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New Schedule for the Kol Hadash

After this issue, the *Kol Hadash* will be published every other month. The next issue will be in March, and the monthly BJ calendar of events will be distributed with the weekly *Kol Jeshurun* and (as always) posted to the home page of the BJ website, www.bj.org. For the new incarnation of the *Kol Hadash*, we would love your stories, articles, and photos—about BJ activities in which you have participated, reflections on your involvement in the community, and anything else you'd like to share with BJ members. If you have an idea for an article or a photo to contribute, please contact Denise Waxman, BJ Communications Manager, at dwxman@bj.org or 212-787-7600 x275 for guidelines.

Perspectives of a Rookie Gabbai

BY SHARON ANTSEY

We who go to shul take so much about services for granted. Somehow, someone appears at exactly the right time to open or close the Ark; to lift, dress, or hold the Torah; or to come up for an aliyah. We don't think at all about how this is choreographed. Here is a look behind the scenes.

At BJ, almost 70 honors are distributed from the first day of Rosh Hashanah to the end of Ne'ilah on Yom Kippur at the traditional and Family services that are conducted at three separate locations. Over the years, a separate gabbai team has taken responsibility for the daunting task of planning and overseeing honors at each location. I have been a member of the mostly female team, known affectionately as the Gabettes, at 86th Street. The Rosha of the Gabettes has been leading the team, which consists of a core group of four members, for 15 years. Since I joined the team about three years ago, all I have had to do was make phone calls to those who had been tentatively assigned honors, and escort a few people up to the Ark during the service. Occasionally I would have to run up to the balcony to find a missing person. It was no big deal. I was a rookie.

This year turned out a bit different. It started with an email invitation to a Shabbat lunch in early September, a "farewell" for our Rosha, Myriam Abramowicz. I wondered where on earth she was going when the Gabettes had a long-scheduled meeting coming up on September 16 to assign the honors? It turned out that she had just received a diagnosis of breast cancer and was flying to Brussels for an operation and further testing. She was covered by health insurance there, her native country, but not here in the U.S.

The Yamim Nora'im without her calm, steadying presence were unthinkable. She had been carrying most of the responsibility for the choreography of the many participants for such a long time. The only aspect she didn't oversee personally were the aliyot. These were handled by another Gabette, Sandee Brawarsky, whose hallmarks are serenity and grace. She could step into our leaders' shoes without missing a beat. But then it dawned on me: Sandee had just recently married and would be with her husband and family in Teaneck, NJ, for both days of Rosh Hashanah. She would only be at BJ for Yom Kippur.

Surely there had to be others who could step into this role? A few names were floated and, for various reasons, rejected. And then it happened. I had been "annointed" by our Rosha for this role—I was going to have to step into her mega-shoes. A few sleepless nights followed as I focused on all the details of the service to which I hadn't paid close attention. When, for example, is the Ark opened prior to returning the Torahs to the Ark? As the lead gabbai, you are both stage manager and actor. You are responsible for each cue and for magically making the right person appear at the right time. You are also a visible presence, "on stage" much of the time.

I and the other two remaining Gabettes made the Rosh Hashanah calls to the donors, board members, volunteers and "lottery winners" *(continued on page 10)*

BJ Getting Greener Thanks To the Environmental Action Hevra's Program

The Environmental Action Hevra thanks all who participated in our second BJ Environmental Survey. **This year's survey showed that the Environmental Action Hevra has had an impact on the congregation's environmental awareness and practices.** Our response rate was almost 13% of all BJ households.

The two major reasons for motivating people to take personal action to change environmental practices were the same as our last survey: a sense of moral obligation and a sense of urgency about the fate of our planet.

Ninety-seven percent of the respondents now say they recycle glass and plastic bottles, metal cans, and mixed paper either most or all of the time.

Seventy-two percent of the respondents have one or more compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) in their homes, **up 22%** from our last survey. On the other hand, the percentage of respondents who would purchase CFLs if BJ offered them went **down 13%** because they either have CFLs already or they do not want them because of concern over the disposal problem

with mercury. Three-quarters of the respondents have either signed up for "green" (sustainably generated) electric power with Con Ed Solutions or another company that helps combat global warming (13%), or would consider doing it (62%)—**up 12%** from our last survey. This year's survey showed a dichotomy between those who are gung-ho environmentalists and those who would like to be if they knew where to go to recycle specific items, such as batteries, electronics, and clothing/textiles. The need for an education/information program is evident, as suggested by many respondents.

