



Temple House of Israel Bulletin

A Member Congregation of the Union for Reform Judaism
15 North Market Street, Staunton, VA 24401 (540) 886-4091
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1412, Staunton, VA 24402
www.thoi.org

Our mission is to perpetuate Jewish life and identity through a welcoming community of spirituality, learning, service, joy and worship

NOVEMBER 2017 / CHESHVAN—KISLEV 5778



Saturday Evening Get-Together
wine and cheese, appetizers and sweets

November 4th
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm



Come and share a bit of good cheer and good conversation with other THOI members and friends.

\$12.00 per person

Please respond by November 1st.

**Send the information below, along with your check to: THOI
P.O. Box 1412 Staunton, VA 24402**

Name/number Attending: _____ Amt Enclosed: \$ _____

Dear members and friends,

Over the course of the next month, you will be asked to complete a comprehensive congregational survey focusing on areas of membership, worship & spirituality, rabbinical leadership, adult education & learning, pastoral care, Jewish life & culture and outreach & social action. As you complete this survey, I challenge you to grow your personal vision of our community; what might be meaningful and engaging to you? Focus less on what you don't like by giving thoughtful consideration to what you want to experience, feel and do to make Temple House of Israel a vibrant community. Each of us brings our personal experiences and connections from other Jewish communities that resonate with us. Please share your ideas and thoughts with the THOI board. We really want to know!

There are several services and events scheduled through November.

- Friday, October 27 Shabbat Service at 7:30 pm
- Saturday, November 4 for an Evening Get-Together from 6-8 pm (details above)
- Friday, November 10 for a Rabbi-led service with Rev. Ed Covert as guest
- Saturday, November 18 for a Havdalah service followed by a viewing of the documentary The Power of Good at 6:30 pm.

As a small congregation, we have a lot going on. Please take an opportunity to attend one or all of these events.

**President's
Message
Bonny Strassler**

From the Rabbi's Desk

Dear Temple House of Israel Congregants and Friends,

It was a joy and a pleasure to celebrate the High Holiday season with you. As you know, the High Holy Day period is a time of introspection, of self examination, of looking back and seeing where we fell short. Of course, there is room to improve. None of us is close to perfect. But we need to catch ourself (and our loved ones) doing good, being just, acting righteously, being godly. We each had those moments, and we need to remember them just as much as our failures. We realize we have so many blessings to acknowledge, so many good memories to revisit, so many wonderful relationships in which to take pleasure, so many things to be grateful for, and so very many successes, large and small, that pepper and festoon our year.

Our job is not to be perfect, but to seek to make more successes (and thereby fewer failures) ourself, and to help our loved ones to do the same. Ultimately, to seek to change the balance so there is more good than bad things to account for in our life. In this way, the spirit and meaning of the High Holy Days and this season will extend through the year and we will be on the path to being a better self.

Rabbi Joe's message begins on page 7 

Of Note

The return (or 'Son') of the **Biblical Hebrew & Text** class started in October in a slightly different format. Students are free to come to either or both locations (Staunton and Harrisonburg) twice a month (once in each location) on Sundays at 3:30 to 5 pm. The text studies will be something different each session; a copy of the text to be read will be provided. This course is FREE. The preferred background is sufficient familiarity with the Hebrew alefbet to decode and follow the text, but please don't be intimidated. Contact me by email to register or to ask any questions about the course. rabbijoeb@hotmail.com.

The **Basic Introduction to Hebrew** course (the Alefbet and Vowels), sponsored by the National Jewish Outreach Project's Read Hebrew America program) also began in October at Temple House of Israel. For those of you who want more than this level, Ruth Chodrow is offering a set of follow-on courses. Please contact her to inquire about them. rchodrow@gmail.com.

Be sure to mark your calendar and come to a special **Havdalah and Documentary evening on November 18th**. We will start at 6:30 with Havdalah (about 10 minutes) then watch the uplifting and satisfying documentary "The Power of Good" and have a discussion immediately following. The story is of what one person did just because it was the right thing to do. All congregants are invited as well as others in the community for this evening.

Reaching the Rabbi

Please note: Rabbi Joe may be reached by email at **RabbiJoeB@hotmail.com** (Other email addresses may not reach him in a timely fashion, or at all).

