



THE SHUL OF NEW YORK

A Synagogue for Spiritual Judaism

NEWS FROM THE HEART



Editor: Dani Durkin

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A MESSAGE ON LOVE FOR THE NEW YEAR

From **RABBI BURT AARON SIEGEL**

Happy New Year, Gut Yontif to
The Shul of New York

Those of you who attend our inspiring services know that I often like to share thoughts about Love with the community. I'm certain that all the teachers of genuine religion agree that Love is the supreme spiritual value. The philosophy of *The Shul of New York* is to emphasize the spiritual and ethical principles of Judaism. Spirituality is about creating space in our lives for God. Ethics is about creating space in our hearts for concern about the well-being of other people.

One of the many ways I think about Love is that it is the impulse and the action of creating this space in our lives as well as in our hearts. After all, Love is spacious. Love is opening. Love is the gradual understanding that the creation of space for God and for others is the essence of a spiritual life. As we grow in our capacity to Love over the course of a lifetime, we discover that the spaces we create to receive God—and people—expand. Our consciousness moves away from contraction and narrowness in order to move toward receptivity and selflessness. More and more, we experience a sense of moving more boldly and deliberately into life. We have a sense of flourishing.

Our Shul is founded on Love as the ground of our religious philosophy. I look forward to exploring with you the many meanings of Love for years and years to come.



Rabbi Burt at Shabbat.

(photo by Dani Durkin)

Love and Thanks

by **Dani Durkin**

This issue of *News from the Heart* focuses on the love we share in our community.

Thank you. Yes, you. It's easy to say that "Love" is the basis of *The Shul of New York's* philosophy, but not as easy to live it. When I stumbled into the services for the High Holy Days in September 2001, I didn't know a soul here, but I felt something significant: earnestness, good will, all-important humor!, and sincere spirituality. I had no money to give. But you let me in. And you gave money when I could not. Thank you.

Thank you for the music. The stunningly talented musicians (all of whom play in numerous other bands of varying styles), led by Adam Feder, with his guitar, with his flowing gestures, and with his warm voice, instantly reached my heart. Your contributions have made it possible for The Shul Band to flourish here. Thank you.

Thank you for Rabbi Burt. Rabbi Burt *shares* the Torah with the congregation, explains its meaning, and infuses its messages with contemporary, relevant commentary. I have never seen a rabbi literally invite members of the congregation to dance with the Torah in their arms. It is a fusion of Love and spirituality and community and action; a physical sense of what we call our "Synagogue for Spiritual Judaism."

Thank you for allowing me to weave myself into your community, and find another sort of family in this city. I decided you were all good reasons for being part of *The Shul of New York*: I started coming to Shabbat services on the first and third Fridays of the month. I came early to help set up. I joined the adult Bat Mitzvah class. I coordinated the onegs. I was elected to the Board! I lead the Social Action Committee. And I edit *News from the Heart*. Among others, I've met artists, musicians, lesbians, activists, lawyers, bankers, therapists, drama queens, Buddhists, people of different races, writers, teachers, clowns, students, drop-outs, CEOs, curators, and healers. Thank you for making it possible for me to be a part of all of you.

The Shul of New York continues due to your financial contributions, as well as your presence during the High Holy Days; your children's enrollment in our classes; your attendance at concerts like "*Verry Villa-Lobos*," a forthcoming violin extravaganza featuring Ernesto Villa-Lobos of The Shul Band and his virtuosi brothers; your donations for our annual silent auction; and your belief in compassion and diversity.

Thank you for sharing this with me—I am grateful that you make this Jewish, inclusive community of joy possible for all of us. Shalom. Namaste. Peace. Love.

**KENNY BOOKBINDER'S (famous) KOL NIDRE
SPEECH SEPTEMBER, 2005 (edited)**

I love this place. I know what it has done for me, for my family, for people I have met here, for friends that I have made who have really become family— immediate family, not extended family.

This is the most special of places.

There is a part of me that wants to pound the Bima and aggressively urge everyone to give, give, give! (Kind of like they do in the other shuls.) This is, in part, due to my passion, but also because I am privy to how badly we need your contributions. There is another part of me that urges me to be mellower. But those of you who know me, know that the “mellow thing” has never worked out too well for me. So, what should I do? Do I rant and rave and carry on?

