



THE SHUL OF NEW YORK

A Synagogue for Spiritual Judaism

NEWS FROM THE HEART



Editor: Dani Durkin

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Designers: Paula Goldfader and Dolores Cotten

A message from Rabbi Burt Aaron Siegel



I am delighted to wish all of you
a blessed New Year.

photo of Rabbi Burt by John Balan

This season of the year brings us an opportunity to slow down a little and take a closer look at our lives. This past year, I have been asking myself what I truly need to find the satisfaction, fulfillment, and richness that I'd like to have in my life. It has been a most valuable exercise. I'd like to encourage you to spend a little time during the High Holyday season to give some thought to these ideas. We may find that some of the things we believe we need to be happy are illusions and delusions. Our consumerist culture has hypnotized us into thinking that we need so many things. Most of us have come to clearly see that these "things" that we are told are so vital never bring us even one instant of real happiness. Many of us have talked ourselves into believing that we can't make it without intangibles such as approval, status, and needing to look as if we always have it all together. We have talked ourselves into a veritable addiction to these things. What do we really need for our happiness? What is real happiness?

Understood spiritually, love is a state of fullness. Love is the capacity to give and it derives its power from within and goes beyond our relationships with any person. Spiritual love is not desiring to be completed by someone else, but to share our completeness with others.

On a deeper spiritual level, the question is not how to find love, but how to give love.

If we look for love from the outside, unless we are very lucky, sometimes we have it and sometimes we don't. If we look for love from the inside looking out, it's because we don't believe that we already have love within us. If we put our attention on *giving* love, then we will always *have* love because we see it as inherent within us.

Love is our nature. But we must expect nothing in return. From this kind of love, compassion flows. "Com" means "with." "Passion" is "feeling." Compassion is "feeling together." Feeling together. Feeling that the other person is like myself. Compassion is a recognition of the Divine Presence in all people. The Divine Presence in one is the Divine Presence in all others and the Divine Presence in buildings, rocks, mountains, monkeys, spiders, and all beings and Being.

Love and compassion are the highest values. We need to learn about these values. We need to begin to embody and live these values at the level we can practice them—and so begin our spiritual journey. The journey toward God and toward the deepest levels of fulfillment in life. ✡

Save the Date!

The Shul Band and Friends Spiritual, Folk, Funk Music Fest December 9, 2007



Ernesto Villa Lobos; Adam Seidman; Matthew Snyder; Adam Feder (front); Seth Ginsberg; Matt Aiken; Dave Hertzberg



Dani Durkin on the Shofar
photo by Paula Goldfader

Defining the Divine Every Day by Dani Durkin

First of all, let's welcome our newly sworn in Board of Directors: Co-Presidents: Mike Hearn and Karen Seidman; Treasurer: John Balan; Secretary: Joe Sussman; Board: Kenneth Bookbinder, Joan Brancaccio; Dani Durkin; Mary Ellis-Bookbinder; Sheila Grosfeld; Dara Kessler; Anne Lewison; Joy Mach; Vera Michaels; Jennifer Palgon; and Douglass Seidman. Advisory Committee: Ruth Bauman, Mark Beigelman, Jill Ben-Ezra, Susan Boehm, Jan Cullinen, Robbin Cullinen, Paula Goldfader, Monte Grosfeld, Sheila Hixon, Seth Kessler, Sara Lavner, Marsha Leo, Rich Mach, Stephen Palgon, Sari Roboff, Claude Samton, Michael Turits, and Rebecca Turner. Being a member of the Board is a rewarding experience because it allows me to put into practice what I believe so strongly: to be compassionate; to practice kindness; to cultivate mindfulness; to act. The Shul of New York continues to be a place where I can create my own definition of what it means to be a Jew. The most wonderful community of entertaining, earnest, and progressive folks surround me at The Shul of New York and I love the diversity of thought I encounter here. Rabbi Burt's leadership and spiritual messages infuse our services and our lives with his unique outlook on the living, breathing Oneness of what each of us calls the Divine. We have had so much success this past year with our programs, music, and fundraisers that we've had the opportunity to explore even more events and educational initiatives in new, stimulating ways. We are counting on everyone to give generously this year to support our programs and allow us to maintain our no-minimum-dues policy. Please consider this when you make your annual contribution. The entire Board and Advisory Committee join me in a big thank you to all of you for your involvement, enthusiasm, and contributions that make The Shul of New York such a special, enriching community for all of us.

CELEBRATIONS FROM THE ADULT BAT MITZVAHS AND BAR MITZVAHS

Words from John Balan who, at age 72,
recently celebrated his Bar Mitzvah

My partner, Annie, has my appreciation for testing me during the home stretch and making sure I had it right. And I thank my fellow celebrant, Jiro, for encouragement during the studying. It was nice to have a fellow sufferer.

And I thank everyone here for inspiring me to become a Bar Mitzvah. It would never have happened without belonging to this community.