In regard to joining a Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, 5% have already joined one and 30% would consider joining one—**up 10%** from the last survey. (There are two CSAs in our immediate neighborhood: Tuv HaAretz at Congregation Ansche Chesed and at SPSA.) Twenty percent of

the respondents said they never use disposable serving items, **up 11%**. Two-thirds of them either *only* purchase environmental household cleaning products or *sometimes* purchase them, **up 17%**. As in our last survey, when our respondents shop for food, they shop organic and locally over 60% of the time; fair-trade products, sale items, and conventional brands entered into their shopping decision 40% of the time. Regarding car purchases, forty percent either own or say they would definitely buy a hybrid and another forty percent have no need for a car.

The survey evoked several suggestions for influencing BJ practices—from recycling paper, bottles, etc. to energy-efficiency measures. Other comments pertained to influencing government, corporations and our neighborhood. Several respondents recommended having environmental tips disseminated (a "Green Tips" column already appears monthly in the *Kol Jeshurun*). Still others suggested programs like an exchange fair ("swap meet") and drop-off for recycling, and ways to keep raising our environmental consciousness.

As for our demographics, 70% of respondents were female, 52.5% were between 40-60 years of age (36% were older and 11.5% younger); and 81% percent live only in Manhattan. In total numbers, 490 respondents were counted, including 111 children. Three-quarters of the responses came by email; one-quarter by snail mail, almost the reverse of last time.

Stay tuned for more environmental updates. ■

—Donna Weinstein

Ninety-seven percent of the respondents now say they recycle glass and plastic bottles, metal cans, and mixed paper either most or all of the time."

Reflections on Volunteering at the BJ/SPSA Homeless Shelter

Last June, I received a number of urgent calls and e-mails from the parents of a Horace Mann junior who wanted to volunteer at the BJ/SPSA Homeless Shelter. I've gotten such calls from teenagers and their parents before, usually because they need to fulfill a community service requirement. But, this was the end of the school year! What was going on? Curious, I decided to meet Victoria Marlin. As soon as I did, I saw the seriousness of her commitment and appreciated her awareness. Victoria increased her involvement and will soon perform her first overnight assignment at the shelter—and she's getting her parents involved.

I asked Victoria to keep a journal of her activities and reflections, as we ask all our teenagers who perform community service. Below are some excerpts from her journal, which convey the flavor of volunteering and Victoria's sensitive responses.

—Anne Millman, co-chair
BJ/SPSA Homeless Shelter

June 25: Anne showed me how all of the activities work at the church and at B'nai Jeshurun and showed me where the supplies were located. Because I organized them, I will know where everything is located when I come back another time. Even though I had not met them, I felt very sad to know that the guests who would be staying there did not have a home of their own.

July 2: This was the first time that I had ever volunteered at the shelter with the guests. I came early and waited for the other volunteer. When Amy came, we began setting out the beds. However, the shelter guests arrived early and wanted to eat. All the volunteers ate dinner with the guests (including myself). I felt no difference between the guests and the volunteers and it made me really happy to know that everyone could sit down together and socialize.

Also, I was surprised to know how smart the guests were about current events and other facts. One guest knew all about the *New York Times* articles that had come out that day. Another young girl was talking to Amy about all of the dogs she knew and how the species differed.

After dinner, the volunteers and one of the guests helped clean up in the kitchen and in the showers. I felt great knowing that I was helping them and also that they were safe in the shelter.

July 9: I was the first to arrive so I opened up the room downstairs on my own. Some of the guests recognized me and it made me feel happy to know that they appreciated that I enjoyed working there and helping them out.

When the overnight volunteers arrived at 9 p.m., we explained to them what to do (because they had never volunteered

before). I felt good that I knew where everything was and how all of the activities had to be done and that I was therefore able to help the new volunteers.

I also felt really proud of myself because at first I was afraid that I would do something wrong when helping the guests out. But I realized this day that the guests are extremely nice and grateful for the work that the volunteers do. It is a really rewarding job.

July 16: The volunteers set up the beds and the table, as usual. Again, we ate dinner with the guests but this time was a more eye-opening experience because the women were talking about the buses, their jobs, showers, etc. They said how hard it is to be able to leave their jobs early to make the bus (that brings them to the shelter), and how one woman showers at her office because only the SPSA Church has a shower, and there is only one so sometimes she doesn't even get to use it. I felt really bad knowing that I could take a shower anytime I wanted, and it made me realize all of the things that I take for granted, even the simplest things such as showering.

July 20: I met Anne Millman at B'nai Jeshurun. A new cabinet had been delivered so all the food supplies, pots, pans, etc. had to be reorganized. Anne and I washed all the old pots that were worth keeping. Then we organized all of the utensils and plates in the new cabinet so that they could be accessible for the volunteers. I got to understand how BJ works compared with the church.

