

BI@Home: **News from your home away from home**

A Word from Rabbi Fellman



My parents modeled hospitality. Almost every Shabbat and holiday there were different guests at our dinner table. When it came to Sukkot, there were also sometimes guests at our lunch table. In planning the meals of the holiday, we would not only plan the foods but also the guests. On Sukkot, we would refer to our guests as Ushpizin . Ushpizin, which is Aramaic for visitors, is a kabbalistic innovation for Sukkot whereby people from our

Tanakh are metaphorically invited into the Sukkah, different biblical guests on different nights. So in our family, we'd talk about who were we having as guests for the first night in addition to the biblical Avraham and Sarah? On the second night, who would be dining with Isaac and Rebekah and with the Kremers (my maiden name)?

Ari and I have tried to continue that tradition in our home. With COVID, we feel the absence of guests. This year we will still be inviting others to our sukkah. While some have referred to our guests this year as Zoom-shpizin, Zoom is not the only way to have guests on Sukkot. In our family, we will be calling or reading letters from various family members and others, as a way to infuse our sukkah with guests again this year.

In addition, this year, we will be following Maimonides, who admonished that anyone who sits comfortably with their family within their own walls and does not share with the poor is performing a mitzvah not for joy, but for the stomach. Ari and I will be making donations to causes that provide food for those in need, causes that help fight for equity and human rights, causes that align with the themes and values of this holiday and support our community. In this way, we continue to provide for others, fulfill mitzvot, and infuse our lives – and our sukkah – with guests and love.

Join us in welcoming others in and doing good for others this chag. One of the symbolic approaches to the Sukkah is seeing permanent structures (our homes) as temporary and temporary structures (our sukkot) as permanent, where we primarily dwell. May Sukkot 5781 bring stability and also show us how dear and fragile our gifts in this world are and may we open our hearts, homes, and eyes to those around us.

The seven nights of the holiday are reflected in seven different Kabbalistic Sephirot (mystical aspects and emanations of God) and are paired with Biblical men (the Ushpizin) and in later years, also Biblical women (Ushpizot). There are a few different traditions for pairing them. The list below is based on the Women's League for Conservative Judaism list.

<https://www.wlcj.org/resources/resources-for-members-and-friends/seasonal-materials/ushpizot/>

Hesed (loving kindness)- Abraham and Sarah

Gevurah (strength)- Isaac and Miriam

Tiferet (splendor)- Jacob and Deborah

Netzah (eternity)- Moses and Hannah

Hod (glory)- Aaron and Avigail

Yesod (foundation)- Joseph and Huldah

Malkhut (kingship)- David and Esther

I AM FULL OF GRATITUDE FOR YOU!

Paula Sommer, Beth Israel President

To our beloved congregation, thank you for your help during this unprecedented time.

I never would have imagined at the beginning of the summer that we would be coming together as a community with livestreamed High Holiday services. The Shehehyanu that we said together this year was particularly moving, making me realize how far we have come.

I am so appreciative of you, our caring community members, who continue to make Beth Israel your spiritual home, of our clergy and staff, who have risen to this challenge in such innovative ways, of our volunteers, who have been able to create new blessings from the COVID challenge, and everyone who has been willing to try new things over the internet. Such creativity and hard work! Just look at what we have been doing this summer!



Our spiritual life is continuing to meet our needs with the help of new technology. We have offered vibrant services; Zoomed daily morning and evening minyans; and have stayed connected to our snowbirds in Florida, our international members in Israel, and everyone in between. We have provided parking lot comfort for mourners, and celebrated life cycle events, including a livestreamed simcha in our sanctuary (a b'nai mitzvah ceremony), and plans for another bar mitzvah in the fall.

Our learning is continuing, as our rabbi has remained committed to weekly Torah study, parsha classes, Exploring Judaism, and lunchtime schmoozes. Our members and staff have offered robust programming for varied interests, including mindfulness classes, yoga, a writing workshop, and Sunday morning Brotherhood and Members Together brunches. BI has started a yearlong partnership with Project Zug for extra educational opportunities.

Our children are continuing to socialize and learn as we switched to a virtual Rimon Hebrew School, which included individual Hebrew tutoring sessions, and Tot Shabbat. For the first time ever, seeing a need during COVID when most summer camps were closed, our principal Dale Rosenberg along with our Early Childhood Educator Rowan Mason crafted a Rimon summer program, with Story and Crafts corner, songs and history, and thoughts for family discussions, to help the children and all the Rimon families stay connected and involved.

