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Congregation Beth Elohim
133 Prospect Street
Acton, MA 01720

Michael Rothbaum, Rabbi
Sarra Spierer, Cantor
Beth R. Goldstein, RJE, Director of Education
Susan C. Perry, Director, Early Learning Center
Ezra Habif, Administrator
Lewis Mintz, Rabbi Emeritus
A FREE psychoeducational class for family and friends of individuals living with a mental health condition.

The evidence-based course meets weekly for 8 online sessions and is taught by NAMI trained family member volunteers.

The Family-to-Family curriculum utilizes presentations, videos, discussion and interactive exercises. Learn about:

- Bipolar Disorder, Major Depression, Schizophrenia, Borderline Personality Disorder, Panic/Anxiety Disorder and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Evidence based treatments and therapies, local mental health resources
- Communication techniques, problem solving, managing crisis and relapse, coping skills, and self care
- Mutual support, compassion, and reinforcement from the group setting

The Wakefield based course will meet for 8 weeks via Zoom on Tuesdays starting September 8th, 6:30-9:00 pm. Registration is required.

For questions or to sign up for the class, contact Maureen at 781-864-2336, maureen1maureen@aol.com or Elizabeth at fongef@gmail.com.

Additional info and more online sessions available at: namimass.org/nami-family-to-family/
President’s Message
David Leers
president@bethelohim.org

It seems like only yesterday that I was writing my comments for the June/July issue of The Star. Despite all the restrictions, summer has flown by. At that time, I wrote we hoped to get some answers and a sense that we could return to some sort of normalcy. While in our part of the country, the number of infections and fatalities are at a much better level than country wide, vigilance remains critical. Schools and universities have developed plans as to how they will start the new academic year; the future will determine how this works out. At CBE we continue to take a cautious approach. Services and programming remain virtual, and the plan is for religious school to also be mostly virtual. After a successful summer program, the ELC starts its fall term on August 31.

As I expect you now know, with the exception of a few events (Tashlich and ‘Shofar roadshow’), the High Holidays will be virtual. This is not what anyone was

(continued on the next page)
President’s Message (continued)
dreaming of back at the start of this year, but it is the
reality needed to keep everyone safe. Check out the
website for all details (www.bethelohim.org/high-
holidays-5781—thank you, Maida Fund and Lauren
Salomon). And, don’t forget to register for the many
events which will make these High Holidays truly
special.

Very soon, you will also hear more about the High
Holiday Appeal. This will come as we’re more than six
months into the season of COVID, with more than
180,000 deaths so far in the US, and unemployment
hovering around 10%. It is a stressful time nationally,
as well as for our own community. Our CBE family
members, like countless others across the country, are
facing illness and fear of health challenges, difficulties
with childcare and schooling, loss of income, financial
instability, as well as widespread isolation and
loneliness.

So, in the middle of all these challenges, is this the
right time to kick off a High Holidays appeal? Our
answer is yes. In fact, this is the time to step it up.

In the season of COVID, we need community and
connection more than ever. That has been one of the
greatest lessons of this year—we need each other and
we need to take care of each other. We need a place
we can turn to as a safe haven when the world around
us, frankly, feels like a dumpster fire.

We need the Chesed committee to call us when life
falls apart. We need our CBE family to celebrate our
B’nai Mitzvah, baby namings, and other life milestones
with us. We need to meditate and find peace with
Cantor Sarra, and we need to sing (virtually!) with the
Choir. We need the friendships and community we
have built together here, and we need to fight
isolation so that each member of our community is
welcomed and supported.

We need the guidance and sustenance that our Jewish
values and tradition provide, so that we can remain
grounded in even the most challenging times. We need
to daven together, to recenter ourselves in relationship
to God and our ancestors. We need to study and learn
together with Rabbi Mike, to rediscover the texts and
practices that have kept Jewish communities going
through thousands of years and can still sustain us
today. We need to provide a place for our children to
be together (via Zoom) and learn and grow—which is
so beautifully provided by Beth Goldstein, Susan Perry
and the religious school and pre-school teachers.

We also need to look outside of ourselves and our own
community, to those who are suffering around us, so
that we can hold out a hand in partnership to them.
So that we can work together on a world where each
person is truly treated as though they are made
B’Tselem Elohim, in the image of God.

