

BI@Home: News from your home away from home

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A WORD FROM RABBI FELLMAN



In our shul lobby, there is a work of letter art that reads, “*Just as my ancestors planted for me, so will I plant for my children.*” (*Babylonian Talmud, Ta’anit 23a*) In the Talmudic story, the sages are wrestling with a Biblical verse. Rabbi Johanan said, “This righteous man (Honi) was always bothered by the meaning of the verse, ‘A Song of Ascents, When the Lord brought back those that returned to Zion, we were like dreamers.’ (Psalm 126:1). Is it possible for a person to dream continuously for seventy years?” he wondered.

The text responds with a story illustrating how that might be possible. One day Honi was journeying on the road and saw a man planting a carob tree. He asked him, “How long does it take [for this tree] to bear fruit?” The man replied, “Seventy years.” Honi then asked, “Are you certain that you will live another seventy years?” The man replied, “I found carob trees in the world; as my fathers planted these for me, so I, too, plant these for my children.”

We, too, have wrestled and continue to question and grow as a religious and spiritual community. When this piece of art was commissioned as part of our *B’Yachad* renovations in 2018, it was intended to celebrate the seeds that were sown for us, whose fruit we have benefited from, and the legacy that we work to leave our children and subsequent generations.

Almost 100 years ago, the founders of our BI community seeded our synagogue community. I wonder if they, like the planter of the carob tree, knew or had dreams of what this community would look like 70 years later. From those seeds grew roots that have nourished us, and enabled us to grow, strong and vibrant. Our community – the trunk, if you will – continues to flourish, as we uplift each other, support each other, and create the canopy of branches and leaves that expand and celebrate our diverse ways of being Jewish and engaging with one another.

Over the next couple of years, as we count up to our *Meah*, our century, as a shul here in Central Massachusetts, we will be caring for and celebrating our physical, spiritual, and communal presence. This includes our BI home – working to further enhance our grounds and our building – as well as honoring our foundational members who were our roots, celebrating the breadth and impact of our presence today, and planting seeds for the future, working together to ensure a strong Jewish community at BI and in Worcester for generations to come.

While our centennial is not until spring of 2024, we have already begun planning for a very special celebration. Watch for news in weekly emails and future editions of BI@Home about activities leading up to the anniversary, and how you can contribute your ideas and energy to make our 100th year even better. If you want to start getting involved now, please let me know.

A WELCOME IN WORCESTER

PAULA SOMMER, BETH ISRAEL PRESIDENT

Being a Worcester native means you were born here. Forget coming here as a newlywed – even arriving as a baby doesn't count.

However, Worcester has always been a welcoming community. We see it in the 2020 census. We have been the second largest city in New England for a long time, but now our population has exceeded 200,000. A 2015 report from the UMass Amherst Donahue Institute said: 'Currently, Worcester has more foreign-born residents than any other Massachusetts Gateway City.'

Many of us attended the Ellis Island virtual presentation last month. We learned that about a third of Ellis Island immigrants remained in NY, while the rest spread throughout the country, often where there were '*landsleute*', people from the same shtetl back home. I know that happened in my family. My mother was the first child in her family to be born here – a Worcester native.



Three decades ago, we welcomed many Jews from Soviet Russia. Most of them had not been able to live Jewishly. Couples had been married civilly. Partnering with Hadassah, the community offered the opportunity for a Jewish wedding, hosted at BI. Eleven couples signed up. Our recollections differ, though it felt like all of central Massachusetts rallied around, with 11 rabbis and 11 cantors performing 11 weddings under 11 chuppahs spread throughout the BI campus, inside and out, followed by a dinner and dance party.

We continue to build strong relationships with our neighbors, and throughout our community.

We provide a place to see citizenship in action during Worcester elections, as the polling location for District 1 Precinct 4, routinely enjoying the distinction of having the highest turnout in the city.

We welcome our neighbors to enjoy our campus as they explore with their dogs. Indeed, some consider it their local dog park.

We host Summit Academy, a private therapeutic day school.

Our refurbished playground is open to all, and includes a Little Free Library, to offer a pleasant take-home souvenir or share a book with others.

Our invigorated BI Cares Committee is developing to extend help to the BI family as a sustainable caring community.

We have a strong commitment to Rachel's Table, our local food bank sponsored by the Jewish community for the benefit of all, and we provide shelter meals monthly.

Our most recent social action effort is working as part of a Neighborhood Support Team with several other local houses of worship, to support a large Afghan refugee family recently settled in Worcester. We hope to be able to build on this as more families come.

Congregation Beth Israel will continue to reflect a Worcester welcome to our neighbors and our community, as we have done in our almost century old history. Join us as we work to build a better community and society.