The Rabbi has referred to this place as The Shul of Love, as well as The Shul of Perpetual Simchas. True enough. But I remind everyone that this is also The Shul of No Minimum Dues, The Shul of No Minimum Membership Fees, and The Shul Without a Building Fund! We have expenses nonetheless, and we are dependent on what we take in on Kol Nidre Night to survive! So, do I rant and rave, or do I lay back, and get mellow?

I decided to seek guidance from that great source of wisdom: In this case, not the Rabbi, but the Torah. I wanted to see how people throughout our history fared with their Kol Nidre appeals.

And it was just one year ago, the very first service of the New Year, where the Rabbi read from the Torah about Noah and then spoke of Noah. The Rabbi told us that Noah was a good and just man. As is our son, Noah, but Noah did not have an EZ Pass lane or have wonderful associates to help fund and collect for his journey. In fact, I did a little research and what you will not see in the Torah is that Noah was actually headed to the Lower East Side, but due to lack of funding wound up on a mountain in Turkey.

Ah, but what about Abraham? All he did was found one great religion and father another religion. Well, the bible says that Abraham had the toughest job with his appeal - that he had the smallest database with which to work (I am paraphrasing here) so Abraham turned to his wife, Sarah, for a contribution. But the bible says that Sarah was barren, and I think we can assume that she was reproductively barren as well as financially barren. In his desperation, Abraham turned to his son, Isaac, but Isaac said, “Dad, a week ago you were ready to sacrifice my life on an altar, and now here you are hittin me up for money, get real!” There is some real disconnect here.



Kenny Bookbinder

So, Abraham's appeal was not successful.

Ah, but what about Moses? This should be a no-brainer: Slave, then prince of Egypt, and then slave again, then chosen by God to confront Pharaoh. He then frees the Jews, takes them out of the house of bondage after 400 years, parts the Red Sea. You've all seen the movie. What a resume! It took Moses quite a while to come down from Mt. Sinai, understandably I think, but the congregation grew restless in his absence. And to make matters worse, if there was any shot at a successful appeal, it was lost because instead of diversifying their assets, they put them in one product, a golden calf. So, Moses' appeal was unsuccessful. It should be noted that right after Moses, Joshua was successful and his coffers began to flow with both milk and honey.

Now, the thousands of years after Moses and Joshua were the most difficult for me to research. Google may be a great search engine, but try looking up Kol Nidre Appeals slash Middle Ages. As we say in New York, “Fahgetaboutit.” It was not until modern times - 1961 - January 19, Erev the inauguration, when JFK said, “You know Jackie, I have this speech to give tomorrow and I can go one of two ways. How does, ‘Ask not what *The Shul of New York* can do for you’ sound?” And the rest is history. Right around that same time, I remember my own father saying to no one in particular that the only thing that two Jews agree on is what a third should give as his Kol Nidre pledge.

But out of all of these people I have the easiest job in terms of my Kol Nidre Appeal. For I am speaking to the smartest, most sophisticated and most generous congregation, and what a team I have!

In Rabbi Burt Siegel we have a Rabbi who is very dedicated and passionate. A Rabbi who speaks of and embraces love, inclusiveness, and diversity. Every year the Rabbi goes to India in a sense to recharge his spiritual batteries. He is the first Jew that many of the Indians have met. What a way for them to experience their first taste of Judaism. Back here at home, the Rabbi gives everyone the foundation and framework, and the opportunity and the challenge to not only be better Jews, but to be better people.

Now, let's talk about The Shul Band, now internationally renowned! Adam Feder is the leader. You all know what a talented musician and vocalist he is, but he is also responsible for assembling the extreme talent you have been listening to. This year Seth has really stepped up in both a musical and leadership role. Dave is a pleasure to listen to on the bass, but even if he couldn't play a lick, he deserves big praise for schlepping that in and out of the subway and up the steps of the Orensanz Center. I know there are many Friday nights when we hope that this is a weekend when Lilly Lavner and Adam Seidman

(Kil Nidre cont)

may be home from their respective colleges so that we can hear Lilly's beautiful voice and Adam on the keyboard. Eileen has been a great addition. And how about my friend, Eli Seidman, who is rarely heard, but makes sure the rest of us are. Did I leave anyone out? Oh yes, Ernesto, the Big E. I was nervous tonight in anticipation of speaking, but listening to Ernesto play Kol Nidre calmed me - really calmed me in a way that I haven't been since last year.