The High Holiday Appeal is a critical source of income
for us, without which we cannot sustain the necessary
programming and be the same community. Over the
coming weeks, you’ll hear from many members of this
community about what CBE means to them personally.
I invite you each to take time to think back about what
this community has given to you over the past years,
how it has helped you live your values, and what your
hopes are for the future. That is what we are building
together. That is what you’ll be supporting with your
generous gifts this year.

Keep an eye out for the High Holidays annual appeal
letter, which will be coming soon.

We hope to see you all on Zoom during the High
Holidays and wish you a shanah tovah u’metukah, a
sweet and happy new year.

The next time you want to buy a book—or practically anything else.

When you shop using Amazon Smile, Amazon will donate 0.5% of your purchase amount to Congregation Beth Elohim. For easy, one-time directions, visit www.bethelohim.org. Pull down the “Give” menu at the upper right, and click on “Shop Amazon.”

How to Reach Us

Telephone

The congregation office telephone number is 978–263–3061. Dial these extensions for:

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<td>Ezra Habif</td>
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Web Site

Our congregation web site, www.bethelohim.org, includes the online edition of The Star as well as a variety of other information including a bookstore link (Amazon.com) and a donation form.
Well, now I know what it’s like.

As you know, at CBE we take a break from Saturday services in July and August. Normally, Anthony and I go down the road to Or Atid in Wayland to daven with my colleague, Rabbi Louis Polisson. But the first Saturday morning in July, I awoke and faced a jarring reality: we couldn’t go to shul.

So, I did what you’ve been doing. I sat down in my home office, found the link, and logged on to Zoom. It felt peculiar, at first. But I settled into my office chair, my tallis on my shoulders, and found that I could do something remarkable—sit in my home, and pray with a community.

Not that there weren’t obstacles. I learned quickly that there were barriers I hadn’t considered. My desk had bills and papers on it, which distracted me. I found myself self-conscious of my open closet door, visible on my Zoom screen. When I rose for standing prayers, my computer ended up at my waistline.

As we know, the High Holidays this year will be unlike any in the past and, we pray, in the future. We’ll mostly be in our homes, unable to greet each other with a handshake or hug.

But that doesn’t mean we can’t create community. It doesn’t mean we can’t make meaning.

After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, our sages of blessed memory taught that each Jewish home could become a mikdash m’at, a miniature Temple. As in days past, Rabbinic colleagues and synagogue volunteers alike have been experimenting with ways to do just that. Besides my own personal experience, I am grateful to my colleague Rabbi Oren Steinetz and our own Ritual chair, Elaine Braun-Keller, for suggesting ways we can create pathways to meaning and holiness, even in front of the screen. Below are some ways to set both a mood and your heart for prayer.

• Clothing. Though sweats are comfortable, I learned that wearing a dirty t-shirt didn’t put me in the most spiritual of mindsets. I didn’t put on a suit. But taking a shower and putting on a collared shirt and khakis helped me enter into a more mindful and purposeful experience.

• Space. I stayed in my office, but cleared off my desk in advance. Set up your laptop or tablet in a nice, comfortable area in your home, or try using your living room television. Jewish tradition is to face East, toward Jerusalem, during prayer. Wherever you are, consider using a tablecloth or lighting some candles. I used ones scented like pine. It made a difference. I also faced a window, so when I prayed I saw a beautiful line of trees.

• Distractions. From Rabbi Steinitz: “If using your computer, close all your browser tabs. Emails and social media can wait. Change your phone setting to ‘do not disturb.’ We are used to being available 24/7, but trust me, the world will continue to turn if you allow yourself to be 100% present for a couple of hours. You are not missing out on that much!”

• Be mindful of what others can see. From Elaine: “Be mindful of the view you are presenting to the congregation—make sure that when you stand up the congregation is not viewing your bottom half! Please refrain from eating or drinking during services. If you must eat, please turn off your video.” I placed my computer on a small stool on top of my desk. It meant that I was usually at eye-level. And when I needed a refill on my coffee, I switched off my screen!

• Sing!. This one felt weird at first. But when I sang along with the service leader, it was a powerful experience. Try singing out loud, even louder than you would at shul. Nobody will know if you mess up the words or lose the tune. And more importantly, if you let it, your soul may soar heavenward upon your voice.

In a hard time, we remember that we’re so blessed to have homes to live and sleep, eat and learn. For many of us, they are now workplaces and classrooms. And, now, they are a synagogue. Our synagogue.