RIMON IN A TIME OF CHANGE

DALE ROSENBERG, DIRECTOR OF LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

The past couple of school years at Rimon have been full of changes, as has been the case for schools of all kinds and in all places during the pandemic. We continually strive to provide the most engaging education we can. We hope that some upcoming changes will help us better meet the needs of Rimon students and their families.



Ours is a very small religious school, reflecting the small number of Beth Israel families with school age children. We're looking to grow the school, although we will always want it to be small enough to give individualized attention. As more families with young children join, our numbers should increase. Programs like Tot Shabbat; Bagels and Books; the BING! Program for young adults; and special Rimon family holiday events will, we hope, attract more young families to BI and put small children into the "pipeline" for Rimon.

For now, Rimon students are a very small group with a large age range – from almost 5 to 13. Four of our students had their b'nai mitzvah in the past eight months and will be finishing Rimon at the end of the year. A number of our families have contracted COVID this school year and students necessarily missed classes while they, or other members of their family, were isolating. The Omicron variant closed the building on Shabbat for a number of weeks, cancelling our Saturday sessions. Also, some of our older students have many other activities and, like middle schoolers all over the country, they struggled to keep up with their work in "regular" school, their extracurriculars, and also have time to attend Rimon two afternoons a week. As a result, we often had Wednesday sessions when 1, 2, or no students Sixth Grade and up were able to attend. This makes it hard to meet the educational needs of the older and younger children at the same time.

We are making some short-term changes in order to help alleviate these issues. During this time, we will consult with parents and try to come up with plans more suited to our current demographics. We will also focus on the expected demographics next year, when most of the older children in Rimon will have aged out.

For the months of March and April, we are suspending Wednesday sessions except for a few special events that are designed to be entertaining and educational for all the children. Since we are now able to return to Shabbat morning classes, we are still offering Rimon twice a week, as well as weekly Hebrew tutoring. Our Shabbat sessions will begin with a brief (30 minute) service, with the Rimon students taking turns leading prayers. I expect that some of the older students will prefer to spend most of the morning with their families in the main service. I'm encouraging them to join us for that first half-hour, so they can practice leading prayers in a low stress environment and serve as an example for the younger students. All are welcome to go upstairs with us afterwards where we will study the parasha of the week, including the popular "parasha debates" activity.

We are also looking to increase the ties between Rimon, USY, and Tot Shabbat. For a few examples – one of our special events will be a Purim carnival led by USY; a pre-Pesach project will be jointly presented by Rimon, USY, Tot Shabbat and BING (described elsewhere in this issue); and we are looking into joint USY/Rimon field trips. As Tot Shabbat returns to in-person meetings on Saturday mornings, we will (pending medical approval) be able to once again invite the younger children to join us for snack at the end of their session. The Rimon students can practice being hosts and also have the opportunity to teach the younger children how to ask for the various snack foods in Hebrew. In addition, our madrichim (assistant teacher) program gives opportunities for high school students to transition from being older Rimon students to Rimon teachers.

Acting Vice President for Education Deb Martin, Rabbi Fellman, and I are working closely to develop programming that engages our Rimon community as it is now while also building for a future in which BI's babies and toddlers will find a place to explore their Judaism as they grow into "big kids" at Rimon. We want your help! Spread the word about our innovative personalized program and refer any potential families you know of to me, so I can let them know what we're up to.

WE'RE SO GLAD TO BE BACK! (AND KIDDUSH LUNCH IS COMING)

On Shabbat of February 18/19, we were finally able to return to services in our beautiful sanctuary, as the Omicron Surge receded. What a joy to be able to pray together, our voices rising in song as a congregation! How lovely to have aliyot again, and to read from our Torah scrolls. **Our expectation is that on March 5 we will resume kiddush lunch**, removing our masks as we sit and eat and schmooze together in our Social Hall, something we have all missed so much.

We at Beth Israel are extremely lucky to have an exceptional group of volunteers with a variety of expertise who meet weekly to advise us on ways to be as fully ourselves and as fully a kehillah as possible in these challenging times. We particularly rely on our Medical Advisor Dr. Jeremy Golding to keep up with the current trends and risks related to COVID-19 and we update our policies and procedures according to the best practices, keeping *pikuach nefesh* as our guiding principle.

Over the past two years, we've all seen how the COVID pandemic is a constantly moving target and we need to adjust as conditions change. We strive for the most interaction and most community connection we can accomplish, while keeping the safety and health of our congregants, clergy, and staff foremost.