August 13: Tonight the volunteers from the first time I was at the shelter were there and it was nice that we all knew each other already. But there were a lot of new faces (among the guests) and many old timers did not come. I felt glad because I think it means that they started their lives again and that they found a permanent home to stay in. However, I know that in some of cases the prospect of this is pretty slim and I worry that some of them didn't come because something bad might have happened to them.

The women seemed very happy and one wanted to teach everyone ballet. Only two people agreed, but the others watched and all of them seemed to have a good time. Watching all of the women having fun and laughing together felt great because I realized that they were finally becoming really comfortable with each other and I could see a difference in the way they interacted.

—Victoria Marlin

... It made me realize all of the things that I take for granted, even the simplest things such as showering."

Look for the Birds: Finding Comfort in BJ's Sanctuary

After my father died, in 1999, I wanted to trace his life. I wanted to walk where he walked, stand where he stood. He was a daydreamer, like me, and he once told me that during services at BJ, where he went with his family as a young man, he would study the intricate detail of the sanctuary and it would help him to focus. "When you go," he told me, "look for the birds."

I didn't get to BJ until after my father died and over these years, like him, I have found *kavannah* from the sanctuary. Psalm 16:8 tells us, "*Sh'viti Adonai L'negdi Tamid*. I have set Adonai before me always." I have read that a *sh'viti* or Mizrach—which means "east" in Hebrew—is a decoration that hangs in a sanctuary to offer orientation for the spirit and for prayer. For me the whole sanctuary is a *sh'viti*, my own canvas for contemplation. I fix on a detail or pattern and that is my way into prayer. After the Amidah, I open my eyes and drink in the light, which feels more spiritually nourishing because it's filtered through the astonishingly beautiful windows. About a year ago on a summer Shabbat morning I looked in a different direction after the Amidah... and saw birds, eight of them, depicted in a tall window to the left of the ark. "I found the birds," I said out loud, then burst into tears and smiles. My father all these years later was sending me a message. "Look all around," he was telling me. "Look at familiar things in a different way, and you'll find new meaning."

I began to sit in different parts of the sanctuary so that I could experience services—and life—from every angle. Surrounded by living, breathing, dancing people, I also started to become

curious about the people who are commemorated on the windows. So each week I began to take away with me one name from one of the windows. After Shabbat my ritual now is to feed into the *New York Times* search engine the words: "B'nai Jeshurun," "obituary," and then the person's name. I'm reading about the Bermans, the Pomerantz family, the Petchers, Max Oltarsh. The names are my starting point. From there I'll find out more about BJ's four previous homes and the current one, built by two architects who were also congregants, and which the National Register of Historic Places named a landmark in 1989. I'll find out about the three distinct eras of the stained glass windows: the long ones against the north-facing wall; the uniform, mid-size windows on the east and west walls; and the charming, childlike windows depicting holidays on the doors leading into the sanctuary itself. After that I'll go to the Ratner Center at JTS, where BJ donated 49 linear feet of records, from 1825-1993. And I'll interview BJ members. I plan to share some of my findings in upcoming articles—and who knows, maybe even a book.

If you have information about any of the people commemorated on the windows, plaques, or Torahs, or if you want to share your recollections about the BJ sanctuary, I'd love to hear from you. Please contact me at judygitenstein@mac.com. ■

—Judy Gitenstein

Judy Gitenstein has been a book editor for 36 years. At BJ she is a member of the Bikkur Holim Committee and was for three years co-chair of BJ Reads.

A Winter Treat from the BJ Bakes Havurah

The BJ Bakes Havurah is focused on baking and cooking a wide array of food from desserts to calorie-conscious dishes using fresh seasonal vegetables. This havurah is for cooking-challenged types or others who want to learn to prepare some healthy new dishes. If you are interested in joining the havurah, please contact Nina Horak at nhorak@nyc.rr.com.

This recipe (by Nina Horak) is great for people on a variety of diets, particularly low/no-carb ones, as well as after enjoying too many Hanukkah parties:

CAULIFLOWER MASHED POTATOES (no potatoes needed)

4 cups cooked cauliflower florets
1 oz I Can't Believe It's Not Butter spray
1 oz fat-free Half-and-Half (such as Land-O-Lakes)

Puree above ingredients in a food processor and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Mazal Tov

To the following members and their families on their b'nai mitzvah (through December):

Sara Kern	Heila Precel
Charlotte Frankel	Michal Ben Or Tsfo

To the following members and their families (through December 5):

Susan Landau and Thomas Reiner on the birth of their grandson, Ezekiel Adin Jaffe.