And how about the Orensanz Center? What a glorious place, the perfect place for *The Shul of New York*. 156 years old. A place where so many of our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, have worshiped. Our landlord, Al Orensanz, has done such a great job of retaining the original charm, but with modern conveniences. This year he added new air conditioning and heating. Al, we thank you for all that you do.

Now, if you are someone who is thinking “you know if they get 499 contributions they will not miss mine,” I ask you to get rid of that thought. Every dollar you give comes right back to you. There are no administrative costs here, no lobbyists. Don't cheat yourself. The more you open up spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, and tonight we are adding financially, the better off you will be.

If you are that 500th person and still on the fence, remember what Rabbi Hillel said addressing a similar situation - “if not you, then who?” And if you are thinking, I will definitely give but I will wait till the weekend, or till succouth or lag ba omer, also remember Hillel. “If not now, then when?”

This is the time. This is the place. Please be generous. ☆



High Holy Day Services 2005.

(photo by Paula Goldfader)

The Shul of New York web site
is now equipped to handle credit card donations!
Just visit www.theshulofnewyork.org and
click “Donate Now.” Instructions are on line.

SPIRITUAL JUDAISM IN INDIA

by Rabbi Burt Aaron Siegel

Two wonderful members of *The Shul of New York* accompanied me this year on my annual trip to India: Christina Wright and Noah Baumwoll. Our journey was primarily to the International Yoga Festival in Rishikesh, sponsored by my ashram, Parmarth Niketan. My intention in inviting Shul members to join me was to create an opportunity for spiritual growing. We are *The Synagogue for Spiritual Judaism*, and our fundamental mission is to support the spiritual development of the people in our community. Our philosophy is one of inclusiveness. I wanted to provide an opportunity to members of the Shul to learn about the deep spiritual insights of Yoga Philosophy, and to make those insights part of their personal spiritual philosophy if those insights made sense and seemed beneficial.

Yoga is a spiritual teaching that can be incorporated into any religion. It is completely compatible with all expressions of liberal Judaism. Yoga is a teaching about the nature of the mind and how the mind can be controlled and its energy harnessed toward the creation of a wholesome life. This cultivation of mind and Judaism's profound affirmation of life can be a very joyous blending that leads to a high level of spiritual development.

I was honored to share with the many hundreds of people from all over the world who participated in the festival my understanding of the basic one-ness of all religious teachings, and my ideas about the meaning of a spiritual life. As we know, there are countless people all over the world who know very little about Judaism and have had very limited, if any, contact with Jews. I am certain that our little delegation from *The Shul of New York* enabled many people to understand more about Jews and Judaism. And we, in turn, learned about other cultures and people.

These experiences of sharing and learning will help break down the barriers that divide and separate God's one human family. Our journey to India was a most successful effort to extend the philosophy of our amazing Shul. ☆



Rabbi Burt (far right) with other spiritual leaders by the Ganges River.

Home, and Jewish, on the Banks of the Ganges by Noah Baumwoll

(Noah, a member of *The Shul of New York*, accompanied Rabbi Burt to Rishikesh for the International Yoga Festival in March, 2006.)

First, I want to thank this amazing Shul and our incredible trail-blazing Rabbi for the opportunity to share and participate in the launching of The Shul of India!

The other day I sent out pictures from the trip to lots of people and, after looking at them again, I see how elevated and filled with bliss my expression is in every picture. Based on people's reactions to the photos, it is clear to me that my face looks different from the usual posed smile we make in photos. While I was in Rishikesh, peace and love were tangible entities, and I felt that to the core of my being.