Weekly emails will delineate any changes to procedures. Right now, we are having in-person services on both Friday night and Saturday morning, with Zoom access for those who cannot join us. To attend in person, everyone who is eligible must be vaccinated and "boosted." If you are boosted but have not yet sent in a picture of your vaccination card, please do so as soon as you can. For now, congregants are continuing to wear surgical/medical masks for the entire service, sit in distanced household groupings, and leave the shul right after services, schmoozing outside as we eat our Kiddush snack. Rimon is returning to Saturday mornings and in April we plan to resume Tot Shabbat on Saturday mornings, as well. We are excited to be resuming Kiddush lunch, which is such a wonderful opportunity to catch up with old friends and meet some new ones.

Check your Shabbat and Weekly Email blasts for updated information on our COVID policies and procedures. And, for those who are not yet ready to return in person – or who live too far to do so – rest assured that we will continue to have multi-access services, allowing you to attend via Zoom.

WELCOME AFGHAN REFUGEES BUNNY CALLAHAN

As part of fulfilling the mitzvah of welcoming and caring for the strangers in our midst, BI has joined with other faith groups to welcome Afghan refugees currently being relocated to Worcester. We are part of a team helping one large family among the dozen or more in this wave of evacuees. Our family consists of 2 parents and 10 children, ranging in age from 4 to 24. They are non-English speakers, and have minimal to no formal education. Imagine the shock this move is causing!

I do not name them, because there are relatives still in Afghanistan who could be endangered. Many hands are needed to help in this effort. The current major need is people to drive them to appointments (doctor, dentist), homework helpers and translators (they speak Dari and Pashto, Farsi is close). Any help you can give, please contact Bunny Callahan.



WELCOMING THE STRANGER IS A MAJOR JEWISH VALUE

RABBI AVIVA FELLMAN

In less than two months, Jews all over the world will be sitting down to our Passover Seder tables. In this oldest and most practiced Jewish tradition, we are commanded to retell and remember our ancestors' Exodus from Egypt and to see ourselves as if we left Egypt. In other words, this practice of sitting and retelling is not just about history. It is also about how we fit into that narrative today – in fighting injustice, celebrating freedom, and engaging the world around us, working to make it a better place.

As Jews, we hold that each person is created in the image of God. We are also implored 36 times in the Bible that we are responsible for helping to care for strangers as we were once strangers ourselves. In that spirit of responsibility and caring, I offer the following prayer:

Our God and God of our ancestors, may each of us fulfill our obligation of citizenship, religious moral imperative, and leadership with care, generosity, and gratitude, ever conscious of the extraordinary blessing of freedom, ever mindful of our duties and responsibilities to one another.

Fill us all with the gifts of love and courage, that we may create a world that reflects Your glory. Help us share in our freedom and help to lift the voices of others in beauty and strength. May we each respond to the charge of Your Prophet Micah (6:8), “For what does HaShem demand of You – but to act justly, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with Your God.” May the one who brings peace on high bring peace and prosperity to our world and keep us in safety. Amen.

COFFEE AND THE WORLD

HOWARD FIXLER, VP MEMBERSHIP

Do you ever wake up on Monday morning with thoughts still circulating in your brain from Sunday morning news shows such as Face the Nation, FoxNews Sunday or Fareed Zakaria GPS? Or perhaps an article from Wall Street Journal Weekend edition, New York or London Times, The Jerusalem Post, Foreign Affairs or The Economist really got you thinking about world affairs: history as well as our future.



Let's meet up on the first Monday of the month for an open forum and a chance to bring up anything you wish on world affairs. We'll meet at 10:00 and talk for up to an hour. No agenda, just a chance for people to share with each other something from their viewing or reading. Feel free to express your own ideas and viewpoints. It's a foregone conclusion that we won't all agree with each other. Let's be sure that we agree that this will be a space where all are given a chance to speak, all will be listened to, and all will be treated with appropriate dignity and respect.

We will begin by meeting on Zoom. The Zoom link will be in each weekly email. Once we have the all clear from the B.I. Medical Team, we can choose to meet inside at BI.

See you Monday, March 7th, 10:00 to 11:00AM

And, oh yeah, don't forget the coffee!



WHAT'S NEW WITH USY ***ROWAN MASON, YOUTH ADVISOR***

USY teens continue forward with our Hot Cocoa and Havruta learning series this Spring on Sundays March 6th and April 3rd at 3:30-5pm in the BI Library. Isaac Shertzer and Zev Lipton-Praver will be facilitating our March discussion, with an icebreaker led by EmmaChaya Lipton-Praver, and leadership opportunities will be available to youth at each of the subsequent sessions. We are studying Project Zug's course "Am I Responsible?: An Exploration of Jewish and Human Responsibility."

