efforts of this congregation to plan and coordinate a complex day of activities that included homemade gourmet food, quality entertainment and engaging children's activities.

We are the Mighty Mouse of synagogues, and while we may not have "saved the day" for Jewish culture, we sure as heck seized it. Isn't it amazing how the area's smallest congregation had the *chutzpah* to pull off a celebratory day of Jewish life with around 500 people in attendance! To stretch the mouse metaphor a bit further, B'nai Israel is the "Synagogue That Roared".

Many thanks go to an outstanding festival committee and the many synagogue volunteers who joined them. Peter Ohring and his team did an amazing job and each committee member, Rabbi Nelly Altenburger, Pam and Shalom Lampell, Barbara Levitt, Paul Simon, Susan Tritter, Julie Leventon, Nada Adler, Gail Boms, Jessica Block, Mary Ohring and Sam Markind worked tirelessly toward a set of common goals. Mark your calendar for our fourth annual Jewish SummerFest, August 23, 2009!

As fantastic as the festival was, I also want to acknowledge something worthy of our attention. Yesterday, for no special reason, we had 60 people at Shabbat services. Sure, there were a couple of out-of-town folks who stayed overnight with family and friends for the next day's festival, but mostly it was our regular Shabbat service-goers.

That too, is a remarkable feat for a synagogue of this size (or any size). *Yasher koach* to Rabbi Altenburger and our dedicated core of worshipers for creating a warm, reflective and intellectually stimulating environment that is attracting congregants and visitors. Whether sixty people or

five hundred, spending time at B'nai Israel is spiritually, educationally, socially, musically, religiously and of course, gastronomically rewarding.

Shana Tova,
Joel



Steve Golub, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism Regional President presented the Solomon Schechter Silver Award for Synagogue Excellence to Rabbi Nelly and Joel. Steve is the nephew of the late Abe Golub, longtime B'nai Israel member and co-founder of Maimonides Academy.

Stew Leonard's Gift Card Fundraising Program



Do your shopping at *Stew Leonard's* because the synagogue receives 5% (sometimes 10%) when you shop using the gift card(s).

Call Cheryl at the office (792-6161) for your gift card(s).

Teshuvah: Overhauling Our Priorities

No one is perfect. Human reality is to fall behind expectations – both of other people and our own. All of us have behaviors we are not so proud of, and sometimes, we are even ashamed of them. And all of us know that there are good things we are supposed to do, which we fail to accomplish. All those shortcomings are ways through which we break our wholeness. We, who live in a broken world, are also broken.

That's why Judaism offers a door that brings us from our reality back to our potential, and from there to realizing that potential. That door is called *teshuvah*, which figures prominently on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and the days in between. It is one of the ways to begin mending both the world and ourselves.

How do we go about it? There are six steps – a mental ladder for *teshuvah* that addresses the causes of wrong behavior and eliminates them. Here they are:

- ***Recognition*** – that the action is wrong. It is the admission of our brokenness. That includes regretting failing to do ritual *mitzvot* that are the bridge between us and God.
- ***Renunciation*** – of the importance of the deed in our lives. This means that our personality does not depend on what we did – we can change! We also renounce the “high” we get out of that deed, whatever it is.

- ***Verbalization*** – both of the action and how it destroyed your life. You do not need to confess to a rabbi, but you do need to say it to yourself. Writing it down is also a great way of confronting the seductiveness (the “high”) of wrong behavior.
- ***Reconciliation*** – with whomever was hurt, deceived or belittled by your actions. Telling it like it is to yourself is a good step, but the next one is to repair the world around you – whether apologizing to another human being or God.
- ***Rebalancing*** – the scales as close as possible to how they were before you did the act that you now regret. This can be achieved through financial restitution, a gift, personal service, or other means.
- ***Resolve*** – not to repeat the behavior. Having recognized, apologized and reimbursed the other party, we must decide that whenever a similar situation appears, we will behave differently.