But the biggest thanks goes to Rabbi Burt, the ultimate teacher. His patience, his kindness, and his sensitivity have made studying for this Bar Mitzvah a joyful experience. Rabbi Burt, thank you so much for making this possible for two guys who are no longer kids.

It goes without saying, and I'm sure that it is obvious, that the preceding ceremony has been one of the great highs and significant moments of my entire life. Becoming Bar Mitzvah has been extremely fulfilling.

I have not inquired whether it is possible or acceptable to dedicate a Bar Mitzvah ceremony to someone. And so I will take the chance of tampering with tradition. I would like to dedicate what has just happened here to my father, Alexander, who died forty years ago last month.



John Balan and Rabbi Burt

photo by Joe Sussman

A number of you here in this Shul have heard me speak about my childhood experiences as a Holocaust survivor, a story I am frequently asked to share with young-people's groups. The part of this story which I would like to briefly repeat this evening relates to my father.

In 1938, after it had become obvious that we would not be able to leave Czechoslovakia, and that circumstances facing the Jews would be getting worse, my father took me, aged close to four, to a minister of the Hungarian Reformed Church and undertook to have us both baptized.

Nazi racial theories were already known at the time, and it

was understood that a baptism could provide considerable protection from the inevitable anti-Jewish regulations, from the inevitable persecutions and deportations, and from the suffering that was already becoming evident elsewhere. And no one knew how much worse things would get as the Nazis began to truly fulfill their ambitions to cleanse Europe of Jews.

You need to understand that my father was part of a large practicing Jewish family. What he now did was done purely as a tactic to enhance our chances for survival. He did not become, nor did he intend to become, a believing Christian.

The sacrifice was considerable. He was no longer welcome at family holidays, for Passover, or other celebrations. He could no longer go to Shul. His co-religionists spat at him in the street and refused to associate with him. My father had given up being a Jew, and had to face the consequences. It is difficult to imagine what must have been going on in his mind and conscience.

We survived the war. And, again as some of you know, we continued the charade of being gentiles not only after the war in Europe, but even after immigrating to America. My parents encouraged this, so afraid were they of a possible recurrence of the events of the Holocaust. Being Jewish was simply not safe. The denial was intense, and the steps taken to keep the secret sometimes bordered on the comical and absurd. Both my parents died without breaking this pattern. I, a good son, went along with all this for a half-century.

Of the three of us, my father, mother, and myself, I am the only one who is now having, and taking, the opportunity to break the lie lived much of my life, and to return to reality and to my roots. Today is the culmination of that effort.

I cannot say exactly why, although there had been various small indications during his life, but I feel that my father never did give up the beliefs with which he was raised. He knew he was playing a game, drilled into him by his experiences of surviving the war. I think that my father went to his grave a Jew.

It had been my hope at the time that we could bury my father in a Jewish manner, but my mother would not have stood for it. And so the ceremony was a Christian one, hypocritical in some ways, leaving me with only the possibility of occasionally saying Kaddish or El Maleh Rachamim at his grave. I am sure that he can hear me.

And now, can you see my father sitting up in his grave and cheering? We have come full circle. He had to stop being a Jew, at least outwardly, and I have reclaimed his Jewishness, and mine, after more than a half-century of denial. It was a slow and sometimes very difficult process, but the reward and the feeling of completeness and satisfaction are immeasurable, the catharsis intense. My father can now rest in peace, in truthful peace.

And Annie, my partner, and I are celebrating my being a Jew by going to Israel in two weeks.

My thanks go to all of you for making this possible. ✧

The Jew In the Mirror by Jiro Adachi



Rabbi Burt with Jiro Adachi and John Balan

photo by Joe Sussman

THE JEW IN THE MIRROR . . . was not me. For years, I could not reconcile the face I saw in the mirror with the Jew that I knew I was. I found out one day that I was a Jew at the age of nine, walking home from school with my friend, talking about God and religion. When I told him I was Protestant, he looked at me and told me matter-of-factly, “You’re a Jew. Your mother’s Jewish.” Of course, he was right, and I knew it immediately. But the Protestantism is another, much longer story, and one that belongs to my mother.

In my mind, that day marks the beginning of my slow trek toward Judaism and what has seemed its opposite and equal movement toward me. I’m not a joiner of things and never have been. But there was something about Jews that mixed well with my already mixed chemistry. Many of my close friends were Jewish. My first serious girlfriend was Jewish. I married not one but two Jewish women. The first one, Amy, who is here tonight, was the one to tell me, “You’re a Jew, so you should at least know the *sh’má*,” which she taught me on the spot. When we lived in Fort Collins, Colorado, as members of the only synagogue in town, I had my first full, active year of being Jewish, learning the holidays, the prayers, the songs. I was even recognized by others as a Jew. But still, the face in the mirror did not seem quite Jewish enough.