Our outreach to the larger Worcester community is continuing. We have donated food to Rachel's Table and other food banks, have written letters to the elderly, created a voter registration initiative, and are celebrating our stable homes by creating blankets for Habitat for Humanity.

We have continued to prepare and are now celebrating the High Holidays. Although the building was mostly closed, we arranged for families to visit the ark for a few meditative moments during Elul, and with an incredible effort were able to reopen with limited in-person High Holiday services. As we celebrate the holidays together, this year most of us will be at home during the holidays, so we created Do It Yourself High Holy Day resource bags, to help us create our own sacred space at home.

It is a pleasure at this time to acknowledge all the members of our hard-working committees who sprang into extra action in March and have brought us to this point. When you talk to any of them, please give them your hearty thanks for enabling BI to offer everything I mentioned above, plus High Holiday services to everyone in various ways, pre-recorded, live-stream, and in-person, unique and special.

Thank you to Dr Jeremy Golding and Dr Mattie Castiel, the Medical Task Force who work tirelessly on their mission of keeping us safe.

Thank you to the Technology Task Force: Jeremy Golding (chair), Howard Drobner, Denise Forbes, Jack Gold, Dick Goodman, Sherri Sigel, and Adrian Zeffert, for spending countless hours to get us connected. Thank you to the Maven Squad, Jack Gold, Marty Rosenbaum, and Adrian Zeffert, for customized help in getting everyone connected.

Thank you to the Ritual Committee, working within the bounds of halacha in unprecedented ways: Victor Saffrin (chair), Joel Baker, Herb Daroff, Rabbi Aviva Fellman, Jeremy Golding, Alan Harris, Sharon Krefetz, Steve Levine, Herb Millman, Sondy Padow, Harriet Robbins, Leon Sebag, Dan Shertzer, and Reena Slovin.

Thank you to the Facilities Committee, which oversees the physical upgrades necessary for a safe reopening of the building: David Cohen and Howard Drobner (co-chairs), Eric Capellari, Andrea Goodman, Ira Gregerman, Paul Martin, and Scott O'Toole.

Thank you to the Safety and Security Committee, which ensures our physical and medical security: Denise Forbes (chair), David Cohen, Marc Cohen, Howard Fixler, Scott O'Toole, Dan Shertzer, Steve Sosnoff, Nancy Spitulnik, and Rich Traiger.

Thank you to the Reopening Task Force: Jeremy Golding (chair), Caroline Aboody, David Cohen, Howard Drobner, Rabbi Aviva Fellman, Denise Forbes, Scott O'Toole, Victor Saffrin and Paula Sommer, for coordinating all these efforts.

Besides contributions of time, expertise, and energy, we have also received such generous donations to help further our education and technology efforts.

Thank you to Barry Aframe, who sponsored our membership in Project Zug, for a year's worth of classes for our whole community.

For their creativity in helping us celebrate our community, thank you to Brian Vinik, for making beautiful videos, and thank you to Kathy Pulda, who created the wonderful torah mantel for the small torah that was used during High Holiday services.

Thank you to our members who have made generous donations in kind to the ongoing BI Reopening technology process – so far, the Wi-Fi, computers, audio mixer, wireless microphones, and other not inexpensive items.

Thank you to Howard Drobner for a donation of personal computer and monitor used for the Live Streaming operation.

Thank you to Adrian Zeffert for a donation of Pyle 8 channel wireless microphone system, cables, connectors, and USB adaptors.

Thank you to an anonymous donor for uninterruptible power supplies to provide battery backup through brief power hits, given in recognition and appreciation of the work of the BI Technology and Reopening committees.

Thank you to an anonymous donor for a new building ORBI Wi-Fi system, given in recognition and appreciation of the work of the BI Technology and Reopening committees.

Thank you to an anonymous donor for a Soundcraft 24 Input Digital Mixer, given in recognition and appreciation of the work of the BI Technology and Reopening committees.

As you see, there has been an extraordinary effort by so many people to keep our BI family spiritually connected, socially energized, and helping each other during this scary time. The BI community, staff, and clergy are there for you in difficult times, and to celebrate happy events. We have had extra COVID-related expenses, many thousands of dollars, for equipment, cleanings, sanitizing, safety and security. If you can give an extra donation at this time, to ensure that BI continues to be a home for prayer, learning, and community, know that it will be put to very good use, and provide the foundation for an uncertain year ahead.

We greatly appreciate all of your efforts to support Beth Israel's annual budget and our long-term endowment fund, that will keep our synagogue active and thriving for future generations. Todah Rabah for all you have done and will do for Beth Israel, through your financial support and through the time you volunteer to keep our synagogue strong.