But *teshuvah* is more than just changing our behavior. *Teshuvah*, in Hebrew, means returning or answering. When it is complete, *teshuvah* replaces our constant worry with our own selves with a broader perspective, recognizing that we are not the center of all life – and that having things is not a substitute for being. We acknowledge being part of a much larger, interconnected reality. In a world that mistakes things for goals and status for worth, *teshuvah* corrects our vision and opens our path to wholeness.

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Tuesday, September 2nd Hebrew School Begins

We are looking for another exciting year in Hebrew School. School this year returns to Tuesdays from 4:00 to 6:00 P.M. and Sundays from 9:30 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. We are pleased to introduce you to our new Hebrew School teacher Robbyn German.



Robbyn German comes to the B'nai Israel School faculty with excellent credentials in education. She has a background in elementary education and a Masters in Reading. Robbyn enjoys a creative approach to teaching -- using her love of music, art and drama to enrich and enhance the curriculum. "I want religious and Hebrew education to come alive!" she emphasizes.

Robbyn's parents brought to their marriage Orthodox observance (her mother) and a reform/secular background (her father). She began to realize the importance and possibility of studying to become a *Bat Torah* when she was in her 30's. She describes the experience as being personally most rewarding and wants to be able to transmit her love of Torah and Hebrew to the children that she teaches.

Currently, Robbyn heads Robbyn's Nest a program for children in grades K-5. She has worked at Maimonides Academy, Wooster School and Cross Roads School in Brewster, teaching children in preschool through 5th grade.

Robbyn is married to Arthur Eidelson and the couple lives in Sherman, CT.

We look forward to Robbyn joining our B'nai Israel Faculty and a year of creative learning for our children.

SCHEDULE OF HIGH HOLY DAY SERVICES - 5769

Rosh Hashanah

Monday, September 29, 2008	
<i>Erev Rosh Hashanah</i>	6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, September 30, 2008	
<i>Rosh Hashanah Day 1</i>	8:45 a.m.
<i>Tashlich</i>	4:00 p.m.
Wednesday, October 1, 2008	
<i>Rosh Hashanah Day 2</i>	8:45 a.m.

Yom Kippur

Wednesday, October 8, 2008	
<i>Kol Nidre</i>	6:30 p.m.
Thursday, October 9, 2008	
<i>Yom Kippur Day</i>	8:45 a.m.
<i>Mincha</i>	4:00 p.m.

Sukkot

1 st Day Tues/, October 14, 2008	9:30 a.m.
2 nd Day Wed., October 15, 2008	9:30 a.m.

Shemini Atzeret

Tues., October 21, 2008	9:30 a.m.
October 21 st <i>Simchat Torah</i> Celebration	7:00 p.m.

LOOKING AHEAD

Sunday, October 12th at 11:00 A.M. Women's Group Meeting/Brunch

Join us October 12th for brunch as the Women's Group has it's first meeting after summer break. The topic will be related to the holidays. Everyone is welcome.

SAVE THE DATE! November 9th from 2:00 - 4:00 P.M. Art Show

Philip Gelber has a twinkle in his eye when he speaks of his November one man show at the Ridgefield Library. The show will open on November 9th with a reception for the public from 4:00 - 6:00 P.M. and will run for the whole month.

Gelber describes his work as oils including an eclectic mixture of landscapes, both physical and psychological (including Holocaust memories) and religious subjects. Also, he adds with a mysterious smile, "People who know my work will be surprised!" This surprise element is yet another incentive to come to the Ridgefield Library in November to see Philip's beautiful work.

GOOD TIMES WE SHARED

THE THIRD ANNUAL SUMMERFEST!

Dear Friends,

Our third annual summer Jewish Festival at B'nai Israel took place on Sunday, August 24 and I am writing to thank everyone who played a part in making it a reality. The ability to organize for the sake of collective action is a sign of a healthy community. The festival was a genuine community effort with large numbers of volunteers working long hours and B'nai Israel can be proud of what it accomplished.