Several years later, I was single again, an unaffiliated, unpracticing, but self-identifying Jew. It was during that time I got a job teaching writing and literature at Stern College for Women at Yeshiva University.

The fact that I got this position there gave me pause. I remember telling myself, “This Jew in you wants to be recognized; it wants to be acknowledged—that’s some powerful blood.” And even though I was the one being paid to teach, being in a room full of young orthodox Jewish women four times a week for five years was quite an education. The students seemed both tickled and interested that I was Jewish, and they loved when I asked them questions about their prayers, their holidays, the orthodox dating scene. They seemed to enjoy discovering my ignorance as much as they enjoyed helping me transform, though perhaps they didn’t know they were doing that.

A deeper transformation began when I met Jaymie, my wife. Finding her, my *be’sbert*, and sharing things Jewish, has been a delightful source of nourishment in our relationship—a full course meal, actually. Once, when we were in Burma, at the

start of an overnight bus ride up country, we noticed that the Buddhist passengers around us were praying. It was then we began our ritual of saying the *sh’má* at the start of trips and any event of major importance. We found this Shul together, and befriended Rabbi Burt, who welcomed us, married us, named our child, and became Reynie’s honorary grandfather.

In my professional life, my teaching changed. I began to talk to my students about their *Kavanah*, their intention, when writing essays. When my Stern students got chatty in class, I would tell them, “Less *midrash*, more work!” In my pokey fashion, I was making choice bits of Judaism my own.

All of you here at The Shul of New York have become our family, our people, and Jaymie and I always comment on this fact at home and after services. Reynie is a child of this Shul: Burt’s wonderful baritone, our prayers, The Shul Band’s music — these are sounds she was grown on in utero and has loved her whole life.

It has been one of the great pleasures of my life to have spent this past year learning Hebrew and studying for my Bar Mitzvah with Rabbi Burt and John. They are the menschieft of men, and I love them both as teachers and brothers. And I want to thank them, Jaymie, Reynie, the rest of my family, my friends, and this Shul for so much support and love. Because these days, when I look in the mirror, the Jew that looks back is without question, definitively, me. ✧



Rabbi Burt, Jiro Adachi, and John Balan



Alexandria Baer celebrates her Bat Mitzvah

This “Last Supper” to become the first of many joint “Seders”

by Dani Durkin

Rabbi Burt Siegel of The Shul of New York and Reverend Jacqui Lewis, Ph.D. of Middle Collegiate Church, both of whom call lower Manhattan home to their very diverse congregations, combined their spirits and their flocks on April 5, 2007 for a spiritually uplifting joint Seder. In honor of “Maundy Thursday” or The Last Supper where, according to the Christian tradition, Jesus of Nazareth (a noted rabbi and prophet) feasted with his disciples at what the Jews continue to celebrate as a Passover Seder, Middle Church hosted an interfaith celebration. Rabbi Burt and Reverend Jacqui both spoke to the central theme of the story of Passover, which is the narrative in the bible detailing the Jews’ escape from slavery in Egypt. Moses, having been raised as a son of the Pharaoh, ultimately leads his true people, the Jews, into a life free from bondage. Evoking the essential messages of fighting for the freedom of all peoples, Rabbi Burt and Reverend Jacqui reminded everyone that, regardless if you believe that Elijah the prophet has yet to herald the coming of the messiah (in the Jewish tradition) or John the Baptist has already welcomed the Savior Jesus (in the Christian tradition), we must all remember that no one is free from the chains of oppression until all peoples are free.

Rabbi Burt, seated at a table at the front of the room next to Reverend Jacqui, identified each symbol on the Seder plate and each ritual performed at a Jewish Seder. Not many Jews are able to boast having had the extraordinary pleasure of a gospel choir singing at their Seder but The Shul of New York and Middle Collegiate Church are not like other synagogues and churches, are they? Around forty gifted singers from the church sang “Jesus is a Rock” in gloriously moving, spiritual harmony. The evening’s congregants, who were black, white, young and old, and equally from the synagogue, the church, or from the East Village neighborhood, clapped their hands and swayed to the tuneful enthusiasm vibrating throughout the room. Later, Matthew Snyder, gifted clarinet player for The Shul Band, mesmerized everyone with a jazzy klezmer solo, reminding us that music truly transcends all difference and reaches all open hearts. Both The Shul of New York and Middle Collegiate Church make it their mission to welcome a culturally diverse, inclusive community, with room for peoples of all persuasions, all faiths, all identities. They are spiritual congregations whose dedication to the arts, to music, and to social action make them members of the same family of progressive, religious communities. We believe that all people are equal, and that freedom from war, oppression, and slavery is the essential right of all humankind. ✧



Rabbi Burt Siegel and Reverend Jacqui Lewis, Ph.D (middle)

Photo by Dani Durkin

Annual Online Auction was a huge success!