He reads email regularly, except on Jewish Holidays. or Shabbat, when he does not use the computer. **His cell number is 925-272-8563 (925-2-RAVJOE).**

Telephone messages left at the Congregation number are only checked sporadically. PLEASE CALL if you have any urgent messages or in case of an emergency, and please let Rabbi Joe know if you or anyone you know is ill or would want a call or visit for any reason.

You are also invited to contact Rabbi Joe to arrange an appointment to meet. Rabbi Joe will be happy to make an appointment to speak with you, so that he can offer you his full, undivided attention.

News from the Pews

- **Mazel tov** to Debbie and David Jacobs on the birth of their granddaughter, Colette Monroe, born on October 17th to their son Josh and his wife Megan.
- **Refuah Shelemach:** Wishing and praying for a speedy and full recovery for Daniel Heifetz, Greg Cizek, Kate Goldenberg (granddaughter of Vicki and Alan Goldenberg), Dennis Ward and Rabbi Lynne Landsberg. To Jim Clark, Michelle Clark and their daughter Lauren, Leah Farmer, Nancy Witt, Steve Guberman, Sue Solomon, Shirley Brand, Dan Schorsch, Linda Jones (Dan and Ellen Schorsch's daughter), Joanne Simons (Carla Donley's aunt), and Tom Davis (Gail's husband) .
- Ellen Werther will be spending Thanksgiving with her grandson, Myles, in California.

New Members

WELCOME!

Alan and Tumay Goldsmith who left New York City because he recently retired and they were looking for a change of lifestyles. Tumay grew up in Istanbul and Alan in New York City. They were seeking a much smaller town. Something like Mayberry with Class. They found it in Staunton and the Valley. Instead of looking at the Empire State Building in the morning, we are awakened by a herd of cows. They love it! Alan has three grown children and two grandchildren.

November Celebrations

Happy Birthdays to

Tom Pereles celebrates on November 4th

Karen Blair on November 5th

Jordan Kristoff on the 10th

Both Leah Farmer and Sue Solomon celebrate on the 12th

Jacob Goldenberg on the 15th

Debbie Jacobs will celebrate on the 30th

David Young celebrates 30 years on November 25

Asher Brand celebrates on November 26



Happy Anniversary to

Sarah and Byron Grove-Humphries

***The Women's Group meets on the second Tuesday of the month
at 2:00 pm in the temple social hall.
No dues ... just good hearts doing good things and having fun.***

***Everyone is welcome to attend
More information on the next page***

Women's Group

Team Tikvah was named Top Team for our fundraising efforts at the **Greater Augusta Out of the Darkness Walk** on **October 21**. It was a beautiful day to walk in Gypsy Hill Park! Thanks to Debbie Jacobs for coordinating all of us and to all the people who donated funds toward this worthwhile cause. And thanks to our walkers: Bonnie Brown and her son Sam, Ruth Chodrow, Gail Davis, Leah Farmer and her friend Pat, Debbie Jacobs, Ellen Schorsch, Buffy Shapiro and her daughter Sammy, Karen Lange and Beth Young.

Last spring the Women's Group donated 13 filled Journey Bags for children entering the foster care system. These bags are filled with necessary items and some personal items to ease a child's placement into the system. At our last meeting, the members voted to do this again. The requested items are listed below. You do NOT need to supply all the items in a bag—any contribution will be appreciated. **The items should be new.** We hope to fill the bags at our next meeting on November 12th before the holiday season starts.

7-9 year-olds boys and girls

shampoo	lotion	body wash
Underwear	comb or brush	toothbrush/toothpaste
pillowcase	hair ties	stuffed or small toy
pajamas	blanket	backpacks
socks	Chap-stick	pens/crayons/pencils
coloring books	journals	books & child's bible

10-12 year-olds boys and girls

Eliminated from the list above: coloring books, crayons and pencils

Added to the list above: deodorant, games or activities

Michelle and Jim Clark have made a generous donation to be used by the Women's Group in Adam's memory. They send their thanks with gratitude to all those who made the service and reception for Adam all they could have hoped for. Special thanks to Debbie and David, Beth and Rich, Rosalie, Ruth, Kay, Bonny, and Elizabeth as well as to Debby and Taylor, who were all there from beginning to end.