On the first day of the yoga festival, Swami Muniji said we were "the chosen ones, the special ones" and I felt that Godliness, the "special" quality during my time at the ashram. I met other "special ones" there from all over the world and truly came to understand that it doesn't matter where you are from or whom you worship; we all are One. That is the concept of yoga. That Oneness. It is something we affirm every Shabbat. "Adonai Echad."

The Swami said to us "welcome home," and I felt that in a profound way. On the banks of the holy river Ganges, chanting praises to the river and to God, I felt "these are the chants of the children of Zion, these are the ancient songs of all humanity." It felt Jewish. My soul felt at home.

We celebrated the light of the day and the light of the human soul by holding lamps and raising them up to the sky. After the Aarti service, which is like our Shabbat (but every evening), we waved our hands over the lamp and received our bhindi. (The symbol of the third eye that opens divine consciousness.) The act of waving our hands over the light is right out of our service when we ask God to bless us with Shabbat Joy, Peace, and Love. The first night during the singing and chanting, the Swami added the chant of "Shalom" and it flowed perfectly into the chant of "OM."

On the last night of the festival, our rabbi made a powerful speech. He talked about the greater sense of unity and peace between all peoples of the world. He called out all the names of God from all nations of the world, and led everyone at the festival and visitors in the chanting of Shalom. And we were One. It is no coincidence to me that the word for peace in Hindi is "Shanti" and *Shanti* is manifested in the sound "OM, SH and OM."

Over the course of the trip, we visited several Hindu temples and shrines to different deities. Rabbi Burt helped us to feel at home in any temple we visited, and helped us to see that all of the deities and shrines are just visual and perceptible manifestations of the same one God. By worshipping a specific

deity, a Hindu person develops a personal and familiar relationship with God. It is not the statue or the idol that is worshiped, just that aspect of the one God that it represents.

My days there were totally filled with yoga. I came to understand that yoga is not just the physical practice of asanas, but a whole way of life. From getting up before the sun, to eating vegetarian, to making time for meditation. Yoga is about transforming yourself into a cleaner and clearer vessel to hold your true highest self.

In addition to having the privilege of sharing this awakening spiritual experience with my Rabbi, the trip was made even more special by the inclusion of our Indian friends, Anup and Mandar. They are shining examples of lives lived in yoga with peace and love. Anup, who is from Rishikesh, welcomed us into his home and we had a true Indian meal, eaten with our hands. The trip was also made special by the inclusion of Christina Wright, who is a true Yogini and offered wonderful grounding and balance to our little group.

Thank you again to *The Shul of New York* for making this life changing and uplifting experience possible for me. To the congregation I say

"NEXT YEAR IN RISHIKESH!!!"



***The Shul of New York* Silent Auction**

The Silent Auction was a resounding success this spring! Although a separate letter and/or email will be sent urging you to donate for the spring 2007 auction, donations are gladly (and eagerly!) accepted throughout the year.

The "Letter of Introduction" and forms can be found on our web site at www.theshulofnewyork.org. In addition, feel free to email Joy Mach at JMach@nyc.rr.com for more information.



Noah Baumwoll in the Ganges River.

Remembering MIKE BAUM (1935 - 2006)

by Kenny Bookbinder

Mike Baum was a friend of mine. Mike was a friend to *The Shul of New York*. Mike and Myra Baum were original members of the Shul, as well as board members, and brought vision, integrity, and class to the Shul and to the board.

The first or second time I came to services, Mike came up and introduced himself and said, "That was a beautiful service, wasn't it?" We chatted, and I remember on the ride home I said to Mary, my wife, that I had just met the nicest little man.

After that, Mike and I would seek each other out both before and after services. He always said, "That was a beautiful service, wasn't it?" But each time he said it, he meant it. And he said it not with a twinkle in his eye, but with a boyish charm. It was so genuine, it was as if he had never said it before. We would schmooze after the service en route to the oneg table (even if the Rabbi said not to) and soon found out that we had several things in common: notably, a love for baseball and an interest in the stock market.

I attended one of Mike's lectures on investing, and one time he spent a couple of hours on his computer showing me the basis for his technical analysis —with his oscillator, et al. Much of it was beyond my understanding (and some of it was beyond my level of interest!), but I was more taken with his passion than with the information.