Menorah sculpture by Noah Baumwoll

Under the direction of Joy Mach, the online auction sported a new look, and images of almost all of the items for sale were available to bidders. Some of the fantastic items sold this year were a lunch with Rabbi Burt; art by Mary Ellis; sculpture by Noah Baumwoll; a behind-the-scenes tour of the Chinese wing of the Met with Mike Hearn; a day at the spa; one-of-a-kind jewelry; and restaurants galore. We raised \$17,000.00 this year—an unprecedented sum! It’s never too early to start

donating items for next year’s auction. **To get involved, volunteer, donate an item for the auction, or receive more information, please email Joy Mach at Jmach@nyc.rr.com.** Watch for it again in spring 2008. A big thanks to our donors (and forgive us if anyone has been left out):

A Place For Everything, Ramona Rideout; A Salt & Battery; Asphalt Green; Bamiyan; Laine Barton; Noah Baumwoll; Mark Beigelman; Kenny Bookbinder; Joan Brancaccio; Louise Fishman, Cheim & Read; Chickpea Restaurant; Cathy, Miranda, and Rawley Cooper; David Lee; Dewi Williams, Tea & Sympathy; Don Brancaccio, Idiot-Proof Computers; Mary Ellis; Seth Epstein; Erin Zimberg, Z100 Radio; Adam Feder; Gabrielle Sanchez; Tobe Gerson; Paula Goldfader; Sheila Grosfeld; Karen Hasher; Mike Hearn; Herbert C. Hoffman, Bulova Watch Company; Hudson Chesapeake, Sari Roboff; Roberta Jaret; Jody H. Klein, Abko Music and Records; Jonathan M. Tisch, Loews Hotels; Gary Katzman; Kelly Le Febure, Barefoot Yoga Co., Dara Kessler; Kimberly Jason, ABC TV; Barry Kominik; La Vela Restaurant; William, Sara, and Lilly Lavner; Marsha Leo; Lisa Lewis; Lia Schorr Skin Care; Lina Guglielmo, D’Agostino’s Supermarkets; Lord & Taylor, Lavelle Olexa; Louis Rubensahl, New York City Ballet; Lucien Restaurant; Debra Lynne; Joy Mach; Richard Mach; Maternal Fitness Spa, Julie Tupler, RN; David Mellins; Sarina Meones; Mermaid Inn; Michael Pinkerton, Mumbles Restaurant; Michael Weston, Ameriprise Financial; Vera Michaels; Naomi Glaser, Computer Cars; Neil Mautone, Devin Tavern; North Square, Judy Paul; Wendy Paris; Patricia Perlo; Lisa Phillips; Marcio Pinto; Ann Radding; Robin Hirsch, Cornelia Street Café; Edward Rosenfeld; Joan Rothenberg; Russ & Daughters; Ruth Baumann, Baumann Resource Group; Claude Samton; Douglass Seidman; Karen Seidman; The Shul Band; Rabbi Burt Aaron Siegel; Joshua Soros; Susan Taubman; The Cottage; Rebecca Turner; Village Restaurant, Mr. Aron Bauman; Ernesto Villa Lobos; William Frazer, Flowers on Essex; Deanna Yalowitz; May Yamada-Lifton



Mike Hearn giving his tour of the Chinese wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

News from BIMA

BIMA, The Shul of New York's alums from the adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah class, traditionally leads Shabbat services when Rabbi Burt is on his annual pilgrimage to India. This year Sara Lavner delivered her interpretation of the Parsha:

Shabbat Shalom. I am greatly honored to be giving my interpretation of the Torah reading from Exodus 21-24. It is the book of Shemot (Names). The concept of a name is significant to this parsha because it forces us to think about names: without a name, there is no identity. In the past, a slave had only a number, and no name, and existed only to serve. It is easier to distance oneself from a number than from a person with a real name. This way of being, this treatment of people, was on the threshold of change.

This portion of the Torah provides numerous laws that God has given to Moses to give to the people. But the laws do not only apply to Moses and his people; these laws apply to all, the people and their slaves. The laws do come from another time and place, and we Jews no longer have slaves. But slavery still exists in this world. And this parsha reminds us of the beginning of an impulse to be fair and just, a radically new way of thinking and being. This kind of consciousness had not really existed in the same way before.

The Ten Commandments came first, but the laws herein demonstrate a further striving for fairness and justice. They acknowledge personal injury, protection of property, social responsibility, and the Laws of Justice and Mercy.

Because this was another time, there are laws that can seem vengeful and very angry to our modern minds. "Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death." Extreme? But this was an effort to find a fair and meaningful way to live together. These people had been oppressed and God wanted them to use that experience to empathize with, and not oppress, others. "Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt."

According to one of the interpretations that I have read, Moses dealt with God's Laws with much anxiety and apprehension. But God says to Moses, "What matters is not whether they believe in you, but whether you believe in them. You must identify with them. If you do not believe in the people, eventually you will think yourself superior to them, and that is a corruption of the soul."