Condolences (through December 5)

The community of B'nai Jeshurun extends sincere condolences to the following members and their families:

Richard, Ivette and Benjamin Stern on the death of their beloved stepfather, father-in-law, and grandfather, Martin Yedvarb.

Adam and Pearl Atkin on the death of Adam's stepmother, Edith Atkin.

Nahum Precel, Rivka Tenenbaum-Precel and Heila Precel on the death of their beloved father, father-in-law, and grandfather, Mariano Precel.

Renee Schlesinger Vaccaro, and Vincent, Jeanne and Benjamin Vaccaro on the death of their beloved father, father-in-law, and grandfather, Walter Kramer.

Evelyn Lewis-Enright on the death of her beloved great-uncle, Alec Baz.

Mimi Lox on the death of her beloved aunt, Lillian Friedman.

Marilyn and Charles Mardsen on the death of Marilyn's beloved mother, Naomi Ruth Weber.

Alfred Litman, Betty Jane Jacobs, and Joseph and Juliet Litman on the death of their beloved mother, mother-in-law and grandmother, Belle Litman.

Rose Diggs on the death of James Diggs, our long-time friend and SPSA security guard.



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
				1 New Year's Day BJ OFFICE CLOSED BJHS CLOSED
4	5	6  • 5:00 PM - 4th Grade Families Cooking for the Shelter, 88th St. Frankel Hall	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day BJ OFFICE CLOSED BJHS CLOSED	20	21	22
25	26 ROSH HODESH SHEVAT • 7:00 PM - Rosh Hodesh Women's Group, 88th St. (SEE P.9)	27	28  • 4:30 PM - Gan & Aleph Mishpaha Family Learning Program, 88th St.	29

SERVICE TIMES

Morning Minyan (88th Street):


• Monday-Friday 7:30 AM • Sunday & National Holidays 9:30 AM

Kabbalat Shabbat:

• 6:00 PM 88th St. • 7:30 PM 88th Street

Shabbat Morning:

• 9:30 AM 86th Street. • Children's services, 10:45 AM 86th Street
• Additional Services: Junior Congregation, January 3, 17, 31 10:30 AM 86th Street

DAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	<p>2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30 PM – Kabbalat Shabbat Service, 88th St. 	<p>3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30 AM – Shabbat Morning Services, 86th St. 10:30 AM – Junior Congregation, 86th St. Social Hall 10:45 AM – Children's Services, 86th St. Following Services – Post-Junior Congregation Lunch, 86th St. Social Hall
	<p>9 </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:30 AM – Frankel Friday, 88th St. Frankel Hall 6:00 PM – Kabbalat Shabbat Service, 88th St. 7:30 PM – Kabbalat Shabbat Service, 88th St. Following 7:30 PM Service – Shabbat Dinner for Tze'irim, 88th St. Frankel Hall (SEE P.9) 10:00 PM – Friday Night Off-Broadway, 88th St. (SEE P.9) 	<p>10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30 AM – Shabbat Morning Services, 86th St. Bat Mitzvah: Zofii Kaczmarek Bat Mitzvah: Elska Kaczmarek 10:45 AM – Children's Services, 86th St. Following Services – Community Kiddush, 86th St. Following Services – Tze'irim Potluck Lunch, 86th St. Parlor 4:30 PM – Minḥa Bat Mitzvah: Aliza Astrow 4:30 PM – Reach for Shabbat Retreat Reunion, 86th St. 5:30 PM – Family Havdalah and movie, 86th St.
	<p>16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:00 PM – Kabbalat Shabbat Service, 88th St. 7:30 PM – Kabbalat Shabbat Service, 88th St. 	<p>17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30 AM – Shabbat Morning Services, 86th St. Bar Mitzvah – Kenneth Lebovits 10:30 AM – Junior Congregation, 86th St. Social Hall 10:45 AM – Children's Services, 86th St. Following Services – Post-Junior Congregation Lunch, 86th St. Social Hall
	<p>23</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:00 PM – Kabbalat Shabbat Service, 88th St. Following 6:00 PM Service – BJHS Gimmel and Dalet Family Dinner, 88th St. Frankel Hall 7:30 PM – Kabbalat Shabbat Service, 88th St. 	<p>24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30 AM – Shabbat Morning Services, 86th St. Bat Mitzvah: Olivia Manocherian Bat Mitzvah: Sofie Moss-Slaven 10:45 AM – Children's Services, 86th St. Following Services – Community Kiddush, 86th St. Following Services – K-2 Families Shabbat Lunch, 86th St. Social Hall 6:30 PM – Men's Havurah, 88th St. Frankel Hall (SEE P.9)
	<p>30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:00 PM – Kabbalat Shabbat Service, 88th St. 7:30 PM – Kabbalat Shabbat Service, 88th St. 	<p>31</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30 AM – Shabbat Morning Services, 86th St. 9:30 AM – Junior Congregation breakfast with the Rabbi, 86th St. Parlor 10:30 AM – Junior Congregation, 86th St. Social Hall 10:45 AM – Children's Services, 86th St. 4:30 PM – Dr. Neil Gillman's Teaching in Memory of Shira Palmer-Sherman, location TBA (SEE P.9) 5:00 PM – Minḥa Bat Mitzvah – Hayley Berson