Gmar Chatima Tovah!

KEEPER OF THE FLAME AWARD 5781: ALAN HARRIS
Steve Wolfe, Past President, BI Brotherhood

The Keeper of the Flame (KOF) is an annual event sponsored by the New England Region (NER) of the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs (FJMC). KOF recognizes the positive actions men take to do right in the world. Each NER Men's Club or Brotherhood selects a KOF recipient based on his extraordinary service and leadership.

Beth Israel's Brotherhood is proud to announce Alan Harris as this year's KOF honoree!

This year, due to the pandemic, there will be a Virtual Ceremony with Video Tributes for each of the KOF recipients. The event is supported by donations, including registration fees and the KOF Tribute Book (tribute content sent before the event). Funds raised support Regional and Club activities.

The event will be held on November 1 at 5:00 p.m. so mark your calendars now. Watch your email blasts for details on how to register.

Support Al and see him receive this prestigious award! All are welcome. You can register online at www.nerfjmc.org. A link for the program will be sent to those who register.



BUILDING A DISTINCTIVE SUKKAH or THE ELEPHANT NOT IN THE ROOM ***Michele Roberts***

I built our sukkah 30 years ago, the design of which was informed equally by halacha, availability of building materials, ease of assembly, and durability. Halacha: It must have at least 2½ walls, corners, and a roof more than half-covered by plant material, through which the stars are visible. Elephant flanks as sukkah walls are discussed at some length in the Talmud, but I will mention them only flippantly in this discussion.

The materials I used: Plywood comes in 4x8 sheets, and 2x4's come in 8-foot lengths. Elephants were not readily available.

I assembled eight panels (satisfyingly appropriate for an eight-day holiday) from eight sheets of exterior-grade plywood, each fitted with a frame of 2x4's at the perimeter, the plywood applied to the narrow face of the 2x4. One of the vertical 2x4's is attached at a 45° angle, because my original design was to have an 8-foot square, each side consisting of two panels meeting adjacent sides with two 45° angles forming a conventional 90° corner. I drilled three holes through each vertical 2x4 to accommodate 4" bolts, securing adjacent panels to each other. I used a template, because it is very important for the holes to align. So far so good. Now to slide the bolt through – any two side-by-side panels worked just fine, but the corners were too tight to accommodate a bolt. Now what?

I had three options: use headless bolts, drill holes in the panels through which the bolts would be inserted, or... flip every other panel, and attach one 45° 2x4 to one 90° 2x4. I chose the latter; thus, an octagonal sukkah was created. It is not a circle, it is less than twenty *amot*, but more than ten *tefachim* tall, and it has corners — eight of them, but no elephants.

We have an octagonal sukkah, and we are happy to report that the floor area is approximately 69 square feet, as opposed to 64 square feet for a square sukkah with the same perimeter. One panel, of course, has a half-sheet of plywood (and three vertical 2x4's) to form a doorway. Three additional 2x4's cross the top of the structure to support the *schach* and to stabilize the octagon – important in autumn, in New England.

Every year our octagonal sukkah is elaborated with material improvements. It has been painted several times. One year, I made an octagonal table, and installed two-dozen cup hooks in the “rafters”. Cup hooks greatly simplify the process of hanging our sukkah lights, ropes of tiny multicolored lights that go on sale in all of the discount stores in January. Every year, we grow more attached to our traditions, the traditions of our people, and the traditions of our family. Sukkot, at the autumnal equinox, connects us to the earth as much as it connects us to the spiritual.

One year, we rummaged through our daughters' old toys to find something to amuse two young guests. We came up with Snow White's companions of short stature, squeaky toys, all seven of them. They are now a permanent fixture of our sukkah décor, having been assigned the status of *ushpizin*.

Hasn't everyone celebrating sukkot in New England wanted to turn up the thermostat? Well, we have one in our sukkah. It's not connected to anything, but we do have a thermostat. Although an elephant would be warmer, a thermostat will do (but it won't do much).

In addition to hauling the panels out of the shed, locating the hardware, and assembling the sukkah, every year we clear a segment of the line from the septic tank to the leaching field, amassing a pile of harvested saplings, mostly birch, which smell deliciously like root beer. We perform this task in the fall, just prior to Sukkot, so that we can use the long sticks thus generated for *schach*. A quarter-century ago, living in



Connecticut, we trimmed a hedge of yews every year just before Sukkot. After Sukkot is over, the *schach* is bundled for kindling (birch, not yews), or shredded for mulch for next year's vegetable garden. This protracted process is labor-intensive, but intensely satisfying in its seasonality and parsimony.