This belief in the people, that they can follow these laws, have a new way of thinking, that they are capable of change, is what will produce solidarity. Believing in another person is a powerful tool. It is what will establish the Jewish people, give them a solid identity with a deep and profound sense of justice and a commitment to be responsible to each other and to all the other peoples of this earth. The story of Exodus has been the most influential story in the history of politics. When Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin wanted to create a Seal of the United States, Exodus inspired their first choice of an image to epitomize their dreams. When people marched for civil rights, they sang it: "Let My People Go." Century after century, one narrative more than any other has inspired people to build a new society on the foundations of liberty: the story of Moses leading the Israelites into the wilderness toward the promised land. It is the great enduring narrative of hope. God has intervened on behalf of the oppressed and given them the ideas and laws to create a new social order. This is what has kept the Jewish people together throughout the centuries, and this is what this portion of the book of Exodus / Shemot is about. Thank you for letting me share my thoughts with you. ✧



Sara Lavner and Lilly Lavner

Rabbi Burt's Class on the Sh'ma

by Phyllis Resnick Spiva



Phyllis Resnick Spiva

I had the good fortune to be visiting New York (from my home in Pacific Palisades, California) to attend Rabbi Burt's class on the meaning of the Sh'ma prayer, the touchstone of Judaism, on Thursday, May 24th. Held in his apartment on a warm summer evening, I arrived after an hour and a quarter journey from Brooklyn. The Rabbi greeted me and introduced me to the other attendee, John Lepiarz, a knife-throwing circus performer. How wonderful for us that we had Rabbi Burt all to ourselves!

For two hours, we listened, asked questions, and discussed the prayer, (SH'MA YISRAEL ADONAI ELOHAENU, ADONAI ECHAD – Hear! Oh Israel. The Lord is G-d, G-d is One!), word by word. We covered its origins, the history of the Tanach (the sacred book of Judaism, consisting of the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings), and the very meaning of G-d.

I will never forget Rabbi Burt holding up his hands as he explained the first word of the prayer. "Sh-ma!" he said over and over, each time with more volume, and more emphasis. "Hear me! Listen!" It was Moses' way of getting the attention of the people so that he could tell them what he'd learned, that G-d is one.

Rabbi Burt went on to tell us that what is implied in our lives from the Sh'ma prayer goes beyond the affirmation of the unity of one God; it reinforces the unity principle, in which all humans are connected, all life interdependent. This, he said, is the most august thought, and the essence of Jewish Spirituality. I was touched and moved and enlightened by Rabbi Burt's class, and I encourage all to attend future classes when possible. ✧



The Shul Band

"A human being is part of a whole, called by us the Universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."

—Albert Einstein

Kenny Bookbinder's Famous Kol Nidre Appeal

(from 2006/5767—edited)

It's so nice to be back in the Sixties again. The Sixties were a time of love, a time of commitment and dedication; a time of both internal and external change, and a time of community—oh, and did I say, a time of giving? Yes, a time of giving. And these are all characteristics of our Shul. I know that I am not the only one here who was involved in the Sixties—I am not the only member of the Shul with gray hair!—and I know there are many folks here who are my son, Noah's, age, in their late 20s. And maybe some of you who have even studied the Sixties in school. School during the Sixties was a lot harder, though.



Kenny Bookbinder

First of all, there was so much more history to learn. When we studied an era, like the Civil War or the Roaring 20s, we studied it in history class. But when people study the 60s, now, it could be in history, sociology, anthropology and, dare I say, pharmacology. . . . But the 60s really were a time of giving. And this being a Kol Nidre message, and this Shul being one of the few institutions on the planet that doesn't have a minimum dues policy or membership fee (and we don't even have a building fund!), this is an important time for us to step up and contribute generously. This is how you make it possible for us to sustain and maintain and enhance all that we do and all that we offer. We do provide an amazing spiritual and religious environment, incredible music, and a great place to experience it all.

Each of us has an opportunity and, I feel very strongly, an obligation to contribute this season. Now, it is important to note that giving can be a selfish act—and that is okay! Many of us have been altruistic over the years to hurricane victims, earthquake victims, and tsunami victims. We don't know these people; these folks will never be able to thank us directly, and we don't necessarily know the good that our contributions do. But in writing out a check or contributing online with your credit card (www.theshulofnewyork.org), you will immediately experience good feelings. While this may be selfish. . . I want everyone to know that THIS IS ALL RIGHT!