I feel very blessed to be with you, together, even at such a challenging moment. May God guide us on pathways to each other, even across the miles, and—at this time of renewal and return—to our best selves.
Reviving the column devoted to questions about Jewish history called

**The People of Chelm Want To Know...**

After a decade of dormancy, this column was revived last year in *The Star*. Each month there are now two fairly difficult questions, and you should be congratulated for trying to wrestle with them. If you don't know an answer, you will find it on page 8. This month's questions relate to the High Holidays which we celebrate this month. Please share your new knowledge with your neighbors, fellow congregants, and especially the people of Chelm. In Jewish folklore, the people of Chelm were famed for coming up with bizarre and incorrect answers to even the simplest questions.

1. Rosh Hashanah is a time for renewal. Like Judaism itself, this Holiday has undergone its own renewal as its meaning and traditions have changed and evolved over the centuries. Listed here are several traditions associated with Rosh Hashanah. Try to sequence them in the order in which each was introduced into common Jewish practice: study and preparation during the month of Elul; being inscribing in the Book of Life; blowing the shofar; and the custom of Tashlich, emptying one's pockets.

2. Oftentimes the Talmud holds real surprises. This great repository of Jewish wisdom holds that Yom Kippur is a truly happy day. Over a thousand years ago, it was written in the tractate on fasting that, “there were no days as happy for the Jewish people as the fifteenth of Av (a day on which marriages were arranged) and Yom Kippur.” This holiday involves our reflection on both collective and individual sins, more than a full day of fasting, and solemnity and seriousness unmatched at any other gathering throughout the year. How could it be that Yom Kippur brings a happiness that the rabbis would compare that of the joy of marriage?

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**Join the Postcard brigade!**

As of this writing we have over eighty postcard writing volunteers in the postcard brigade, and have mailed roughly 7000 postcards. The messages on these postcards are not intended to support a particular candidate. Rather, they notify voters whose names may have been removed from the voter rolls on how to get reinstated, or notify voters on how to vote by mail, or how to vote early. I am grateful to the huge groundswell of support this postcard brigade has received in the congregation!

It’s not too late to join our team of volunteers. We still have roughly sixty packets of postcards (twenty postcards per packet) to send out before September 20. Please contact Cindi Silverman cindisilverman@gmail.com for more information, or to join our team.
High Holiday Schedule

Selichot Program—Saturday, September 12
8:00 PM Songs of the Soul with Anthony Russell
9:00 PM Brief Selichot service

Erev Rosh Hashanah—Friday, September 18
6:15 PM Rosh Hashanah Evening Service
7:00 PM Rosh Hashanah Seder

Rosh Hashanah, Day 1—Saturday, September 19
9:00 AM Blessings of the Morning
9:15-11:00 AM Rosh Hashanah Morning Service with Torah Service
11:00-11:45 AM Virtual community court
11:00-11:45 AM Reboot
Noon-1:00 PM D’var Torah and Concluding Service
1:00-3:00 PM Virtual community court
3:00 PM Tashlich
5:00 PM Story and Havdalah
6:30? Jordan Berg Powers, Executive Director at Mass Alliance

Rosh Hashanah, Day 2—Sunday, September 20
9:15-9:45 AM New Year Z’man K’hilah
10:00 AM - 12:30 PM Morning Service
3:00-4:00 PM Shofar Roadshow

Erev Yom Kippur—Sunday, September 27
7:00 PM Kol Nidre Service

Yom Kippur—Monday, September 28
9:00-9:15 AM Blessings of the Morning
9:15-10:30 AM Yom Kippur Morning Service
11:00-11:45 AM Virtual community court
11:00-11:45 AM Reboot
12:00-12:30 PM Sh’ma Koleynu
12:30-1:30 PM D’var Torah
1:30-3:00 PM Virtual community court
3:30-4:30 PM Regular Folks Doing Right
4:30-5:30 PM Martyrology and Mincha Discussion
5:45-6:30 PM Yizkor Memorial Service
6:30-7:15 PM Neila

Join our Food Drive for the Acton Food Pantry

As we prepare to usher in the new year, let us remember our friends and neighbors who are suffering during this pandemic. The need has never been greater for food assistance in our greater community.

Please join our food drive for The Acton Food Pantry, by bringing your bags of non perishable goods to the CBE parking lot. There will be a truck waiting to accept your donations from Tuesday, September 23 at 7:00 AM, through Friday, September 25 at 4:00 PM.

If you prefer, you may send a check to CBE made out to the Acton Food Pantry. 

Join us! Together we can make a difference.

For more information, or questions, please contact Rick Silverman, at silverman@milldandb.com.