We would also talk about baseball - and I would kid him that, even though he was older than I, I had been a Yankee fan longer than he was a Mets fan. But that was easy, as the Mets were the newer team! Mike was sharp as a tack, enthusiastic, and involved.

At Mike's funeral service on April 24, 2006, I got to meet his sons, and had the opportunity to hear them, as well as Mike's friends, speak about this wonderful man. I learned more about him, and I am so sorry that I didn't know him longer or better. Those of us who knew him, and those of us who would have gotten to know him, are all cheated by his untimely passing.



NORFOLK STREET IN LITERATURE! by Lou Blumengarten

We worship on Norfolk Street, an insignificant street nestled between Essex and Suffolk Streets, all three named after counties in northeast England. But Norfolk Street has special meaning for all of us. It has further meaning to me because my maternal grandmother, Sadie Olshin, nee Elkin, was born at 113 Norfolk Street on May Day, 1890.



Mike Baum
photo by Paula Goldfader

I have found what I suspect are the only references to Norfolk Street in literature: there are eleven references to it in Sholem Asch's short novel, *Chaim Lederer's Return*. Written in 1919 when the Lower East Side was known as the "East Side" (and people from the neighborhood were called "East-Siders"), the novel was translated from the Yiddish into German, Russian, Polish and other languages before being translated into English in 1938.

It opens with the celebration of the forthcoming retirement of Chaim Lederer, a prosperous shirt manufacturer whose office and manufacturing premises were now on Broadway and his home, now more grand, on Flatbush, in Brooklyn. But formerly, he and his wife lived in a tenement and worked on Norfolk Street, and he often yearned for his life there as a workman and tenement-dweller. This quote from page 86 of the novel illustrates that: "I was happier back on Norfolk Street. Two poor little rooms, that was what we had. And I was so happy! I had to work for my wife and children then; it was sweet to work. What do I have now? Nothing, nothing I don't have a thing!"

Chaim Lederer's Return deals with some important themes including the problem of what to do with retirement and what is the meaning of life. By no means is it the "Great American Novel," but it is a well-written work, albeit old-fashioned, and the references to Norfolk Street were a pleasant surprise.



FAMILY SHABBAT SERVICES

We needed a service where you could dance while everyone else was sitting, or sit while everyone else was dancing!

by Dara Kessler

When our son, Miles, was born in July 2005, my husband, Seth, and I were both very excited to introduce him to the amazing, inspiring music and services at *The Shul of New York*. We soon realized that keeping Miles up past his 6:30 pm bedtime to attend *The Shul of New York's* Friday night services was unfair to him, and unsatisfying to us. We knew we weren't the only new parents who needed a service that took place early enough to accommodate early bedtimes—and kids of all ages. We needed a service where you could dance while everyone else was sitting, or sit while everyone else was dancing. Sing when you're supposed to be quiet, or be quiet while everyone else was singing. Rabbi Burt agreed, and *The Shul of New York's* family service was born. The 45-minute service takes place on the second Friday of every month at 5:30 pm at the Abrons Art Center of the Henry Street Settlement. Typical of *The Shul of New York*, we have families of all shapes and sizes, with all ages from infants to toddlers to preteens. For more information, comments, suggestions etc...please don't hesitate to contact me!

doctordara@yahoo.com.



Seth, Charlie and Judy Ginsberg, and Miles, Dara and Seth Kessler lighting candles.

**HOW I FOUND
THE SHUL OF NEW YORK**
by Sheila Grosfeld



Sheila and Monte Grosfeld. (photo courtesy of the Grosfelds)

I have never been able to come to grips with the way women are treated by the Orthodox community. My falling out with the Jewish religion began when I was a young girl attending Hebrew School. The Rabbis treated the boys and the girls differently. They made the females feel like second-class citizens. I felt this was rude and disrespectful in a house of worship where the emphasis should have been on learning the language of the Bible so that we could better learn our heritage and traditions. So I did the only thing I could think of at that time. I dropped out of Hebrew School and out of the Religion. It seemed a waste of my time and my father's money.

