

BI@Home: News from your home away from home

A Word from Rabbi Fellman

The summer before I started Rabbinical School, I enrolled in the first cohort of Yeshivat Hadar (now under the auspices of the Hadar Institute). I had left my corporate Manhattan job and started an intensive two-month learning experience. For 11 hours a day, I prayed, studied, wrestled with text, ate vegetarian food, and wondered what crunchy, endless mess I had gotten myself into. As I plowed through the summer, I found that I loved it. Not all of it, of course, but most of it, especially how it challenged my comfort zone, how much I learned and grew. I discovered that I didn't actually hate kale and quinoa, and most of all, that I really loved learning in havruta.



Havruta learning is when two (or three) individuals study a text together- reading through the text out loud, discussing it, and adding their voices to the text. Havruta learning was one of the sustaining elements that I carried and embraced throughout Rabbinical School; it has become a central part of the way in which I teach (at BI and through WISE); and it is a form of learning and engaging with text where I can guarantee that I will also learn as my understanding of the text is always enhanced by the voices and experiences of others with whom I study.

I am delighted that this year, we are officially partnering with Project Zug (*lit.* project pair), Hadar Institute's havruta learning program, to bring varied content that we can learn together, even while distanced. As part of this partnership, we will offer multiple courses and opportunities to learn and engage with text that will be facilitated by different members of our community. (All texts are shared in both Hebrew and English and are fully accessible regardless of your prior knowledge of Jewish text.)

We will be kicking off a year of Zug learning this coming Elul with a course called *Unlocking the Mahzor: A Look at Key High Holiday Prayers*, where we will explore the textual roots of this special liturgy. At the same time, other participants from all over the world will be learning and engaging with the same materials and texts. We will be participating as a community. Once a week, for 5 weeks, we will come together to engage with our community, lift our voices, stretch our minds, and open our hearts – together. While we may not be able to gather all together in a prayer space, we will celebrate the ability to be and learn together as a cohort, and you will come away from these sessions with a more nuanced understanding of our liturgy and new ways of standing to pray.

Sessions for this Project Zug Elul course are scheduled for Thursday evening, August 20, then the following four Wednesdays: August 26, September 2, September 9, and September 16. All sessions are at 7:30 p.m. The first and last sessions will be “live” (via Zoom) presentations by Hadar Institute scholars. In the others we will study the texts together at BI (also via Zoom). To sign up, and join our Elul Zug learning, please contact Dale Rosenberg rimon@bethisraelworc.org.

Note: If you can't attend this first Project Zug course, don't despair. There will be many others to choose from throughout the year!

BI Reopening Town Hall: Members Speak Out

Paula Sommer, President



It was a pleasure to see over 95 households at the Reopening Town Hall on July 13. It's been over four months now since we have been able to physically gather as a community, and there is no end in sight. However, we are still a strong and connected community. At the meeting I shared that several people have told me how much the BI community means to them, even without a physical meeting space. Here are some of their voices:

“When we joined BI in 1991, we found a caring community, and have made deep and lasting friendships. This community celebrated our many simchas, and supported us in challenging times. While we greatly miss physically gathering, we know that our community ties transcend the separation.”

“Beth Israel has been a life-affirming and life-changing touchstone for me and my family, ever since I became a member of this loving community in 1981. I’m grateful for the friendships, support, learning, and religious fellowship—and the fact that if it weren’t for BI, I wouldn’t have met my husband.”

“BI is lucky to have a morning and evening minyan every day of the week. We support the daily minyan for a number of reasons: prayer, comfort, community, education and saying Kaddish. It is a great place to check in, and contact other community members. Participating in minyan on Zoom is easy. Try it out!”

“BI is a borderless community: Zoom minyanim and Rimon Hebrew School, our son doing bar mitzvah prep with his bar mitzvah tutor and the Rabbi and check-in phone calls. We miss everyone and yet we are all still together!”

“Fifteen years ago, I went through a painful divorce. With my parents gone and my only sister far away, I felt very alone, until wonderful friends stepped up and took care of me, my friends from the Beth Israel community. No one told them to do it. They just did it. That’s the kind of community we have.”

“The ‘virtual embrace’ of the Beth Israel community during our period of loss has surrounded us in a profound way. The consistency of seeing faces, hearing voices and joining together daily has helped more than words can express... we are proud to be a part of this Kehillah Kedoshah.”

“The Brotherhood breakfasts and talks last month were wonderful. The talk about the 1918 flu epidemic was so informative and pertinent to today. And the history of the bagel - I have never been so excited about eating a bagel in my own home!”