Michelle has offered to be the new chair for our **Caring Committee**. Many thanks to Ellen Schorsch so has so ably sent cards and flowers to members in need for the past year. If a member is ill, in the hospital or needs something specific and you, *any one of you*, know about it, first ask the person if it is okay to share the news with the congregation and then notify Rabbi Joe, if that is appropriate. Then notify Michelle who will respond from the Caring Committee. Please contact Michelle via email at michelle_clark@verizon.net.

A reminder that the flamingoes are available to delight and celebrate a birthday, anniversary or any special occasion for only \$25. Call or email Debbie deb1130@hotmail.com or 540-688-8058.



Elizabeth Schwartz has agreed to chair our **next meeting on November 12th at 2:00 pm** in the social hall. We'll be filling bags for foster children under the auspices of Phyllis Meador at First Choice Realty. Debbie Jacobs will chair the December 10th meeting.

Religious School is held on Sunday mornings at Beth El in Harrisonburg.

Religious School

Our religious school will join others on November 19th with a Global Day of Jewish Learning: Beauty and Ugliness. Thanks to Dara Hall and Liz Webb, co-principals and to all the teachers who educate our future leaders! Please contact Dara Hall, principal, at mddmhall@verizon.net with any questions you may have.

SHORTY

Staunton Harrisonburg Reform Temple Youth will be leading the lay-led services at Beth El in Harrisonburg on November 10th. The next group meeting will be held on November 19th. If you know of any teens interested in participating in SHORTY—we plan to meet the third Sunday of each month at 12:30 at Beth El. We also plan to have an event one night each month. Please contact Becky Mintzer at rem82398@aol.com.

Pre-School

If you have any very young children (ages 0-5), the pre-school program meets each week from 11:15-12:30 when religious school is in session. Thanks to Rebekah Greenfield and Jessica Levine for leading the activities and celebrations.

We honor the memories of our loved ones at this season

November Yahrzeits

Burton Blair	Jack Brodsky	Fannie Cohen
George Degen	Betty Donenfeld	Sadie Werther
Ida Klein	Max Freeman	Esther Goldberg
Julius Goldberg	Beryl Gutnick	Harry Harris
Ada Kaufman	Paul Lewis	Ralph Lurie
Abraham Peretz	Bernice Raskin	Joseph Rosen
Ralph Rosen	Louis Rosenthal	Leopold Schorsch
Ethel Shapiro	Louis Shapiro	Fannie Barth Strauss
Fannie Switzer	Julius Switzer	Jacob Wilhelm

Board of Directors Contact Information

President	Bonny Strassler	885-8715	bonstrassler@comcast.net
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Treasurer	Patty Sutker	456-6647	lpsutker@yahoo.com
At-Large	Larry Sutker	456-6647	ceolhs@gmail.com
Trustee	Doug Degen	996-8651	dbd@ntelos.net
Trustee	Alan Goldenberg	885-6878	adgvlg@gmail.com
Trustee	Richard Young	885-1481	richardfyoung@gmail.com
Rabbi	Joe Blair	925-272-8573	RabbiJoeB@hotmail.com



Donations

Thank you to these generous people who have recently made donations to Temple House of Israel

In memory of Adam Clark, son of Michelle & Jim Clark Martin Stein and
..... Cheryl Diehl
..... Fran and Bob Clay
..... Sue Solomon
..... Beth and Rich Young
..... Roy, Susan and Jacob Appletree
..... David and Gwynn Litchfield
..... Lewis and Bobbi Dunn
..... Marshall and Judy Forbes
..... Valley Subaru—Scott Simons
..... Ellen Werther (building fund)
..... Larry and Patty Sutker (building fund)
..... Peter Winik

In honor of the Chodrow and Young families Laura and Mark Mandeles

For Yizkor Mike and Bonnie Brown
..... Ruth Chodrow
..... Gail Davis
..... Doug and Martha Degen
..... Steve Goldfarb and Elaine Smith
..... Alan and Vicki Goldenberg
..... Alan and Tumay Goldsmith
..... Sarah and Byron Grove-Humphries
..... Art Goldsmith and Jan Kaufman
..... Heidi Lasser
..... Lynne Landsberg and Dennis Ward
..... Laura and Mark Mandeles
..... Dahlia Neiss and August, Indiana
..... and Severine Caldwell
..... Ken and Elizabeth Schwartz
..... Rich and Beth Young