JANUARY ADULT CLASSES

Please see the BJ website, www.bj.org, for more information and how to register.

Monday

- Introduction to Judaism 7:00-9:00 PM (through May)

Tuesday

- The Rabbinic Mind on Sinai 12:30-1:45 PM (January 13, 20, 27, February 3, 10, 17)
- Workshop for Parents of Teenagers 7:00-8:30 PM (January 13, 20, 27)
- The Book of Exodus 8:30-9:30AM (through May)

Thursday

- Parashat Hashavu'a: Study of the Weekly Torah Portion 7:00-8:30 PM (through May)

YOUTH CLASSES

Monday

- 4-5:30 PM, Kindergarten and First grade
- 4-6 PM, Second through Sixth grade

Thursday

- 4-5:30 PM, Kindergarten and First grade
- 4-6 PM, Second through Seventh grade

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Sunday-Thursday

- BJ/SPSA Homeless Shelter 7 PM

Thursday

- Judith Bernstein Lunch Program 12 PM



indicates Family Life and Hebrew School events

Candlelighting Times

January 2	4:21 PM
January 9	4:28 PM
January 16	4:35 PM
January 23	4:44 PM
January 30	4:52 PM

Parashat HaShavu'a

January 3	Vayigash
January 10	Vayehi
January 17	Shemot
January 24	Vaera
January 31	Bo

Havdalah Times

January 3	5:26 PM
January 10	5:32 PM
January 17	5:39 PM
January 24	5:46 PM
January 31	5:54 PM

Spotlight On Families With Young Children

Building a Learning Community for BJ Children and Their Families

The BJ community is growing and the Youth and Family Education Department is eager, as our mission states, “to ignite the desire and provide the capacity for informed and passionate involvement in Jewish life.” We are energized by our growing community and excited to offer new programming. As educators, we recognize that meaningful programming not only takes preparation, but time for reflection after a program in order to determine what was successful and what could change. Based on the feedback we have heard from families with young children, we have created new Kindergarten through 2nd Grade Children and Families Shabbat Lunch Programs. These programs offer a time for families with young children to come together on Shabbat after services, to eat lunch, sing songs, learn and celebrate. After lunch, children separate into grades and enjoy a grade specific program. During this time parents have the opportunity to meet other parents with children of similar ages. We are excited about these Shabbat experiences and look forward to learning and celebrating with you.

—Davey Rosen, Family Educator

Frankel Fridays: BJ's Playgroup for Babies and Toddlers

Frankel Fridays has been off to a great start this year. On the second and fourth Fridays of the month, at 10:30AM, BJ's youngest members and their parents or caregivers gather in Frankel Hall for a light breakfast, some conversation and watch the kids play together. New for this year, we have been celebrating Shabbat together with some juice, challah and blessings and doing special activities around the holidays, such as making decorations for the BJ sukkah and making Shabbat placemats. We even had a special visit from an Israeli movement and dance teacher. It is really nice to be together in a small group, where parents can talk about being Jewish parents in New York and get to know other members of the BJ community who will be their children's peers going forward. We look forward to continuing this great community building activity in 2009 and we hope that all new parents in our community will join us. For more information contact Rebecca at rrosenthal@bj.org.

—Rebecca Rosenthal, Acting Director of the Religious School and Shabbat and Holidays Coordinator

Save the Date: Mitzvah Fair

Monday, February 9 • 5:30–7:30PM • 88th Street Sanctuary. Becoming a B'nai Mitzvah at BJ is not easy; learning to read trope and writing a D'var Torah are challenging. In addition to gaining new skills, we learn about living life as a B'nai Mitzvah, to study Jewish texts and to take action. But what can we do and how do we start? Join us for the Mitzvah Fair, a great event if you are planning a B'nai Mitzvah social action project or for anyone looking for more mitzvah opportunities in our community, in New York City, in Israel and the world. Questions? Contact Davey Rosen at drosen@bj.org.