By every measure, the festival exceeded last year's event. A diverse group of some 450 visitors of all ages and backgrounds came to the festival and experienced grassroots Jewish Culture. In my opinion culture should not be an armchair experience; it should be hands-on, participatory, even messy. And that's what we had on August 24. We played the music, sang the songs, danced the steps, kibitzed and kvetched, created the crafts, and yes, we even baked the Challah rolls!

Speaking of the Challah rolls – I want to thank Pam Lampell and the others who worked long hours to prepare the food for the festival including Henry and Sue Tritter, Julie Leventon and Shalom Lampell. Pam and I share a DIY passion when it comes to food and I admire the organizational and culinary skills she brought to this endeavor. The food at the festival was delicious; this will lead to good word of mouth, which is critical for an annual festival like ours.

Much of the effort that goes into planning the festival is hidden from view and I especially would like to thank everyone on the committee for all the work that went into planning the festival: I want to thank my wife Mary for her efforts over the summer to prepare materials and ideas for the great children's crafts, Paul Simon for elevating the all around quality of the festival to near professional levels, Nada Adler and Gail Boms for being such great team players and contributing in so many ways, Jessica Block and Sam Markind

for planning the entertainment lineup and more, Joel Levitt and Rabbi Altenburger for their wisdom, and Cheryl Vanak for the administrative support she provided to the committee.

Not all the planning and effort is hidden from view. If you shop at Upscale Downtown on Main Street in Danbury you know that is where Barbara Levitt conducts her festival related activities including recruiting vendors and sponsors and arranging for radio ads. And I want to thank her for the passion she brings to the festival.

I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the extraordinary support we received from St. Ann's Melkite Church for parking access, New Hope Baptist Church for allowing us to borrow their van, and to Western Connecticut State University, which rented us a professional quality portable stage at minimal price and designed and printed the festival program and festival signs as well as providing microphones.

The festival is an expensive undertaking and we are grateful that this year, for the first time, a number of CBI community members provided financial support as "friends of the festival". They are acknowledged individually in a different part of the newsletter.

This year, for the second time, a number of local businesses sponsored the festival. We are very grateful for their willingness to support this event and the B'nai Israel community. You can find information about the sponsors in the festival program (extra copies are available at the synagogue) and we encourage you to give them your business.

Dr Helen Allen
Dr. John Benusis and Dr. Amy Benusis
Body Talk
Dr. Lisa Curman
Danbury Metal Finishing, Inc.
Deep's Trellis Restaurant
The Gold Leaf Insurance Agency, Inc.
Edward L. Hutchings & Company
Infinity Printing
John's Pizza

Dr. Mann
MarketView
The Music Learning Center, Inc.
Nico's Pizza
Sodexo
Three Brothers Restaurant
Upscale Downtown
Western Connecticut State University

We look forward to our fourth annual festival on Sunday, August 23, 2009 and hope that those of you who couldn't attend will be able to help out and participate next year. Please pick up a Save the Date! magnet for your refrigerator when you next visit the synagogue.

Peter Ohring
Chair of the Festival Committee

THANK YOU FRIENDS OF THE CBI SUMMERFEST!

This year for our SummerFest we asked for donations to help defray some of the costs. There were many "Friends of the Festival" who not only made a donation but helped in other areas of SummerFest as well. Our plan was to include a category in our program for "Friends of the Festival" but during the final days of preparation it slipped between the cracks. SummerFest is a huge undertaking for such a small congregation and if we have still forgotten anyone please forgive us but know how much your help or donation was appreciated.

With heartfelt thanks the SummerFest Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank the following people for their donations:

Nada and Dennis Adler
Nelly and Mark Altenburger
Gail and Abe Boms
Roz and Mel Friedman
Rochelle and Ed Hutchings
Fran and Chris Kimball
Sara Kruzansky
Barbara and Joel Levitt
Dina and Sam Markind
Pearl and Amos Turk





Pictures courtesy of Alice Cahn and Peter Ohring

SCHEDULE OF SHABBAT SERVICES

Services begin at 9:30 a.m.