On Erev Purim, USY will be hosting their much-anticipated Purim carnival! Join us in the BI social hall from 5-6:30 p.m. for mask creation, carnival games, and hamantaschen baking. We hope to see you there!

In partnership with Tot Shabbat, Rimon, and the BING! Young Adults group, USY will be hosting Haggadah Companion Crafting at 11am-1pm on Sunday April 10th in the BI Social Hall. See details later in this issue.

RE-INVIGORATING BI CARES ***DEB FINS***

In the January-February *BI@Home*, President Paula Sommer wrote about our plans to reinvigorate the BI Cares Committee. I have agreed to chair this committee to get it off the ground and am working closely with Rabbi Fellman to determine how we might be most helpful to her in her pastoral work.

We have many ideas but want to be cognizant of what is realistic to provide and to help our congregants be realistic as to what to expect. But we can't determine the potential reach of the committee without developing our volunteer group. You can do as much or as little as you want but let us know if you are interested in learning more. We have already had several congregants asking to be a part of this effort.



We will launch our work with a four-session Adult Ed course beginning Monday, March 21 and ending just before Pesach. The course, "Creating Caring Communities through Bikkur Cholim," will be taught by Rabbi Fellman. See details on this course in the Adult Education section below.

It is not required for BI Cares Committee members to take the course nor for course attendees to volunteer with the committee. The info in the course is valuable for all of us. The committee will meet right after Pesach to determine next steps.

If you are interested in joining us or have any questions, please contact me at DLFins@aol.com or 508-756-1261. I look forward to working with you to make our caring community even more effective.

GET READY FOR PURIM

Purim is just around the corner and this year we can enjoy all the raucous fun in person in shul, as we did in pre-COVID times. Start planning your costume now! On March 16, Erev Purim, we'll meet in the BI sanctuary at 7:00 p.m. for the service, Megillah reading, and all sorts of wild merriment! Rabbi Fellman is planning a special shpiel and we'll party like it's 5779! Well, except for the masks on our mouths and noses, in addition to over our eyes.

The younger set is invited to the Purim Carnival, led by USY. It will commence at 5:00 on March 16 in the Social Hall and will be followed by a light supper so families can stay for the Megillah reading rather than rush home to feed children. Then we will all move into the Sanctuary for the main event! Of course, any plans involving food are dependent on COVID trends and subject to change. As of now we expect to offer a meal in between the carnival and the service.

Don't forget about the **Purim Raffle Fundraiser!** This is a major fundraising opportunity for the shul and also a chance at winning fabulous cash prizes. You should have gotten raffle tickets in the mail by now. If you can't find them or need some more, call the office. We have plenty!

The Purim Extravaganza Evening will be simulcast on Zoom, so everyone can join in. Wear your costume on Zoom, too! Note: **You do not need to be present – in person or on Zoom – to win the raffle.**

CELEBRATE MILESTONE BIRTHDAYS BY DONATING TO THE BI ENDOWMENT

Two key members of the BI Community are celebrating special birthdays in March: Rabbi Aviva Fellman and VP of Finance, Andrea Goodman. We're taking this opportunity to have a Birthday Fundraiser for the General Endowment Fund.

Celebrated as Pi Day by nerds everywhere, March 14 (3.14 – get it?) is also our beloved rabbi's birthday and this year she turns 40! So don't just bake her a pi(e) or wish her many happy returns of the day, although those are certainly good things to do. Let's celebrate by contributing money to our Endowment, which will bring many happy returns to our whole community. Rabbi Fellman is hoping we can raise enough money in the General Endowment fund to endow the shul's budget for rabbinic education. This would allow not only Rabbi Fellman, but future rabbis to attend conferences and educational events, something we all benefit from. To be able to fund this each year, we need to raise \$50,000.

Andrea Goodman, our VP of Finance, turns 70 on March 28 (but her hair is still red – amazing!) Her goal as VP of Finance is to grow our General Endowment to \$5,000,000 by our 100th anniversary in 2024. Meeting this goal would ensure the continued financial health of our beloved community and there's nothing she'd like better for a birthday gift than help achieving that goal.

Let's all do our parts for these two special people on their milestone birthdays. Log in to the website and press "Donate." Choose General Endowment Fund and put "Birthday" in the Notes field. You can also mail a check. If you do, put "birthday" in the memo section.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, HARRIET!

Speaking of birthdays, long time BI member Harriett Strogoff turned 101 on Valentine's Day 2022. She had a party with family and friends and had a great time. I'm sure we all wish her a fabulous year. Thank you, Joel Strogoff, for giving us the scoop on your mother's centenary-plus-one and the party.