“Singing Kabbalat shabbat over Zoom is a beautiful way to start Shabbat, where I would otherwise be alone.”

“I have been participating in the Rabbi’s weekly TGIF Torah study since it began, and enjoyed immensely learning in-person with the very diverse group. The previous level of very stimulating, challenging and interactive discussion continues on Zoom: I look forward to this class every week as a special way to participate with our BI family.”

As you see, you are part of a vibrant BI community, which includes more than just a building. We need your support to continue being such a strong community, continuing and building new connections. How? We are learning to provide our services, activities, and programs in many different ways. You support these programs by taking time and showing up. Seeing you and hearing your voices enlarges our community spiritually and emotionally. We also welcome your financial backing, as we put the technology in place for the High Holidays and beyond. Thank you again so much for your support.

So many people have been very busy planning for the new normal in a way that keeps us all safe. It has been intensive work. My deepest appreciation to the members of our reopening committee, Chair Dr. Jeremy Golding, master Zoom presenter Howard Drobner, David Cohen, Denise Forbes, Victor Saffrin, Rabbi Aviva Fellman, Caroline Aboody, and Scott O’Toole. This is the tip of the iceberg for them, for they also chair or are members of other committees. I cannot express enough my gratitude for their dedication to Congregation Beth Israel.

News from the BI Sharing/Caring Clearinghouse: High Holiday Food Drive ***Bunny Callahan***

We are doing a high holiday food drive. Called give a bag, get a bag; we are asking congregants to bring a bag of nonperishable food with them when they come to pick up their High Holiday home resources packages on Monday, September 7. There will be a table in the parking lot where you can drop off your bag of donations.



We’re looking for shelf stable, nonperishable items that are not in glass containers. Some good examples are: peanut butter, tuna, beans, rice, pasta, canned stews, chili, pasta sauces, cereal, macaroni and cheese packages. Remember, no glass jars.

Rachel's Table will take our donations to local food pantries. Please note that this is not a community wide event this year, so this will be the only drop point.

Annual USY Challah Sale

Don’t forget to fill out your Rosh Hashanah Challah Sale form. These yummy round challot come from Blacker’s Bakeshop in Newton and your purchase supports Worcester USY programs. Watch for your order form in the mail.

GET READY FOR RIMON 5781!

Dale Rosenberg, Director of Education/Programming

Rimon, Beth Israel's Religious School, had an unusual school year last year – as did schools all over the world. With little notice or preparation, we found we had to switch from in-person, one-room schoolhouse style learning to online sessions via Zoom. We also lost Lior and Dolev, our emissaries who had taught with me, as they were sent home to Israel. Still, we persevered and found it was possible to have a fun, child-centered program even if we couldn't meet in person.

This summer, all schools everywhere are struggling with whether and how to resume in person instruction. Everyone involved in planning a school year is trying to balance the advantages of physical proximity to one's teachers, students, and classmates with the attendant dangers of physical proximity during the pandemic. These dangers are of course not only to students and teachers, but also to family members of the students and faculty.



As you know, we as a community are prioritizing the Jewish value of pikuach nefesh – concern for the preservation of each human life – over all other considerations. With that “prime directive” in mind, we will not be resuming in person classes this fall, much as we'd love to see one another in person.

Our 5781 plan is for twice-weekly Rimon class meetings via Zoom (on Monday and Wednesday afternoons), supplemented by individual Hebrew instruction and additional suggested family learning activities each week. We look forward to when we can meet together in person and enjoy our Rimon Shabbat Tefilah in the chapel, dropping into the main sanctuary from time to time. That will be a wonderful resumption, and we will move to it only when it is truly safe.

Since our program will be online, it should be a little more accessible for some of those living at a distance from Beth Israel. We also don't anticipate any snow days. If you know of someone with a child age 5-14 who would be interested in our program, but might have been dissuaded by the distance, please give them my contact information.

We're making some changes to our online program to make Rimon even better, learning from our experiences of what worked and what didn't, both at our school and the religious schools of many of my colleagues across the country. Some changes and updates:

- Our family/children services on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur tend to draw our largest Rimon crowd, 25-30 kids, since there are a number of children visiting grandparents for the holidays. It won't be possible to do these on the holiday but I have scheduled two sessions – one for Rosh Hashanah and one for Yom Kippur – to be presented via Zoom on the Tuesday and Thursday afternoon between the holidays. We'll do a lot of singing, discussion, storytelling. And we'll use our Beth Israel branded kazoos for shofar blowing. If you have children/grandchildren or know of any kids who would enjoy a song-filled, story-filled children's service, spread the word.
- We will continue individualized Hebrew tutoring via Zoom for Rimon students, but the scheduling will be more flexible and the materials we work with will be available online. I am also open to in-person tutoring in students' homes (or in mine) if the parents and I can work out mutually acceptable safety procedures.
- Although we will not have Shinshinim (young Israeli emissaries) in Worcester this year, we do have a Community Shaliach (emissary) named Aviv Jerbi who will be joining the Worcester Jewish Community. Some of the older children may remember him, because he was a Shinshin during the 2014-2015 school year. The Community Shlichim program is slightly different and he will not be in our classes each week, but Aviv will be a guest teacher on many occasions.
 - I'm also looking for other guest teachers. If you would like to join us as a guest lecturer, let me know.
 - We will have more craft activities and more writing/drawing opportunities in class. I will send materials to students' homes ahead of time.
 - I'll continue the practice of sending “Thursday Thoughts” – ideas for family learning activities over the weekend. If



anyone reading this would like to receive these emails, let me know. I'm happy to send them beyond the Rimon families list.

- For the younger children, we will continue Rowan Mason's popular Story and Crafts Corner and Tot Shabbat sessions.

This isn't the school program I thought I'd be overseeing and teaching in. Still, I am confident there will be plenty of learning and fun at Rimon this coming year.

The BI Voter Registration Challenge Is Here ***Evelyn Herwitz Harris***

There's a big election coming this November. How you vote is your choice. But in order to vote, you have to register!

Take the BI Voter Registration Challenge!

Our goal: By October 15, every eligible voter in the BI Community is registered.



Here's how:

Step One: Check to See if You're Registered

It's easy to do with Massachusetts's online voter registration system. Have you moved recently? Is your information up to date? Click here to find out:

<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/VoterRegistrationSearch/MyVoterRegStatus.aspx> If you are registered, go on to Step Three.

Step Two: Register to Vote

If you're new to Massachusetts or not yet registered, just click here and follow the easy directions:

<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/OVR/Pages/CheckEligibility.aspx?&Action=Register> Please note: You need a valid Massachusetts driver's license or ID to use the online system. You may also register by mail or in person, as described here: <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleifv/howreg.htm>

Step Three: Tell Us About It!

- 1) Take a picture or selfie of yourself showing that you've registered. Be creative! (But no partisan politics, please.)
- 2) If you're comfortable doing so, share to your social media with #BIVoterReg.
- 3) Email your picture to Dale Rosenberg: dale.rosenberg@bethisraelworc.org. We'll be posting pictures and tracking our progress on BI social media! Watch for details.

Did You Know?: Voting by Mail Is Up to You

A new law was passed in July allowing all registered voters in Massachusetts to vote by mail this fall, if you choose, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. You'll find details here: <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/covid-19/covid-19.htm>.

Members Together on Sunday Mornings

You spoke and we listened! We've heard lots of acclaim for our Sunday morning programs and requests for more, so we're planning more of them. On select Sundays, after morning minyan, we gather together via Zoom for a social opportunity and a presentation. At 9:00 we open the Zoom meeting for schmoozing. If it's a large group, we'll divide you into breakout rooms to get a chance to talk more intimately. At 9:30 we have a presentation on a topic of interest to our membership. Previous programs have focused on: the 1918 Flu Pandemic, the History of the Bagel, and an update on the current pandemic, with a focus on local status. On August 9 Herb Daroff will present on "The Many Tunes of Adon Olam."

We're looking to do a couple of these a month. Future topics may include:

Mah Jongg – How did it get to be so popular among Jews?

Yesterday's Tomorrows – What did 20th century science fiction writers get right and wrong about the 21st century?

Do you have a topic you'd like to present for a Members Together morning? Do you have a topic you'd like to see someone else present? Contact dale.rosenberg@bethisraelworc.org with your ideas.

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Office Hours (Phone only): Monday thru Friday 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.



Congregation Beth Israel

Welcome. Engage. Inspire. Grow.

Upcoming Events at Beth Israel August 2020

Remember: All programs can be accessed via computer, tablet, smartphone, or regular telephone. Call the office at 508 756-6204 for assistance in accessing any program.