Now, I want to digress a moment and share with you a dream I had some time ago: I was interviewing that great Jewish philosopher, Yogi Berra. We were outside St. Patrick's Cathedral. (This dream was inspired by real-life events!) More than twenty years ago, I wound up sitting next to Yogi in St. Patrick's for Roger Maris' funeral. We walked out together on the 49th Street side—also known to many of you as the Saks 5th Avenue side—and encountered camera crews from the local networks and the nationals, all of whom wanted to interview and photograph Yogi. They waved at me to get out of the way but, being the shy and retiring fellow that I am, I just waved back! Sure enough, I was all over the news that night! Anyway, back to the dream: Yogela, as my grandfather referred to his favorite ballplayer, and I are talking on the steps of St. Patrick's and I say to him, "Yogi, I know that when you get together with Yankees from your era, like Phil Rizzuto and Whitey Ford, you talk about The Shul of New York. What's the buzz? What are you hearing?" "I hear that it's so crowded, no one goes there anymore." Then I asked him, "Why do you think this is, Yogi? Why have we become the SHUL TO BE AT?" He says to me, "Kenny, the other shuls just don't have what you guys have!" I said to him, "Yeah, that's what I was thinking." And he says to me, "Kenny, one half is the congregation, one half is the music, and one half is that rabbi of yours." Then I asked him, "Yogi, we have this virtuoso violinist, Ernesto Villa Lobos, and even his grandmother from Vera Cruz who doesn't speak much English told me she loves all of us and then all of a sudden she was singing in Hebrew on Yom Kippur last year! What do you make of all this talent?" He says to me, "Kenny, there is a lot

of heredity in that family." So then I ask him, "Yogi, the last three or four Yom Kippurs it has rained. What do you make of that?" Yogi tells me, "Kenny, I think you guys should change the date next year!" So then I asked him, "Yogi, we had 684 people at services last year and seventeen of them didn't make a financial contribution. How do I reach everyone?" I thought maybe they had too many options: we accept Visa, MasterCard, AmEx, cash, checks, traveler's checks. They can contribute in person at services, on line, by mail. So many choices! Yogi said to me, "Kenny, I know that when I get to a fork in the road—I take it!" "Yogi," I continued, "it is now six years without a Yankees championship. What's it gonna take?" "Well, Kenny," he said, "they won't win until they show the kind of leadership and teamwork that you guys have at The Shul of New York." I thanked Yogi and walked him to the limo that was waiting for him. There was another guy in the car and I saw it was Einstein! He immediately began asking Yogi questions.

And with that, I want to remind you all to give generously. Give because love is a good selfish reason; give because the Rabbi taught you how to love—that's a great reason, too; or because the Rabbi has given you a platform, a framework and an opportunity to be a better Jew, or Muslim, or Christian, or Hindu, or Buddhist, or Atheist—a better person and citizen of the planet. That's a great reason to give. Or, perhaps through the Rabbi's teachings, you have learned that the greatest gift of all is the gift of life and what you do with that life.

The Sixties were a great time of giving—let's open our hearts and remember all the reasons it feels right and give again. Thanks.

CDs by Adam Feder and The Shul Band



The Shul Band

One of the most special reasons many of us come to services is to listen to and sing with The Shul Band.

Adam Feder, music director and leader of The Shul Band, has been writing music and performing for over ten years and he has (finally!) been persuaded to privilege us with a CD collection of spiritual folk funk. Some of the songs are those he has introduced to The Shul of New York over the years and have become cherished favorites such as KolHaOlam and his own renditions of MichaMocah and Adan Olam. You'll also hear new rockin' versions of some Maccabee Funk and some spiritually uplifting rock and roll Chanukah tunes. Go to www.adamfeder.com for more information and some gorgeous photos of The Shul Band. You will be able to purchase the CD during the High Holydays, as well. In addition, The Shul Band has been even busier than usual because they plan to release a new CD for Chanukah, as well! Our stellar musicians are geniuses with jazz, klezmer, roots, funk, soul, country, blue grass, and pure love. Visit www.theshulband.com for updates and to hire The Shul Band for your wedding, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, party, or special occasion.

SIMCHAS, EVENTS, NOTES FROM THE CONGREGATION

WE WOULD LIKE TO CELEBRATE EVERY SIMCHA IN OUR COMMUNITY! TO SEE YOUR JOYOUS EVENT IN *NEWS FROM THE HEART* EMAIL Danilune@earthlink.net. WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOUR SIMCHA IN OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER.

Haiku About/For The Shul of New York by Lou Blumengarten

Haiku, an ancient Japanese tradition of unrhymed, season-related poetry in three lines consisting of 5-7-5 syllables respectively, is actually well-suited for writing about The Shul of New York in its most urban of environments, the Lower East Side. Haiku is very popular in America. Many folks write "geese fly overhead" haikus. But not this New York Jew. I haven't seen too many geese lately. Pigeons, maybe. I'm too urban for those nature haikus. You should try your hand at some! Here are several of mine:

You ain't seen nothing
Till you've seen services at
The Shul of New York
Sublime meets the now
Services are underway
When a cell phone blares
Personalities
This Shul is full of such folk
A real community
Always the question
It's Friday, where will we pray?
Upstairs or downstairs?
New York City streets
Buildings stand while I walk through
Urban dreams in place

We would like to celebrate every simcha in *News From the Heart*. Please email Danilune@earthlink.net with your joyous news so we can share it with you!