My next contact with religion was when I got married. The ceremony was conducted by a Conservative Rabbi with whom I felt no connection. I had two sons from the marriage and, wanting them to have some connection to their heritage, I sent them to Hebrew Day School where they became Bnei Mitzvah. This renewed attempt fell short of a satisfactory connection to G-D. Thus it was that most of my adult life I lacked a formal religious affiliation, even though G-D was always in my heart.

Approximately nine years ago, a friend celebrated her 60th birthday by becoming Bat Mitzvah. I attended the services and was so inspired by the connection she had with the Reconstructionist Congregation, that some spark of my religious faith was reignited, and I promised myself that if I could ever find the right religious setting, one that I could feel comfortable with, I would go through this rite of passage also.

About two years later, I was at a Chanukah party where I met some women who were discussing spiritual Judaism. My ears perked up, and in answer to my questions, I was informed that they were referring to *The Shul of New York*, and Rabbi Burt Aaron Siegel. A period of about eight months went by before I attended my first service there. The rest is history.

My husband, Monte, was raised in the Orthodox/Conservative tradition, and Reform Judaism was not a part of his world. I guess it was out of his respect and love for me and my refusal to attend Orthodox or Conservative Services that he agreed to be married by a female Reformed Rabbi in September of 1994. Still, he continued to attend his Orthodox services at the Bialystoker Synagogue.

After I had made my connection with *The Shul of New York*, even to getting myself elected to its Board of Directors, I tried to get Monte to attend services with me with no success. His background was so ingrained that I eventually gave up and accepted that he would practice Orthodoxy and I would practice Shul of New York, however that is described.

At several times during our marriage, I had made Monte aware of my desire to be a Bat-Mitzvah. In his vows to me at our marriage, he had stated that he intended to support my every desire, and now he more than lived up to that promise. He urged me to attend Rabbi Burt's Bar/Bat-Mitzvah classes, and promised to attend the ceremony. He told me afterwards that he was so taken with the services, Rabbi Burt, the music, the musicians, and the friendliness and warmth of the Congregation as a whole, that he wanted to keep attending the Friday night services. And here, too, the rest is history. ✧



LOVE and THE SHUL OF NEW YORK
by Jaymie and Jiro Adachi

Love and legacy brought us to *The Shul of New York*. Jaymie had lived next door to the abandoned relic that was the shul in 1989 and used to look from her building through the dusty windows of the crumbling beauty as she made her way upstairs to her apartment.

In 2000, we were searching for a venue for our wedding, and the old shul, now the Angel Orensanz Foundation for the Arts, was our first choice. While speaking with AI about the details of the wedding day, he asked us if we already had a Rabbi. We did not. "Why not use ours?" he asked.

To our surprise, a new congregation was meeting every first and third Friday for Shabbat services presided over by one Rabbi Burt Siegel. About thirty congregants were present in the main sanctuary when we arrived for services. There was no Shul Band. There was no dramatic lighting. There was only tangible, abundant good will among those present and a Rabbi who exuded warmth and spiritual honesty.

"Let's ask him," we said to each other during the modest oneg, and without any further deliberation, we introduced ourselves to Rabbi Burt and asked if he would marry us.

The Shul of New York has been our shul ever since. Our daughter Reynie, was named there and Rabbi Burt is her honorary grandfather. With these blessings, we relish The Shul Band, an Angel Band if ever there was one, and our electric, soulful congregation completes our Jewish community here in the very neighborhood where our love took root. ✧

HOW WE FOUND THE SHUL OF NEW YORK
Little did we know that we were dealing with THE most welcoming Rabbi on the planet!
by Karen and Doug Seidman



Karen and Doug Seidman. (photo by Gecko Walsh)

We first met Rabbi Burt when he served as Interim Rabbi at the Village Temple for one year from 1998 to 1999. Very shortly after Burt's arrival at the Village Temple, our older son, Adam, was to become Bar Mitzvah. We were expecting a very diverse group of

guests, many of whom were not Jewish. Not knowing Rabbi Burt at that time, we remember distinctly asking him to take pains to be inclusive during the ceremony. Imagine! Little did we know that we were dealing with THE most welcoming Rabbi on the planet!