Harriet is pictured here at her party, which was held on February 13. I'm sure we can all agree she looks wonderful!



ADULT EDUCATION AT BETH ISRAEL: THERE IS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!

Adult Education for 5782 has such exciting and varied options, your biggest problem will be finding time to fit in all the classes you want to take! Whether you are a spiritual seeker, a history nerd, a sports buff, a nature aficionado, a novice at Jewish learning, or a prospective Torah reader or service leader – we have a learning opportunity for you! See below for details on current and upcoming courses. Questions about the courses or ideas for future ones? Contact Director of Learning and Engagement Dale Rosenberg at dale.rosenberg@bethisraelworc.org.



Sunday Morning Programs: Social Time and Learning

A couple of times a month after minyan on Sunday mornings, we hold Zoom meetings that are partly social and partly learning. We open up the Zoom at 9:00 for schmoozing and discussion. Then at 9:30 we have a presentation with a guest speaker or speakers and a Q&A session to follow. We hope that in the near future we will be able to share breakfast on some Sundays in 2022, as the Famous Brotherhood Breakfast program returns to Beth Israel in person. We will do so as soon as it is safe. For now, you'll need to supply your own coffee and breakfast and break bread together virtually. There is no charge to attend these programs. The next few Sunday Morning Programs are:

March 13. Jewish Sports Figures with Alan Freedman.

Alan Freedman is the Director of the Jewish Sports Heritage Association, (JSHA), a not-for-profit education organization he started in 2015, with the goal of helping to educate the public about the role Jewish men and women have played, and continue to play, in the world of sports, an area of Jewish accomplishment often overlooked. Prior to creating JSHA, Alan was the Founder and Director of the National Jewish Sports Hall of Fame and Museum, a role he held for 23 years. Join us as Alan offers a multi-media presentation on the important role of Jews in sports.

March 27. COVID Update with Dr. Jeremy Golding

Jeremy Golding has served as BI's volunteer Medical Advisor since the start of the pandemic. Between Jeremy and Dr. Mattie Castiel, Worcester's Commissioner of Health and Human Services, we're blessed with a wealth of medical knowledge along with a deep understanding of how our congregation functions and how it is affected by COVID 19. Jeremy is joining us for a Sunday morning program in order to give us an update on the pandemic and how it is affecting our lives here in Worcester and our activities as a community here at BI. Whether our post-Omicron conditions continue to improve or we have a new wrinkle in this often changing story, Jeremy will fill us in and answer our questions.

April 3. Yosef Kibita – a Ugandan Jew Struggling to Make Aliyah

Yosef Kibita grew up in the Abayudayeh Jewish community of Uganda. He visited Israel in 2017 as part of a work and study program run by the Conservative Movement under the auspices of the Jewish agency. He was stationed at Kibbutz Keturah, where he found a love for Israeli life in general and the Kibbutz community where he was living in particular. After returning to Uganda, he decided to make Aliyah. He returned to Kibbutz Keturah as a volunteer until the completion of his Aliyah process. However, his application has been repeatedly denied. Mr. Kibita – with the help of many Israeli friends – is involved in a legal battle to become a citizen of Israel under the Law of the Return. Mr. Kibita will join us to tell his story and raise awareness of the barriers faced by some Jews in making a home in our Jewish homeland. In spite of the obstacles he has faced, his story is an inspiring one of love for Israel and hope for what the Jewish state can be.



Hebrew Reading Class with Ziva Rosenhand Starting March 7



Have you always wished you learned to read Hebrew but never got the chance? Did you learn a few letters and then give up? If so, you need a professional introduction to Hebrew reading, and we have one for you! Beth Israel Next Generation (BING) has arranged for beginning Hebrew reading classes, funded by a generous grant from the Jewish Federation of Central Massachusetts. These classes will be taught by BI's own Ziva Rosenhand and will be open to all members of the Jewish community. Classes will be given on Zoom, on Monday evenings at 6:30, and will run for 10 weeks.

To register, call or email the BI Office before the first class. There is no charge to participants for this course, as all costs are being covered by the grant.

Torah Reading for Beginners and Advanced Beginners with Reena Slovin

Mondays at 5:30 p.m. February 28 - April 4

It was wonderful to see Reena's students reading Torah on a recent Shabbat morning. For some it was the first time and for all of them it was an important accomplishment and a demonstration of a true commitment to lifelong learning. The journey continues!