Important Dates for January and February

Thursday, January 1: BJHS closed—New Year's Day

Sunday, January 4, 4:30PM: Program for Louisiana trip—service learning

Sunday, January 4, 6:00PM: Program for Costa Rica trip—service learning

Tuesday, January 6, 5:00PM: 4th grade Families Cooking for the Shelter

Friday, January 9, 10:30AM: Frankel Friday

Saturday, January 10, 4:30PM: Reach for Shabbat Retreat Reunion

Saturday, January 10, 5:30PM: Family Havdalah and movie

Monday, January 19: BJHS closed—MLK Jr. Day

Thursday, January 22, 6:00PM: Teen Leadership Program

Friday, January 23, 6:00PM: Gimmel & Dalet dinner

Saturday, January 24, 12:30PM: K-2 Children and Families Shabbat Lunch

Sunday, January 25, 4:30PM: 8th & 9th grade Teen Class

Sunday, January 25, 6:00PM: 10th & 11th grade Teen Class

Monday, January 26: Rosh Hodesh

Monday, January 26, 4:30PM Gan & Aleph Mishpaḥa Family Learning Program

Thursday, January 29, 6:00PM: Teen Shabbat Rehearsal

Sunday, February 1, 4:30PM: JFSJ Program

Sunday, February 1, 6:00PM: AJWS Program

Monday, February 2, 7:00PM: Hebrew School Town Hall Meeting

Tuesday, February 3, 5:00PM: 3rd grade Families Cooking for the Shelter

Thursday, February 5, 4:00PM: Dalet Mishpaḥa Family Learning Program

Saturday, February 7, 9:30AM: 5th grade B'nai Mitzvah Program

Sunday, February 8, 4:30PM: 8th & 9th grade Teen Class

Sunday, February 8, 6:00PM: 10th & 11th grade Teen Class

Monday, February 9, 4:30PM: Bet Mishpaḥa Family Learning Program

Monday, February 9, 5:30PM: Mitzvah Fair

Friday, February 13, 10:30AM: Frankel Friday

Monday, February 16: BJHS closed—President's Week

Thursday, February 19: BJHS closed—President's Week

Sunday, February 22, 4:30PM: 8th & 9th grade Teen Class

Sunday, February 22, 6PM 10th & 11th grade Teen Class

Tuesday, February 24: Rosh Hodesh

Thursday, February 26, 6:00PM: Teen Leadership Program

Friday, February 27, 6:00PM: Hey, Vav & MATAN dinner

• **What Makes A Difference To 21st Century Teens & Pre-Teens**
Rabbi Marcelo R. Bronstein and Dr. Ron Taffel

3 Tuesdays (January 13, 20, 27) • 7:00-8:30PM • 88th Street Sanctuary • Free; registration required. Having spent time with teens and children of all ages, listened to their views on many matters, and asked them what makes a real difference in their lives regarding thoughtful restraint, empathy and compassion, genuine self-esteem and the pursuit of healthy passions, Marcelo and Ron will share with parents what they have personally seen and heard that brings out kids' best in this over-the-top culture. A unique, inside perspective on everyday parenting concerns.

• **The Rabbinic Mind on Sinai**

Rabbi Felicia L. Sol

6 Tuesdays (January 13, 20, 27, Feb. 3, 10, 17) • 12:30-1:45PM • BJ Office • Free; registration required. Beginning with a close read of the biblical story, we will then take a step-by-step look at three different midrashic texts on the revelation on Mount Sinai: Pirke deRabbi Eliezer, Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael and Exodus Rabbah. Come to understand how the rabbis think, and explore different explanations and understandings of the story and the ability to experience Sinai through studying it. No Hebrew reading necessary.

• **Rosh Hodesh Women's Group for Shevat**

Facilitated by Rabbis Felicia Sol and Esther Lederman, Marshall T. Meyer Fellow

Monday, January 26 • 7:00PM • 88th Street • Free; registration not required. Each new month on the Hebrew calendar, we will have an opportunity to study, discuss, celebrate and pray together on this holiday traditionally associated with women. Please bring a dairy/vegetarian kosher snack to share with the group as part of the celebration of Rosh Hodesh.