When Rabbi Burt left the Village Temple, Adam Feder joined him as the Shul's musical director. Adam Feder, in turn, asked our son, Adam, to accompany him on the keyboard. Our Adam told us about the Orensanz Center (where *The Shul of New York* held services) and that something really magical was happening there on the first and third Fridays of the month. Even though the first service that we attended at Orensanz took place on the third floor on a sweltering Friday evening, and had an attendance of some ten people, we were captivated.

We kept coming because of Rabbi Burt's caring message, appreciation of other religions, and the evident joy that he showed for what he was doing. During the service, it was crystal clear that there was nowhere else that he would rather be. His face radiated contentment and fulfillment. Two years later, after one-on-one preparation with Rabbi Burt, our son, Eli, became Bar Mitzvah at the Orensanz Center. And Karen was a member of the first Adult Bat Mitzvah class.

Eli now does the sound engineering at the Shul and Adam plays the keyboard (and occasionally sings) when he is home from college. We serve on the Shul Board, with Karen serving as acting secretary and Chair of the Fundraising Committee. Doug specializes in "House" duties such as making sure that there are enough chairs for our overflow of congregants and helping to carry the siddurs and the Torah before and after services.

We met at college (Georgetown University) some 35 years ago and told friends that we would be getting married within a week of our first date. We have been married 32 1/2 years. One of the secrets of the longevity of our relationship is that we do NOT sit together during

services. (Doug stays in the back to assist late-comers, Karen helps set up and sits closer to the front.) We both work in the public interest: Karen as the director of education for Lighthouse International, a vision rehabilitation organization, and Doug as an attorney for Civil Division of The Legal Aid Society, where he represents poor families to help them avoid eviction. We travel extensively, but rarely miss a Shul service! ✧



**WHY I COME TO THE SHUL OF NEW YORK:
THE SUSTAINING LOVE**
by Sara Lavner

One day, my daughter, Lilly Lavner, came home and said she was going to be singing at a new Shul called *The Shul of New York* at a very old synagogue on the Lower East Side. There was a small congregation, but she liked the Rabbi and the music. My husband, Bill, and I thought it all strange but trusted that our seventeen-year-old daughter knew best. We came a few times to hear Lilly sing, and were impressed by the Rabbi and the services. But we were not "regulars."

About six months after we began to attend, our lives dramatically changed: My husband, Bill, was paralyzed during an operation and became quadriplegic. I was forced to search for something to sustain me and my family, to have a sense of stability and community. Many of our friends helped and supported us, and our family rallied, but I needed a larger connection.

Lilly was devastated by what had happened to Bill, but kept singing at The Shul. Eventually, I followed her there. *The Shul of New York* became that stable sustaining community for us. The consistent sharing of joy, reflection, interconnectedness, laughter, and sadness, has helped us sustain the love and bonding of our family. Thank you Rabbi Burt and the congregation. With love, Bill, Sara, Lilly and David Lavner. ✧



Sara and Lilly Lavner.

(photo by Dani Durkin)

AIDS WALK NEW YORK 2006



Doug Seidman, Alexandria Baer, and her daughter, Karen Seidman. (photo by Dani Durkin)

The Shul of New York participated in AIDS Walk New York this May. Walkers included Doug and Karen Seidman, Alexandria Baer and her daughter, Blima Chai, and Dani Durkin. Collectively, we raised \$4,450.00! This is just one event in *The Shul of New York's* commitment to social action. A big THANK YOU to everyone who pledged money, and to those of you who offered tremendous support!!

Oneg Shabbat

Each Friday night at the close of Shabbat services, anyone has the opportunity to celebrate a joyful life event with the congregation by sponsoring an Oneg Shabbat. Celebrate your simcha with us (baby-naming; bar/bat mitzvah; birthday; anniversary; engagement; graduation; friendship; a handsome, intelligent, spiritual, Rabbi who knows how to sing; a fantastic Shul Band;! All it takes is some wine, grape juice, challah, and nibbles of your choice. Look for Jen and Stephen Palgon at services or email them at Jennifer.Palgon@pfizer.com.