Dara, Miles, and Seth Kessler celebrating Purim.



Chanukah at The Shul of New York



High Holiday Services

photo by Paula Goldfader



Sponsor an Oneg Shabbat to celebrate your next simcha!

It's easy, generous, and everyone loves to share in your blessings with a nosh after services together. Contact Jennifer or Stephen Palgon to sign up at happyaccidents@mac.com.



RABBI BURT STARS IN A MOVIE!

Dr. Bronner's Magic Soapbox is a documentary by Sara Lamm in which she traces the origins of the magic soap with which so many of us are familiar. "Dr. Bronner's Magic Soap," a peppermint-infused, all-natural, multi-purpose liquid can be found today in every American health food store. On each bottle of his soap, he printed an ever-evolving set of teachings he called "The Moral ABC," designed, in his words, "TO UNITE ALL MANKIND FREE!" Rabbi Burt is one of the many folks interviewed about the Dr. Bronner phenomenon. June 2007 marks the opening of the nationwide release of the documentary. Be sure to Google it and check it out!



Noah Baumwoll, Gecko Walsh, and others at Shabbat



Ed and Paula Goldfader



It's a baby boy for
May Yamada-Lifton
and Dan Lifton!
Eli Ari-Ichiro Lifton
May 17th, 2007 at 8:49PM
7lbs 14oz and 20.5 inches

Still Life by Paula Goldfader



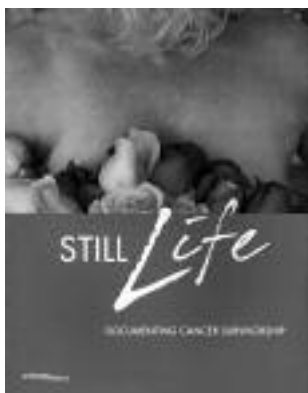
Paula Goldfader

I was honored to be one of twenty-five cancer survivors chosen to take part in a documentary photography project sponsored by The Creative Center: Arts in Healthcare, and funded by a Lance Armstrong Grant. Classes were held over a six-month period.

Participants worked with a photographer-in-residence as well as leading educators and curators from the Whitney Museum and the Museum of Modern Art. This helped each one of us give artistic expression to our cancer experiences. We produced portfolios with strong visual voices that told twenty-five unique stories. It was an emotional and inspiring journey.

This exceptional artistic document of our journey led to having our works published in a book by Umbrage Editions entitled, *Still Life: Documenting Cancer Survivorship*. I am proud to report that I just saw the book for sale at the Whitney Museum.

The Creative Center has played a wonderful role in my life. It has taught me to see the world more positively through the creative process. The Center provides free art classes to people living with cancer and other chronic illnesses. It also supports Artist-in-Residence in hospital, hospice, and healthcare settings in the New York area. For more information call 646-465-5313 or view the website at www.thecreativecenter.org.



Congratulations to Lev Ratnofsky

who celebrated his Bar Mitzvah on March 17, 2007.

You've come a long way, baby! Mazel Tov!



Lev Ratnofsky and Monte Grosfeld sound the Shofar in 2005.



Rabbi Burt and Lev read the Torah on Lev's Bar Mitzvah day 2007.



Dani Durkin and Mary Ellis-Bookbinder



Katya and her beautiful baby on Purim!

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 life event.



Sheila and Monte Grosfeld listen to Arthur's



Claude Samton and Whitney sculpture on the walking tour



Lea



Lea and Reynie

The Quilt of The Shul of New York

When Jiro and Jaymie Adachi were married in 2000, they offered Rabbi Burt a divine creation in thanks for his guidance and friendship: a quilt that was beautiful yet simple in design. The fabric's origins are from all over the world where Jiro and Jaymie have traveled. The couple now plans to lead the congregation in making a similar quilt for The Shul of New York.

This quilt will be made with some of the same gorgeous textiles used to make Rabbi Burt's quilt, along with fabrics donated by members of the congregation. Congregants will be encouraged to donate fabrics with special meaning, and will have the opportunity to donate funds towards the completion of the quilt, or in honor of a life event or loved one.

Workshops in quilt making will allow participants to learn how to quilt, cut, and sew the fabrics together. Stay tuned for more information about this fantastic opportunity to link our most creative selves together in the realization of The Shul of New York Quilt.



Connecting Our Growing Interfaith Community

by Jennifer Palgon

On May 6th, the Shul of New York completed its first-ever Interfaith Relationship Workshop. This five week course was facilitated by myself and Stephen Palgon, my husband. We are an interfaith couple who were married two years ago by Rabbi Burt. In addition to providing a welcoming, safe environment for couples to explore the various issues of interfaith life, the workshop gave participants an opportunity to talk with the Rabbi and hear the stories of other interfaith couples from the Shul. The couples felt they gained much from the workshop, particularly a sense of community as well as a deeper understanding that there is no one way to approach interfaith life. We're excited to continue this highly successful program and will be announcing the next workshop during the High Holidays. If you would like further information, please feel free to contact Jennifer Palgon at happyaccidents@mac.com.