In Memory of Ed Solomon Sue Solomon

In Memory of Celia Lewandowski Michelle and Jim Clark

In Honor of Rabbi Lynne Landsberg and Dennis Ward Lorrie and Michael
Landsberg

In Honor of the High Holidays Pnina Armour
..... Inna and Alex Thomka
..... Dennis Ward and Lynne Landsberg

To the General Fund Joseph Siron

Rabbi's Message

Dining in the Hut, Sleeping in the Field

The last week and a half of September consisted of the Yamim Nora-im, the days of Awe, including the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement); the most solemn days in the Jewish calendar, but also days of celebration of the rulership and kingdom of G-d, of G-d's compassion, mercy, justice and love. On top of that, this year Yom Kippur fell on Saturday, the Sabbath, the very holiest day of the Jewish calendar, so it was elevated even further, to the status of the Sabbath of Sabbaths—making it all the more sacred, and increasing the sense of solemnity and holiness of the day. And then, only five days later, on the evening of October 4th, we started a set of three (!) additional holidays, though they are often treated as one. Fortunately, this year November has no Jewish holidays falling in it other than Shabbat, the Sabbath—otherwise we would collapse from the surfeit of celebration!

First comes Sukkot, the Festival of Booths, and the harvest festival. This is a celebration of Thanksgiving (in fact this is the holiday that was being celebrated late when the Temple in Jerusalem was restored by the Maccabees after it had been desecrated and also the celebration on which the Pilgrims may have based their concept of Thanksgiving, which we have made a secular holiday on the 4th Thursday of November). Sukkot has two intertwined themes.

First, it is a time of gratitude to G-d for creation of the world, and the bounty and beneficence that we enjoy in the world through the natural processes of the seasons, sun and rain, fertility of the land, the plants and trees that grow and fruit, and all that we harvest and sustains and supports us, all of which we attribute to G-d's design and plan.

Second, Sukkot reminds us of several different points in our collective history. Earlier, the time we were wandering in the wilderness, when the world was a harsh place, and G-d was there to provide for and protect us, as a loving parent or a caring spouse (as we read about in the books of Leviticus and Numbers, with G-d leading us as a pillar of smoke and fire, and providing the manna to sustain us, and indicating to us when to camp and when to move on). Later, the time we were in the land, somewhat nomadic, and moving about in a cycle from place to place to plant and harvest the crops (as we read about in the story of Ruth in the fields of Boaz), when we would set up booths and dwell in the fields temporarily. In both instances, we were in the midst of G-d's creation, close to it, able to see it all around us, and to recognize how dependent we are upon it, and how much a part of it we are.

As an aside, I see this as a powerful argument that we are to love the earth as part of G-d's creation, and that our obligation is to care for it and not to waste (Bal tashchit), or to rapaciously destroy what we cannot bring into being. It does not belong to us—it is G-d's, and should be treated with respect and restraint. This is why I see the continued use of limited and scarce resources such as fossil fuels, when there are alternatives that do not have this effect already available and ready to apply, and the ongoing destruction of habitat for creatures that have existed for millennia and the creation of threats to human life such as the construction of pipelines to get to those resources, as violations of our obligation as humans to respect and care for and serve as caretakers for the earth and all the creatures in partnership with G-d.

So we celebrate Sukkot with three things.

First, we return to the custom of building a hut or booth—a sukkah, plural sukkot, and we 'dwell' in it to remind ourselves of the time we were wandering

Rabbi's Message (cont'd)

with G-d in the wilderness: what you might think of as the 'honeymoon' of G-d and Israel, in the image of Israel as G-d's spouse. We sit, eat meals, and even sleep in the sukkah as possible, our temporary shelter, made with a roof and sides that are incomplete so we are open to both creation and G-d around us. To enhance the performance of this act, we 'beautify' it by decorating the Sukkah, and by making it as lovely and as welcoming as possible. We recite as many blessings as are appropriate as we undertake these various activities. Second, we acknowledge creation and G-d through ritual. For this we use a set of four species of plants, known as the lulav and Etrog. The lulav is the combination of a palm branch, willow twigs, and myrtle twigs, held together in a woven reed basket handle. The Etrog is a fruit related to lemons, but much larger and more fragrant, and having almost no edible pulp. We hold the lulav and the Etrog together, and wave them in six directions—left, right, back, forward, down and up—while reciting a blessing, acknowledging G-d is everywhere in the world and all the world is G-d's. Some also see the lulav and Etrog as symbolically representing the four (typological number) kinds of people, levels of creation, understandings of the text, matriarchs, and so on. Third, we invite others to join us in our Sukkah. This can be a lovely chance to visit with friends and relative, but it is also a spiritual action. We are encouraged to invite the presence of our ancestors to join us and to celebrate with us. There is a custom to invite specific people from history or the Jewish past, to wish for the blessing of being able to be more like them in our own lives. These guests are called Ushpizin. Often we 'invite' one or more of them each evening, with the idea that through their presence their traits and characteristics will influence us and help us to be better people.