Reena is starting a new series on Monday, February 28, in the BI Library (Zoom access also available). The first half-hour will be for those who have had some experience (from the previous class or elsewhere) and are ready to move on to the next level. From 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. those with less experience will get the instruction they need to move into a more experienced group. The longer class costs \$60 for the entire series and the shorter one is \$40. If you'd like to join, call the office.

Discover Trees in Winter: Rescheduled from January Saturday, March 12, 2022 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM

Ever wonder how to identify trees in the winter? Without leaves to go by, what are the clues? Join us for a tree walk around BI grounds with Evie Herwitz Harris to sharpen your tree detective skills. Bunny Callahan, Michele Roberts, and Pat Bizzell will also be on hand to share plans for the shul grounds and tree care. Find out how you can help beautify our campus! Meet outside the chapel door after Kiddush lunch (yes, Kiddush lunch!). Dress appropriately for the weather, which is notoriously changeable in New England this time of year!



This event was originally scheduled for January but was rescheduled because of inclement weather. We hope this date and time will work better, while still being early enough in the season to see our shul's winter trees. Leashed pets are welcome.



***The Racial Justice Initiative Presents:
Rosenwald - A Remarkable Story of a Jewish Partnership with
African American Communities
Screening, Presentation, and Discussion March 20 at 7:30 p.m.***

This inspiring documentary by Aviva Kempner tells the story of Julius Rosenwald, a successful American Jewish businessman with a strong sense of the obligation to improve and repair the world. Rosenwald's philanthropy was wide-ranging and influential, in his home of Chicago and throughout the country.

He is probably best known for the Rosenwald Schools – high quality local schools for African American children throughout the segregated south. Working with his friend Booker T. Washington of the Tuskegee Institute, Rosenwald developed a plan to fund and build schools in communities where Black children had vastly inferior educational options. Over 5000 such schools were funded and built and made a huge difference in the educational opportunities for young African Americans living under the oppressive Jim Crow laws. Later on, the Rosenwald Fund offered fellowships to promising Black artists, writers, and scientists, many of whom are now household names. The film is a moving tribute to the ways that American Jews and African Americans can and have worked together for the common good.

We'll show the film via Zoom. Then Rabbi Ahuvah Loewenthal, who is a Rosenwald on her father's mother's side of the family, will present briefly on her connection to the Rosenwalds. Julius Rosenwald's family rescued her father and his family (as well as hundreds of other German Jewish relatives) from Nazi Germany. We'll have a brief discussion after that. Join us on Zoom for this uplifting film. BYOP (Popcorn, of course!)

Bikkur Holim Course Starts March 21

As part of the initiative to develop a Caring Committee (described in the piece by Deb Fins above), Rabbi Fellman will be teaching a course on Bikkur Holim (visiting the sick). The course was developed by the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). Here is the description:



JTS's Center for Pastoral Education has created a curriculum to learn about the mitzvah of *bikkur holim* (visiting the sick) and how to help create a community that cares for its members. Clergy are usually thought of as the main pastoral caregivers in congregations, but often they need the help of trained and dedicated volunteers to fully meet the needs of the community. Participants will gain new skills and a deeper understanding of their communities and will also encounter the richness of the Jewish textual tradition and contemporary scholarship in the field.

This class will be held on four successive Mondays at 7:30 p.m. right after Evening Minyan. There is no charge to take it. If you'd like to join, call or email the office.

***Project Zug Presents: Midrashic Tales of Jewish Survival in Egypt with Rabbi Tali Adler
Four Wednesday Evenings at 7:30 p.m. Starting March 23 Plus Two Bonus Lectures with
Rabbi Adler on Zoom***

Every year at the seder we celebrate our liberation from Egypt. Surprisingly, however, the Haggadah and the Torah both contain very little information about what our enslavement in Egypt was like or how we managed to survive our time there. Join us as we study rabbinic texts about what the Jewish people endured in Egypt and the strategies they used to survive and even flourish under Egyptian rule. Along the way we'll ask ourselves: what are the tools that enable human beings to endure oppression? What do human beings need, in times of trauma, to create meaning and even joy? What does it look like to insist on one's own humanity in a world that seeks to deny it – and what might this teach us about what it means to be human in the first place?



We'll study Rabbi Adler's text sheets for four weeks between Purim and Passover. As has been our practice with Project Zug classes, we'll begin with an introduction, short video, and framing comments. Then we will divide into Chevruta pairs to work through the midrashim and the questions. At the end, we'll reassemble for some final summing up.

In addition to the worksheets, Rabbi Adler will offer two "live" lectures on Zoom – one at the beginning and the other at the end of the series. They are scheduled for March 21 and April 7, both at 7:30 p.m. Do you have a conflict on one or both of those days? No problem. We will provide you with a link to a recording of the Zoom.