• **Friday Night Off-Broadway: Shabbat at BJ**

Friday, January 9 • Following the 7:30PM service • 88th Street Sanctuary and Frankel Hall. Extend your Shabbat experience beyond services. BJ members and non-members Tze'irim (20s-30s) are invited to share an intimate Shabbat dinner together in Frankel Hall. Please visit www.bj.org to register. At 10:00PM, the entire BJ community is invited to enjoy dessert and celebrate Shabbat together with Margot Leverett and the Klezmer Mountain Boys, who will perform and lead us in joyful Shabbat music.

• **Men's Havurah**

Saturday, January 24 • 6:30PM • 88th Street Frankel Hall. Men's Havurah gatherings include some davening, some studying and some schnapps. We will escort Shabbat on her way out via singing, eating, and studying. You just have to be male, whether straight, gay, single, married, or in any other self-definition. The Men's Havurah Committee includes Michael Yoeli, Moshe Horn, Chuck Gold, Bob Kanter, Nahum Precel, Jonathan Adelsberg and Rabbi Marcelo Bronstein. Please check www.bj.org for future meetings. More info: ngoodhart@bj.org.

• **Community Shabbat Dinner**

Friday, February 6 • Following the 6:00PM service • 88th

• **Looking Toward Shabbat Shira:**

Teaching in Memory of Shira Palmer Sherman

"God is a Nice Guy—Sometimes"

Rabbi Neil Gillman, Aaron Rabinowitz and Simon H. Rifkind
Professor of Jewish Philosophy at JTS

Saturday, January 31 • 4:30PM • Congregation Shaare Zedek, 212 West 93rd Street • Free; registration not required. Minḥa will be held at 4:00PM before the teaching and Ma'ariv and Havdalah afterward at 6:00PM. Dr. Gillman was ordained at JTS in 1960, and received his PhD in Philosophy from Columbia University in 1975. He is the author of several books including *Sacred Fragments: Recovering Theology for the Modern Jew*; *Conservative Judaism: A New Century*; *The Way Into Encountering God in Judaism*; and *Traces of God: Seeing God in Torah, History, and Everyday Life*. He was a member of the Commission on the Philosophy of Conservative Judaism, which produced *Emet Ve'Emunah*, the first statement of principles for Conservative Judaism.

• **Third Annual Stuart Polly Interfaith Study:**

Christianity and Judaism in the 2nd-6th Centuries

Dr. Peter C. Bouteneff and Dr. Seth Schwartz

4 Thursdays (February 5, 12, 19, 26) • 7:00-8:30PM • 88th Street • Free; registration not required. Building on the success of last year's introduction to the basics of Christianity in the first century, our interfaith study this year shifts to the next five centuries. This year's series will contrast and compare the history of Judaism and Christianity during that period. The course will assume some knowledge of the faith and traditions of our Christian neighbors. Students will be expected to attend regularly and to participate in reading texts and discussion of the material. The course will be taught by Dr. Peter C. Bouteneff of Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary and Dr. Seth Schwartz of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Street Frankel Hall. Please join the BJ community for a Shabbat B'Yahad Dinner in the spirit of the holiday of Tu BiShevat. The dinner is for singles only ages 35-55. To sign up, please visit www.bj.org or contact Guy at x255.

• **Tu BiShevat Concert: Ha'Orot: The Lights of Rav Kook**

Saturday, February 7 • 6:30PM service • 88th Street. Join BJ and Romemu for a musical journey into the poetry of Avraham Itzchak Hacoen Kook, presented by Rabbi Itzchak Marmorstein, Rabbi Greg Wall, and the ensemble The Later Prophets. The concert will be preceded by havdalah and a session led by Rabbi David Ingber. Wine, nuts and fruit will be served. Cost: \$15 BJ/Romemu members, \$20 non-members. To sign up, please visit www.bj.org or contact Guy at x255.

• **Friday Night Off-Broadway: Shabbat at BJ**

Friday, February 13 • Following the 7:30PM service • 88th Street Sanctuary and Frankel Hall. Extend your Shabbat experience beyond services. BJ members and non-members in their 20s are invited to share an intimate Shabbat dinner together in Frankel Hall. Please visit www.bj.org to register. At 10:00PM, the entire BJ community is invited to enjoy dessert and celebrate Shabbat together with Pizmon, who will perform and lead us in joyful Shabbat music.

Upcoming
Limud

Community
Events

Perspectives of a Rookie Gabbai SHARON ANTSEY *(continued from page 1)*

who had been selected for honors. As usual, most were delighted by our overtures. But people frequently can't accept a particular assignment and so, if possible, we accommodate them and switch assignments. By the time the first day of Rosh Hashanah arrived, I had reached a fatalistic "que sera, sera" mode.

There were three of us at the service: a close friend, Ellen Corenswet, who would handle the aliyot, another experienced Gabbette, who had usually been responsible for the dressing and carrying of the Torahs, and me.