Grants for Israeli Engagement Programming

During these uncertain times, with so much focus on a global pandemic, it can be challenging to develop creative ways to engage our communities with Israel. We are living in a “new normal” that demands novel approaches and actually has the potential to open new avenues for outreach, albeit virtually.

In the spirit of innovation and “start up,” we invite members of our New England community ages 16 and up to develop Israel-related programs or activities that will spark interest in Israel and its people. The grant may be used to support either a new program or enhance an existing one. It’s our incentive to be inventive!

Please send us a short description not to exceed 200 words describing your idea. If your project is selected, we will award you a one-time grant up to $250 to execute the proposal. Awards will be determined no later than September 30, 2020.


For questions, please contact: Ruth Kaplan, Director of Community Relations, at community@boston.mfa.gov.il.
Donations
The congregation thanks our members, their relatives and friends, and the larger community for donations recently received...

**To the General Fund from:**
Mark Block & Terrie Winograd Block in memory of Dr. Joseph Block, father of Mark & Robert Block.
Anonymous
Sari & David Kelly in memory of Ruth Alpert, mother of Shelley Sherman.
Eileen & Benjamin Myers in memory of Howard Ross, brother of Eileen Myers, on the occasion of his yahrzeit.

**To the Na’aseh Fund from:**
Sari & David Kelly in honor of our children: Andy & Christina and Josh & Helena, with all our love.

**Cantoral Fund from:**
Susan & Rodney Hass: in memory of Susan Goldman’s mother, Arleen Lenore Berliner.

**To the High Holiday Appeal from:**
Robert & Faith Hirsch

**To the Darchei Shalom Fund from:**
The Acton Coffee House

**Alex Young Social Action Fund from:**
Sari & David Kelly
Christine Brown in honor of Sara Levine.

**Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund from:**
Chuck & Risa Brooks in memory of Jo-Ellen Hirsch, with our deepest sympathy and love.
Kerstin & Robert Mendelsohn

**Amy Naparstek Fund from:**
Andrea Harris in honor of David Naparstek’s birthday and Chips & David’s anniversary.

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**Answers for the people of Chelm and any other curious souls.**
1. Many meaningful traditions have become associated with Rosh Hashanah over the years. Chapter 23 of Leviticus mandates a celebration on the first day of the seventh month, Tishrei, and calls for the blowing of the shofar. The suggestion is one of rest and renewal, though the day is not yet called Rosh Hashanah. The day was thus referred by other names, such as Yom Teruah (day of sounding the shofar), Yom HaZicharon (day of remembering), and Yom Hadin (day of judgement). By the time of the codification of the Mishnah in the first centuries of the Common Era, the day had come to mark the new year and the passing of judgment on the world, when our fortunes are written in the Book of Life.

Not much later, during Talmudic times (200-500 C.E.), Babylonian Jews began to treat Elul, the month before Tishrei, in a special way. They studied, thought, and prepared for the renewal in their lives for forty days, the thirty days of Elul plus the ten days of Tishrei through Yom Kippur. The custom of Tashlich originated last of all. Tashlich comes from the Hebrew “you will cast” and this is quite descriptive as we cast out the contents of our pockets and throw bread into a nearby body of water. According to Aurthur Waskow, in his wonderful book on Jewish holidays, *Seasons of Our Joy*, there is no mention of Tashlich until late Medieval times. Then it spread from Europe to the Sephardic regions in the sixteenth century, primarily through the influence of the mystical Kabbalists of the town of Safed (formerly Tsfat) in Galilee.

2. When they told us that Yom Kippur was a very happy day, the Talmudic rabbis were not kidding. They clearly knew something of our human emotional makeup. As Rabbi Joseph Telushkin points out in his wonderful book *Jewish Literacy*, the goal of Yom Kippur is not self-mortification but reconciliation—between people and between each of us and God. This is a time to reflect, to repair and renew. If we participate fully, Yom Kippur can be a healthy cathartic experience and we can make “peace with everyone we know and with God.” It is thus no surprise that happiness, a happiness accompanied by a deeper serenity, is but one of Yom Kippur’s benefits.
### Congregation Beth Elohim
#### September 2020

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The congregation calendar is also online at [http://www.bethelohim.org/calendar](http://www.bethelohim.org/calendar)
The deadline for the October issue of The Star is September 15.

Articles submitted to The Star must include a contact name in case of questions.

Congregant email addresses listed in the CBE Directory are to be used solely for CBE matters.