This course – as well as all other Project Zug classes – is available to BI members and those of the four synagogues in the Central Massachusetts Education Consortium free of charge, thanks to a generous grant from the Jewish Federation of Central Massachusetts. Remember, the entire Project Zug catalogue is open to all of us at no charge, not just the group courses!

To register for Midrashic Tales group course, contact Dale Rosenberg at dale.rosenberg@bethisraelworc.org or call the BI Office. If you'd like to study with someone in particular, make sure you say so. Otherwise, you'll be assigned a Chevruta.

***Writing Personal Prayer: Learning to Write Your Own Poetic Liturgy with Martha Hurwitz
Saturday, April 2 at 8:00 p.m. (rescheduled from January)***

Martha Hurwitz has been writing prayers in the form of poetry for some time. You can see her poem/prayers published on Ritual Well, and you've heard some of them read in BI during services. In this workshop, Martha will talk about how she got into this kind of writing and how it has affected her spiritual life. She'll share some of her work and lead participants in trying their hands at writing their own poetic liturgy with an easy and quick introductory exercise.



This is an in-person event at Beth Israel. We'll begin with Havdalah and then segue into the workshop. All attendees must be fully vaccinated and boosted. Call or email the Office to register.

BING Presents: Doorpost Makeover

A Mezuzah Making Workshop with Arielle Ganem-Rosen and Jonathan Boyar

Sunday, April 3 at Noon on Zoom

Join BING, on Sunday, April 3rd, in creating mezuzah cases from colorful, quick-baking polymer clay provided by BI. This is a forgiving material that doesn't require an artistic background to work with, so everyone can feel comfortable being creative and unique. Creating these mezuzah cases will be paired with learning about how kosher mezuzahs are made, why we place them in Jewish homes, and their connection to Passover, as well as learning how mezuzah case styles differ around the Jewish world. What's more? If you can't participate synchronously, you can even do it on your own time, as we will provide videos of how to make a mezuzah. This will be an exciting and creative way to mark Rosh Hodesh Nisan with themes of marking doorposts, Jewish identity, the home, welcoming guests, and spring ushering in new beginnings. Don't buy a Nisan, welcome it!

This course is being provided thanks to a generous grant from the Jewish Federation of Central Massachusetts. All materials needed to make the mezuzah cases will be provided in advance. Assistance on where to acquire a kosher *claf* to put inside will also be given. To attend this class, register with the BI Office by March 28.

Get Ready for Pesach with Haggadah Companion Crafting

Sunday, April 10 at 11:00 a.m.

BING, USY, Rimón, and Tot Shabbat are joining forces to offer a Haggadah Companion Crafting Workshop led by Jewish artist Rowan Mason (also our Youth Advisor and Tot Shabbat leader). This program will be held in person in the Social Hall. A plethora of crafting materials will be available for each participant to create a page they'd like to accompany their family's Haggadah. Rabbi Aviva Fellman will be speaking to her process of creating Haggadot for her family, and plenty of Haggadot will be available to serve as inspiration! All the pages, whether they are maggid art, an illustration of a blessing, a discussion guide, or a thoughtful *drash*, will be compiled at the end of this event into our first Beth Israel Young People's Haggadah Companion, which will be distributed to the whole congregation to enhance each of your seders!

You do not have to be a member of any of the sponsoring groups to join. Everyone's Haggadah can use a little extra something! Register by calling or emailing the BI office by Friday, April 1 so we'll know how many people to expect and can provide sufficient materials and seats.

And Don't Forget... These Ongoing Programs

Out of Egypt

A bunch of eager readers have been reading and discussing Andre Aciman's memoir *Out of Egypt* with the help of English professor extraordinaire Pat Bizzell. There are two more sessions to learn about Aciman and his fascinating family in March.

Mishneh Study

On **Monday and Thursday evenings at 7:00**, in lieu of a traditional service, Rabbi Fellman leads us in a brief mishneh study, along with minimal prayers and Mourner's Kaddish. No preparation is required and you can drop in any Monday or Thursday. There's no commitment to attending regularly. It's an easy way to add some Jewish learning to your week!

Exploring Judaism

Rabbi Fellman's popular introductory class is ongoing! It began this year in October and is continuing on most Wednesdays into spring. This class is open to all: seekers, learners, explorers, and more, and is being held in-person (in the BI Library) AND simultaneously on **Zoom** most **Wednesday evenings at 7:45pm**.