There were no major glitches. Although some people did miss their honors, and one person appeared who was convinced she had an assignment—but in fact did not—and I also had to arrange a quick substitution for a Torah carrier who had not arrived by Kaddish Shalem, the congregation didn't notice these last-minute adjustments. I'm sure gabbais somewhere manage to be in the moment and daven authentically, but I was too

focused on who was up next to be anywhere close to "in the moment" (aside from the odd Amidah, and the Avinu Malkeinu and Unetaneh Tokef). When the service was over, the rabbi told me it had gone "as smooth as silk." But I felt like I had run a marathon.

When the service was over, the rabbi told me it had gone 'as smooth as silk.' But I felt like I had run a marathon."

The most transcendent moment for me that first day of Rosh Hashanah actually came early in the morning, long before the service started. I brought tallitot to the bimah, where they are needed from time to time, and found our very gifted cellist, Gene Carr, practicing alone. He was playing the beautiful music which was to come. There was magic in that empty sanctuary with only the mellow sound of the cello.

On the second day of Rosh Hashanah, one of the Gabbettes unexpectedly couldn't be with us. I made quick calls to find someone to fill in and found myself assisted by two people I'd never worked with before. But we pulled it off. This time a different rabbi said that the service went "like clockwork." I am happy to settle for either "as smooth as silk" or "like clockwork."

The following week, another Gabbette and I ended up with the responsibility of making most of the Yom Kippur honor phone calls. By Sunday evening (Kol Nidre was on Wednesday) we had far too many gaps in the schedule for comfort, but had already worked our way through the entire list. Now we began calling people we knew and whose names just caught our eye. Monday night there were still too many unfilled spots, and we continued calling. Somehow, over the next 24 hours, we just about completed the puzzle. We arrived at shul for Kol Nidre with just one or two spots to fill, but this is not a bad thing and allowed us some spontaneity.

On Kol Nidre, the "fun" really began. Twelve people were designated to hold the four Torahs we were using, and another person was to open the Ark. Only two of us were overseeing the production. Everyone was supposed to arrive at 5:15 PM for the 6:00 PM service. But at 5:45 PM we were still missing our Ark opener, two of the first-round Torah holders and the only male Gabbette, Avi Ashman, who was responsible for finding strong men for each Hagba, the lifting of the Torah. Services had to begin on time and Kol Nidre was set to begin at any moment. We scrambled and found someone to open the Ark. The missing people arrived moments before 6:00 PM, and in seconds we were underway. Only then did we allow ourselves to breathe.

Kol Nidre was magnificent and the rest of the service uneventful until we heard "... and the Ark is opened for Avinu Malkeinu." We looked at one another, startled. "How could this be?" This Avinu Malkeinu wasn't part of our planning. So we grabbed a man sitting near the front and hustled him up to the Ark. Later we realized what had happened. Last year Yom Kippur fell on Shabbat, when Avinu Malkeinu is omitted—and we had been working from last year's plan. After Kol Nidre ended, we went through the mahzor and the Cantor's notations minutely and, sure enough, we found another Avinu Malkeinu on Yom Kippur itself for which we had not planned. Gratefully, we had a chance to take care of this before the last minute.

There were some special moments at the Kol Nidre service. A member who lost his wife in a tragic accident about two years ago, and his new wife, were Kol Nidre Torah holders. We also had a bittersweet encounter with an elderly couple. The women came up to me and, beaming, said "We're getting married." "Aha", I thought, "romance is in the air." Since we still had a few open spots, I asked my partner to find out if they would like to hold the Torah. She came back to me looking perplexed and said, "They've been married for 50 years. She has Alzheimers." We gave the honor to the husband, who was very moved. As they left, the wife said to me, again with a wide grin: "I'm the new missus!" This made me think that it would be wonderful if all Alzheimer's patients were so joyous. Finally, in each round there was someone with a physical disability assigned to carry the Torah: a woman in a motorized wheelchair, a blind musician, and a woman with a walker. It was challenging to assist each of them to transfer the Torah, but so rewarding to see the joy this gave them.

When the Kol Nidre service ended, the rabbi said to us, "It was like skiing in powder snow." If he only knew...

After the challenge of Kol Nidre, nothing could daunt us and the Yom Kippur services went very smoothly. But it wasn't until a few days later that I was certain we had done well. Someone I know only by sight came up to me and said, "You blended perfectly. Always there when you had to be, and invisible at all other times." That, I think, was the ultimate compliment. ■

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KOL HADASH • NEW VOICE
January 2009

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