✧**Shabbat, 6 Elul, September 6: *Shoftim*:** Moshe instructs us to set up just courts to rule our society. "Justice justice shall you pursue."

Haftarah: Isaiah 51:12-52:12

✧**Shabbat, 13 Elul, September 13, *Ki Tetze*:** An array of civil and domestic laws for the Israelites to follow upon coming into their land.

Haftarah: Isaiah 54:1-10

✧**Shabbat, 20 Elul, September 20, *Ki Tavo*:** Come and discuss blessings and curses in Jewish thought.

Haftarah: Isaiah 60:1-22

✧**Shabbat, 5 Tishrei Saturday, October 4, *Nitzavim*:** Moses exhorts the people to follow God's ways.

Haftarah: Isaiah 61:10-63:9

✧**Shabbat 12 Tishrei, October 11, *Vayeilekh*:** Moshe prepares himself and the people for his death.

Haftarah Hosea 14:2-10: Joel 2:15-27; (Micah 7:18-20)

CANDLE LIGHTING

September 5, 2008	7:02 P.M.
September 12, 2008	6:50 P.M.
September 19, 2008	6:38 P.M.
September 26, 2008	6:26 P.M.
September 29, 2008	
<i>Erev Rosh Hashannah</i>	6:21 P.M.
October 3, 2008	6:14 P.M.
October 8, 2008	6:06 P.M.
October 10, 2008	6:02 P.M.

YAHARZEITS

4 Elul, September 4, 2008

Robert Salm (Joyce Shenker)

7 Elul, September 7, 2008

Albert Frankle (Rabbi Judith Frankle)

8 Elul, September 8, 2008

Bessie Lepson (Sol Lepson)

11 Elul, September 11, 2008

Helen Berman (Sol Berman)

21 Elul, September 21, 2008

Abraham Manber (Judy Maya)

22 Elul, September 22, 2008

Miriam Bergman (Pearl Turk)

27 Elul, September 27, 2008

Henry Friedman (Melvin Friedman)

9 Tishrei, October 8, 2008

Louis Eskowitz (Marvin Eskowitz)

10 Tishrei, October 9, 2008

Edythe Nackman (Joyce Shenker)

THANKS! THANKS!

For the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

✧Sol Lepson and Natalie Rapoport

✧Rochelle and Ed Hutchings

For the General Fund

✧Denise and Jonathan Lenchner in honor of their daughter, Madeline's *bat mitzvah* and for the friends at CBI

✧Sol Lepson and Natalie Rapoport

- Mazel Tov to Gail Friedman on her son's marriage

- Mazel Tov to the Boms' on their son's marriage

- In honor of Anna Levitt's birthday

✧Pam and Shalom Lampell *refuah shlema* to Dennis Adler

✧Pat and Alvin Goldman *refuah shlema* to Dennis Adler

For the Kay and Harry Robinson Children's Book Fund

✧Barbara and Joel Levitt *refuah shlema* to Dennis Adler

✧Barbara and Joel Levitt in honor of Barbara and Norman Winnerman's special anniversary

For Their Generous Kiddush

✧Isabel and Barry Kaplan

✧Pam and Shalom Lampell

✧Roz and Alex Bank in honor of their grandson's birthday

✧Pearl and Amos Turk and Marcia Klebanow

✧Betty Feldman in memory of Rhoda Freedman and Lester Feldman

✧Elyse and Jeff Goldshein in honor of their son, Ian Fernando

✧Judy Frankle in memory of her husband Lester

✧Susan Tritter

✧Alice Cahn in honor of husband Charlie and son Sam's birthdays and Charlie's service as co-president of B'nai Israel