Sukkot is celebrated for eight days. The last two of these days have special features. The seventh day is known as Hoshanah Rabah (the great hosanna, literally great supplication) in reference to the practice of marching in a series of circuits (hakafah, plural hakafot) while chanting prayers and psalms, and in this case, while beating the willow branches as we walk, until the leaves fall off. This is seen as a sign of faith; willows require a great deal of water, and this is the day on which we usually begin to ask for the blessing of rain in the season.; beating the willows is a demonstration of our trust that G-d will answer our pleas and provide the rain.

The following day, the eighth, is still considered part of Sukkot, but it is of a rather different character. The first seven days of Sukkot are viewed as universalistic celebration. The concept is that all peoples were welcome to come to the Temple and thank G-d, and sacrifices were offered on their behalf—making it an awfully large number of sacrifices in total. It is a busy, hectic time. On Shemini Atzeret, however, it is the Hebrews turn. This is a day for them to spend time 'along' with G-d, a sort of quiet after-party, if you will, or a chance to catch up and chat after all the guests have gone home. Shemini Atzeret is usually translated as eighth [day] of tarrying, or perhaps in a more modern vernacular, 'the eighth day to hang out and chill'. The feeling for Shemini Atzeret is much quieter, more contemplative, and includes the recitation of Yizkor, the memorial prayers for those who are no longer with us.

Finally, not part of Sukkot, but directly abutting it, is the holiday of Simchat Torah, rejoicing in the law, or instruction. This is a celebration of the giving and receiving of the Torah at Sinai, symbolized by the Aseret Hadibrot, the ten

Rabbi's Message (cont'd)

Commandments, but that is not accurate because at least the first one—or two—are not commandments, but rather statements, not things we can 'do'). This is one of the three pilgrimage festivals, times when people should go to the Temple and bring their offerings.

Torah is, of course, central to Judaism, so this is a big holiday in that respect, and we show our joy and pleasure by literally dancing with the Torah scrolls. This is also the moment in the Jewish calendar when we complete the cycle/circuit of Torah readings (54 parashiot through the year), reading the final section of Deuteronomy, and immediately turning back and starting the Torah again with the first section of Genesis. To celebrate this completion and new beginning, we march around in seven circuits (hakafot) while dancing with the Torah and singing. Many children remember this as a fond recollection; they are given flags and sometimes apples, and make up a parade!

In some congregations the custom is to unfurl the Torah, unscrolling it completely so that it can all be seen at once, and in some places an abbreviated version of the story is told while walking along and pointing to the place in the Torah scroll where the events are happening. This is a visually impressive and memorable moment, recalled fondly by those who have seen it (though it does tend to make many rabbis quite nervous). ;-)

As we circuit, phrases including the words 'Ho-shi-a-nah,' 'Hatz-li-cha-nah,' and 'Ah-ney-nu' - save us, sustain us, answer us—are repeated. The seven hakafot are also based on a typological number which implies completion and wholeness, and indicates the uninterrupted flow of G-d's power through the world we can see. That concludes our brief look at the three-fold holiday season that falls so close after the High Holy days.

Next comes a time of relative quiet on the Jewish calendar, which means that there are no specific additional holidays (other than Rosh Chodesh for the new moon, and Shabbat weekly) from the end of Simchat Torah on October 13th until the evening of December 12th when we begin the holiday of Chanukah.

May this time of relative quiet on the holiday front be one of many blessings for you and your loved ones. May the secular holiday of Thanksgiving (or its equivalent in Canada and other locales) be filled with good things and happy memories. May we all bring the blessings of the High Holy Day season forward into this year, and may it be a good year for all of us.

Rabbi Joe Blair