(front left to right) Reynie, Lea, and (behind) Aiko, dancing on the Bima.

(photo by Patty Perlo)



Seth (of The Shul Band) and Judy Ginsberg are proud to announce the birth of their son, Charlie Julian Ginsberg, Wednesday, April 26th, 2006. Mazel Tov to all!



Illustration of Birkenau by Dora Maltz, who accompanied The Shul Band to Poland in 2006.

SAVE the DATE for a VERRY special musical experience to benefit *The Shul of New York*

Title: **"Verry Villa-Lobos"**
 Date: Sunday, November 12, 2006
 Time: 7 p.m.
 Place: Merkin Concert Hall
 Kaufman Center, Goodman House
 129 West 67th Street
 How: For information on tickets email Karen Seidman at Seidman4@aol.com

Ernesto, Alberto & Luis are the Villa-Lobos Brothers, a vibrant band of multi-colored melodies and rhythms. Classically trained violinists and composers, they were born and raised in the Caribbean state of Veracruz, Mexico and they soon developed their own style of fiddling, called "fast chatting" violin.

At 25, Ernesto ("Ness") is the oldest brother and our dear violinist-in-residence at *The Shul of New York*. He says: "Verry Villa-Lobos is a different idea, a clean slate in terms of musical composition and direction for me and my brothers. Expect a little less structure, less control over the written parts, and more improvisatory moments. We want to bring our music back to its roots, back to the seaside restaurants and cafes in Veracruz where we grew up singing and dancing 'til dawn. I hope you'll join us too!"

FRIDAY NIGHTS AT THE SHUL OF NEW YORK

* Shabbat Services are every first and third Friday of the month at the Angel Orensanz Foundation, 172 Norfolk Street, just south of East Houston Street, on the Lower East Side, at 6:30 pm.

* Torah study is every second Friday of the month at the Henry Street Settlement at 6:30 pm, Abrams Art Center, 466 Grand Street.

* Family Shabbat services are every second Friday of the month starting at 5:30 pm (immediately preceding the Torah study) at the Henry Street Settlement, Abrams Art Center, 466 Grand Street. All children up to age ten with their adults are welcome! For more information email Dara Kessler at doctordara@yahoo.com.

* Shabbat dinners hosted in someone's home are often on the fourth Friday of the month. Email Nigel at naustin@proskauer.com or Jan at Bananajana@aol.com for information about how to participate—everyone is welcome!

* Cultural Fifth Fridays: Stay tuned and check the web site regularly for the upcoming cultural events when there is a fifth Friday in a month.

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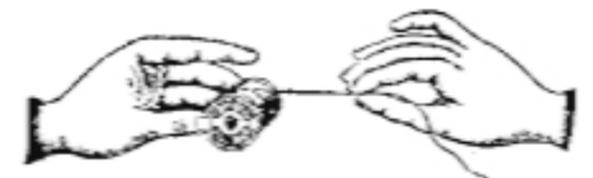
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The Annual Meeting will be
October 20, 2006.
All members of the congregation are
invited to attend.

The Shul of New York
Rabbi Burt Aaron Siegel
445 East 65th Street
New York, NY 10021



**MARK YOUR CALENDAR
FOR THE HIGH HOLY DAYS***

ROSH HASHANAH

Friday, September 22, 7 pm
Saturday, September 23, 10 am

YOM KIPPUR

Sunday, October 1, 7 pm
Monday, October 2, 10 am - sundown

To be held at The Angel Orensanz Foundation,
172 Norfolk Street, south of East Houston

* Signers for the hearing impaired will be present.
For information on the Children's Service email

Doctordara@yahoo.com.

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Consult the web site for more details at:
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Co-Presidents Vera and Mike Hearn at
info@theshulofnewyork.org.

Social Action at *The Shul of New York*:

The Shul of New York, as an all-inclusive haven of spiritual
Judaism, is committed to social action. To find out more
about how to be involved, check the web site for events or
email Dani Durkin at Danilune@earthlink.net.

Gifts from the Heart: Email Sara Lavner at
SLavner@aol.com for details on how to donate to *The
Shul of New York* in honor of a loved one or to celebrate a
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