Saturday, August 1	Shabbat Shalom! 9:00 p.m.	Havdalah with the Fellmans
Sunday, August 2	8:15 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Evening Services including Mourner's Kaddish
Monday, August 3	7:30 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Evening Services with Mishneh Study including Mourner's Kaddish
Tuesday, August 4	7:30 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Evening Services including Mourner's Kaddish Rimon -Story and Crafts Corner with Rowan
Wednesday, August 5	Tu B'Av – a Holiday for Love! * 7:30 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Evening Services including Mourner's Kaddish Rimon – Values through Story with Dale
Thursday, August 6	7:30 a.m. 10:00 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Rimon: Tot Shabbat with Rowan Evening Services with Mishneh Study including Mourner's Kaddish Rimon – Thursday Thoughts with Dale
Friday, August 7	7:30 a.m. 6:00 p.m. 7:40 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Kabbalat Shabbat b'Yachad Candle lighting
Saturday, August 8	Shabbat Shalom! 8:50 p.m.	Havdalah with the Fellman family
Sunday, August 9	8:15 a.m. 9:00 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Members Together: The Many Tunes of Adon Olam with Herb Daroff Evening Services including Mourner's Kaddish
Monday, August 10	7:30 a.m. 7:00 p.m. 7:45 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Evening Services with Mishneh Study including Mourner's Kaddish Exploring Judaism with Rabbi Fellman
Tuesday, August 11	7:30 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Evening Services including Mourner's Kaddish Rimon -Story and Crafts Corner with Rowan
Wednesday, August 12	7:30 a.m. 5:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Writing Group with Pat Bizzell Evening Services including Mourner's Kaddish Rimon – Jewish Heroes: Chaim Weizmann
Thursday, August 13	7:30 a.m. 10:00 a.m. 7:00 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Rimon: Tot Shabbat with Rowan Evening Services with Mishneh Study including Mourner's Kaddish Ritual Committee Meeting Rimon – Thursday Thoughts
Friday, August 14	7:30 a.m. 6:00 p.m. 7:31 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Kabbalat Shabbat b'Yachad Candle lighting
Saturday, August 15	Shabbat Shalom! 8:40 p.m.	Havdalah with the Fellman family

Sunday, August 16	8:15 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Evening Services including Mourner's Kaddish
Monday, August 17	B'nei Mitzvah of Andy and Kenny Kalvinek – Mazal Tov! 9:30 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Evening Services with Mishneh Study including Mourner's Kaddish
Tuesday, August 18	7:30 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Evening Services including Mourner's Kaddish Rimon -Story and Crafts Corner with Rowan
Wednesday, August 19	7:30 a.m. 7:00 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Evening Services including Mourner's Kaddish Reopening Task Force Meeting Rimon – Writing Prompts: Looking to Elul
Thursday, August 20	Rosh Chodesh Elul 7:30 a.m. 10:00 a.m. 7:00 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Rimon: Tot Shabbat with Rowan Evening Services with Mishneh Study including Mourner's Kaddish Project Zug Elul Kickoff Lecture Rimon – Thursday Thoughts
Friday, August 21	Rosh Chodesh Elul 7:30 a.m. 6:00 p.m. 7:56 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Kabbalat Shabbat b'Yachad Candle lighting
Saturday, August 22	Shabbat Shalom! 8:30 p.m.	Havdalah with the Fellman family
Sunday, August 23	8:15 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Evening Services including Mourner's Kaddish
Monday, August 24	7:30 a.m. 7:00 p.m. 7:45 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Evening Services with Mishneh Study including Mourner's Kaddish Exploring Judaism with Rabbi Fellman
Tuesday, August 25	7:30 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Evening Services including Mourner's Kaddish Rimon - Story and Crafts Corner with Rowan
Wednesday, August 26	7:30 a.m. 7:00 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Evening Services including Mourner's Kaddish Project Zug Elul Rimon – Values Through Story
Thursday, August 27	7:30 a.m. 10:00 a.m. 7:00 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Rimon: Tot Shabbat with Rowan** Evening Services with Mishneh Study including Mourner's Kaddish Beth Israel Board Meeting Rimon – Thursday Thoughts
Friday, August 28	7:30 a.m. 6:00 p.m. 7:09 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Kabbalat Shabbat b'Yachad Candle lighting
Saturday, August 29	Shabbat Shalom! 8:20 p.m.	Havdalah with the Fellman family
Sunday, August 30	8:15 a.m. 7:00 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Evening Services including Mourner's Kaddish
Monday, August 31	7:30 a.m. 7:00 p.m. 7:45 p.m.	Shacharit Services including Mourner's Kaddish Evening Services with Mishneh Study including Mourner's Kaddish Exploring Judaism with Rabbi Fellman

* Tu B'Av is a minor holiday in the Jewish calendar. The Talmud says it was a matchmaking holiday in Second Temple times, when young women would wear white and sing and dance and young men would choose their brides. In modern Israel, it's a little like Valentine's Day – a time for couples to celebrate love. It's always a full moon so it's a good time for long moonlit strolls with the one you love.

** Tot Shabbat with Rowan will return to Fridays in September