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 online.

The Shul School Update

by Dara Kessler

We are delighted to inform you that under the leadership of our Education Director, Marsha Leo, and with inspiration and insight from Rabbi Burt, classes for our Hebrew School will begin Monday, September 10, 2007. We have a new curriculum which includes two programs: the Chai Program for Jewish Education (<http://urj.org/chai/>) and the Mitkadem Program for Hebrew Studies (<http://urj.org/chai/mitkadem/>). Tuition includes materials, periodic guest artists (Shul Band musicians and more) in the Hebrew School as well as two separate Sunday workshops called "Creating a Spiritual Experience for the Whole Family" led by Rabbi Burt. Registration packets will also be available at High Holiday Services. If you would like to attend, but cost is a barrier, please let us know as we have some scholarship funds available.

Level I: Pre K/K children ages 2 to 5 (children <4 with a parent or caregiver)

Classes will be held on Mondays from 4pm to 4:45pm

Level II: For children grades 1, 2, and 3

Classes will be held on Mondays from 4pm to 5pm

Level III: For children grades 4, 5, 6, and 7

Classes will be held on Mondays from 5 to 6:30pm

All classes will meet at the Hope Martin Studio, 38 West 14th Street #508 (between 5th and 6th Avenues) www.hopemartinstudio.com

Tuition: Level I: \$750

Level II: \$850

Level III: \$950

Bar/Bat Mitzvah: \$400

Supplemental private Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation with Rabbi Burt to be scheduled individually.

To register contact: info@theshulofnewyork.org

Social Action at The Shul of New York:

Be the change you wish to see in the world and volunteer to lead The Shul of New York in its commitment to social action.

Email Dani Durkin at Danilune@earthlink.net with your ideas!

Upcoming Events:

September 5th: The Shul School Open House/Oneg Shabbat following Shabbat services to introduce and honor our new teachers. (Location TBA)

October 5th: Interfaith Shabbat Service with Reverend Jacqui Lewis of Middle Church and the Middle Church Gospel Choir in celebration of Simchat Torah. Followed by oneg Shabbat and new programs Open House sponsored by The Shul of New York Programming Committee. (Location TBA)

November 30th: Talk and reading by Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz activist and author of *The Colors of Jews*. (Location TBA)

December 9th: Concert by The Shul Band

April 20th, 2008: Interfaith Passover Second Seder at Middle Church (Details TBA)

Check www.theshulofnewyork.org regularly for more events.

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The rock n' roll generation, coming of age in the shadow of an unpopular war, is torn apart into peace protestors and soldiers

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From the desk of Danielle A. Durkin,
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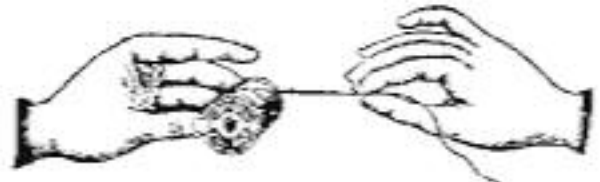
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The Annual Meeting will be
October 19th
directly following the Shabbat service.
All members of the congregation are
invited to attend.

www.theshulofnewyork.org

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE HIGH HOLYDAYS

Rosh Hashanah: Wednesday, September 12, 7:00 pm
Thursday, September 13, 10:00 am

Yom Kippur: Friday, September 21, 7:00 pm
Saturday, September 22, 10:00 am
to sundown

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

Signers for the hearing impaired will be present

For information on Children's Services email

Dara Kessler at: Doctordara@yahoo.com

**Purchase tickets in advance to reserve your
place. Watch for more information in the mail
or visit us online.**

Shabbat Observance

Friday Nights (everyone is welcome to all
Friday night events):

Please check www.theshulofnewyork.org for locations.

First and Third Fridays of the month:
Shabbat services at **6:30 p.m.**

Second Fridays of the month:
Torah study with Rabbi Burt

Fourth Fridays of the month:
Shabbat dinners with fellow congregants

Fifth Fridays: Israeli dancing and other cultural events

Board of Directors: Co-Presidents: Mike Hearn and Karen Seidman; Treasurer: John Balan; Secretary: Joe Sussman;
Board: Kenneth Bookbinder; Joan Brancaccio; Dani Durkin; Mary Ellis-Bookbinder; Sheila Grosfeld; Dara Kessler; Anne Lewison; Joy Mach; Vera Michaels; Jennifer Palgon; and Douglass Seidman.

Questions or comments: write to info@theshulofnewyork.org