Torah Goodness It's Friday – TGIF with Rabbi Fellman

Begin your count-down to Shabbat. Join us to study and discuss an excerpt of the weekly Torah reading. No knowledge of Hebrew or even the parasha is necessary. Having a Chumash/Bible nearby is handy but not required. BYO coffee and we'll learn Torah together. For now, **Zoom** only. **Friday mornings @ 10:00 a.m.** Note: On select Friday mornings Rabbi Fellman's class is followed by a cooking class on Zoom with Rabbi Eve Eichenholtz of Congregation Agudat Achim. Check the weekly email for details.

ISRAELI CULTURAL PROGRAMS WITH SHALIACH AVIV JERBI



Once a month, via Zoom, our community Shaliach, Aviv Jerbi, offers a program featuring some aspect of contemporary Israeli culture. It's an opportunity to learn more about Israel from the privacy of your own home.

March's program will be on Sunday, March 27 at 2:00 p.m. It will be a trivia game all about Israel, with prizes.

There will be another presentation in this series on April 10 at 2:00 p.m. The topic is currently Top Secret but will be revealed a few weeks before the program.

TOT SHABBAT

Tot Shabbat has been welcoming Shabbat on the first Friday of the month with a warm and lively Oneg via Zoom. You are invited to join us with your young ones and a snack! Our Tot Shabbat Oneg gatherings are themed to the Jewish calendar and, in addition to celebrating Shabbat, they acknowledge upcoming Jewish holidays with story books and music. We'll be having our Tot Shabbat Oneg for March on March 4 at 5:15 p.m. on the Shabbat Zoom link.



Starting in April, we expect to return to in-person Tot Shabbat on the first Saturday morning of each month. Families with children 7 and under are welcome to join Early Childhood Educator Rowan Mason at 10:30 a.m., on April 2 for an all-singing, all-dancing, all-delight service for the little ones and their accompanying grownups. At the end of the program, we will invite the Tot Shabbat families to join Rimmon Religious School for snack in Hebrew and a story (in English).

REPORT FROM THE RACIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE

TERRY LUBARSKY, CO-CHAIR

The Racial Justice Initiative at BI is working to raise awareness of racial injustices in our communities and throughout our nation. We've sponsored programs at BI which have included book talks, movie nights, and speakers, in order to further our understanding of racial inequalities and what actions we could take to make a difference. Look in the Adult Education section of this issue of BI@Home for details on our upcoming showing of the film Rosenwald, about Julius Rosenwald's partnership with Booker T. Washington to develop schools of excellence for black students in the segregated American South.

We are working towards making change and eradicating barriers. Please think about joining our committee or attending one of our programs. Here are some upcoming community-wide events that you also may wish to attend:

- On Monday evening, May 2, 2022, the Worcester Black Jewish Alliance is sponsoring an event featuring Rabbi Capers Funnye of Chicago. Rabbi Capers Funnye is an African American Rabbi and the spiritual leader of Beth Shalom B'nai Zaken Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation. He is also first cousin once removed to former First Lady, Michelle Obama. The topic he will be speaking on will be announced at a later date.
- Juneteenth will be celebrated in Worcester on Sunday, June 19, 2022. The Worcester Black Jewish Alliance will be fundraising and publicizing the event when more information becomes available. Juneteenth is a holiday held on June 19th each year to commemorate the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States.

BI@HOME WANTS YOUR INPUT!

The BI@Home newsletter is published every other month and sent, along with a two-month calendar, to all BI Member households. We're always looking for new material to share with our BI community.

Do you have something you want to tell your fellow congregants? Are you working on an initiative that needs to be publicized? Do you need help with committee work? Are you involved in a Beth Israel activity you think needs more publicity? Do you know of community activities that BI members should be clued in to? Contact Dale Rosenberg at dale.rosenberg@bethisraelworc.org to pitch your article or share your idea for an article Dale should write.

Don't wait! The deadline for completed articles for the May/June issue is April 15.

BI Centenary is Coming!

Our beloved Beth Israel will have its 100th birthday in 2024. It will be here before you know it. We want our centenary to be a celebration for the ages. Interested in working on the planning of events and activities? Have stories and pictures of the old days at BI? Just want to help in any way that's needed? Contact Rabbi Fellman or Paula Sommer, BI President.

AND NOW, A WORD FROM OUR SPONSORS...



Get to Know...

MetroWest Jewish Day School

MWJDS is a Pre-K to Grade 8 community Jewish day school that celebrates individualized education, pluralism, and each child's potential. Now enrolling for next year! Ask about our "Just Right" tuition model and van from Worcester!

**508-620-5554 • www.mwjds.org
50 Pamela Road, Framingham, MA 01701**



Our Mission:
To protect and enhance the well-being of Jews
in our community and worldwide

Jewishcentralmass.org

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