In my family of ardent sukkah dwellers, we don't just make *motzi* in our sturdy sukkah; we try to sleep in it every dry night. Frost does not hinder us. Dwelling in the sukkah, we are closer to the earth, grateful for our many blessings.

SUKKOT AND SIMCHAT TORAH AT BETH ISRAEL

Although we are unable to celebrate together in a congregational sukkah this year, BI has great plans for joy and gladness in the Sukkot/Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah season. Watch your email blasts for details on signing up for in-person services, as well as livestreaming, neighborhood Torah walk/community hakafot, and a fabulous Melavah Malkah to end the 5781 fall holidays.

RIMON 5781 HAS BEGUN!

Dale Rosenberg, Director of Education/Programming



Rimon, Beth Israel's religious school, segued pretty seamlessly from summer session into the fall holidays. We've had programming for both the under five crowd (Tot Shabbat, High Holy Day edition, and Story and Crafts corner) and for the school-age contingent (including Jonah being eaten by a giant fish – well it looked giant on Zoom). Regular classes began on September 30 and Hebrew language tutoring will begin after the fall holidays are complete. Students have received packages full of materials for study, games, and crafts and will shortly get their online Hebrew learning materials.

We'll be having guest lecturers this year, including past Shinshinim (Young Emissaries) Zooming in from Israel! If you'd like to learn more about Rimon, contact me at rimon@bethisraelworc.org.

MEMBERS TOGETHER IN OCTOBER – BROTHERHOOD AND SISTERHOOD

We have two exciting Sunday morning programs in October. These Zoom programs are held from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 and are a chance to hang out with other BI members over breakfast and then experience a stimulating presentation. This month, our Brotherhood and Sisterhood have developed the programs.

On October 18, the Beth Israel Sisterhood presents: "Where in the World Did You Grow Up Jewish?" A panel of BI members from a variety of places will talk about what it was like to be a child in an area with very few Jews.

Then on October 25, the Beth Israel Brotherhood continues the Famous Brotherhood Breakfasts with the support of Members Together. Adrian Zeffert will present on the topic of Jews and Comic Books.

When these two Sundays roll around, get your coffee and bagel and log in to the Zoom meeting around 9:00 to hang out and schmooze. The formal program will start at 9:30.

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.

THE BI VOTER REGISTRATION CHALLENGE

Evelyn Herwitz Harris

Are You Registered to Vote in the November Election?

In-person early voting in Massachusetts runs from October 17 to October 30. Early voting by mail is available to all Massachusetts voters and will begin as soon as ballots are ready. At Beth Israel, we have a 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

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/elefv/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's social media.

Thanks to all who have sent in selfies so far! Add your non-partisan pic to our growing Instagram collection, @biworchester. Voting is a precious right. Make sure your voice is heard.



PROJECT ZUG: EVERYDAY MORAL DILEMMAS

Our congregation's initial venture into learning with Project Zug was a great success. Thirty-eight BI members studied key prayers in the Machzor – in chavruta pairs with facilitation and by watching recorded and live lectures from Rabbi Eli Kaunfer.

Our second group learning effort begins on Wednesday, October 21. Rabbi Avi Strausberg of Hadar Institute developed the curriculum and there are videos and study sheets available on the Project Zug website. The group sessions will be held on four Wednesday evenings at 7:30. They will include framing comments, time for hevruta learning, and debriefing. Sessions will be facilitated on Zoom by Rabbi Amy Loewenthal and Dale Rosenberg. Watch your email for details on how to register. And remember, Project Zug's entire catalogue is available to BI Members! Contact the office if you want more information.

LIFE AND LEGACY AND YOU!

Herb Daroff, Beth Israel Board Chair

At Beth Israel, we are very fortunate that many members from many years ago started the endowment. They planted financial trees for us, so that we could benefit from the fruits that those trees continue to produce. When investment markets are down, endowments are still life preservers. But, we need to keep planting trees so those who come after us will enjoy their fruits.

Our Endowment contributes four (4%) percent towards the Congregation's operating budget. That contribution accounts for about 20% of the operating budget.

As part of the Jewish community of Central Massachusetts, Beth Israel joined the Life & Legacy Campaign to help increase our endowment. So far, 48 of our members have signed Declarations of Intent, and 7 have completed their gifts; some from members who fulfilled their pledge during lifetime, and some from members who have died.

Some frequently asked questions about Life and Legacy follow:

Q: How much money do I need to donate now?

A: None. The Life & Legacy Declaration of Intent is a pledge that you will designate Beth Israel as beneficiary of a portion of your life insurance or retirement accounts, or include Beth Israel in your Will or Trust. You certainly can fulfill your pledge during your lifetime, as several donors have already done. But, the goal of the Life & Legacy campaign is for you to designate a portion of your estate to Beth Israel.

Q: How much do I have to pledge?

A: We have not set a minimum, or a maximum. Every Declaration of Intent helps to secure our future. The amount is totally up to you.

Q: What if I want to leave everything to my family?

A: We certainly understand that. We have one donor who told us exactly that. When she discussed it with her children, they told her that since Beth Israel has been an important part of her life, she should include Beth Israel in her estate plan, and she has.

Be remembered forever by helping sustain the Jewish Community in Central Massachusetts, especially Beth Israel. Please consider filling in a Declaration of Intent. For more information, please contact: ecapellari9928@charter.net or HillelKarl@gmail.com or je45marko@aol.com or danbshertzer@gmail.com or stevesosnoff@gmail.com or stollam@aol.com.

MORE THANK YOUS

Paula Sommer, President

It takes a giant list to recognize everyone who has helped make our High Holy Days so special this year. In this unusual time, we've had not only our accustomed High Holy Day activities and responsibilities, all of which require much energy and time from our congregation and staff. Our reimagined High Holy Days also required brand new activities, like neighborhood shofar blowing and musaf vignettes.

Please join me in acknowledging the huge variety of help and helpers for High Holy Day 5781 at Beth Israel. If I have missed you, I apologize. Please let me know so we can give proper recognition.

Ritual Committee Members, Organizing Ritual Response to COVID:

Joel Baker
Herb Daroff
Rabbi Fellman
Jeremy Golding
Alan Harris
Sharon Krefetz
Steve Levine
Herb Millman
Sondy Padow
Harriet Robbins
Victor Saffrin
Leon Sebag
Dan Shertzer
Reena Slovin
Paula Sommer

Elul Ark Visits:
Caroline Aboody
Pat Bizzell
David Cohen
Howard Drobner
Deb Fins
Howard Fixler
Jeremy Golding
Maxine Garbo
Scott O'Toole
Sondy Padow
Victor Saffrin
Paula Sommer
Nancy Spitulnik
David Suhl

Torah Mantel:
Kathy Pulda

Congregational Videos:
Brian Vinik
Sophia Jacobson

Youth High Holy Day Programs:
Dale Rosenberg
Rowan Mason

Leading/Tech-ing Zoom Minyans:

Joel Baker
David Etedgee
Herb Daroff
Rabbi Fellman
Howard Fixler
Alan Harris
Deb Martin
Victor Saffrin
Dan Shertzer
Reena Slovin
Saul Slovin
Steve Wolfe

Pre-recording:

Joel Baker
Rabbi Fellman
Jay Freedman
Jeremy Golding
Ben Krefetz
Sharon Krefetz
Steve Levine
Reena Slovin
USY

Hosting Tashlich:

Dick Rudnick
Sheila Trugman

Musaf Vignettes:

Deb Fins
Denise Forbes
Alan Harris
Reena Slovin
Laura Traiger
Greg Weiner

HiHo Quintet:

Rabbi Fellman
Jeremy Golding
Andrea Goodman
Evie Herwitz Harris
Dan Miller
Victor Saffrin

Leading Services and Reading Torah and Haftorah:

Ari Fellman
Rabbi Fellman
Jeremy Golding
Ben Krefetz
Sharon Krefetz
Steve Levine
Victor Saffrin
Reena Slovin
Nancy Spitulnik

BI Maven Tech Squad:

Jack Gold
Marty Rosenbaum
Adrian Zeffert

Shofar Blowers and Helpers in Services and Neighborhoods:

Rabbi Fellman
Ari Fellman
Hadar Fellman
Idan Fellman
Maayan Fellman
Denise Forbes
Jay Freedman
Jeremy Golding
Alan Harris
Evelyn Herwitz Harris
Jonathan Jacobson
Andrew Jacobson
Sophia Jacobson
Amy Loewenthal
Kathy Pulda
Michele Roberts
Dale Rosenberg
Dick Rudnick
Sherri Sigel
Sheila Trugman
Bruce Wahle
Ellen Wahle
Greg Weiner
Rebecca Weiner
Theodore Weiner

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