



A gift from the heart is the most precious gift not just because the heart is the seat of emotional love. Giving from the heart means giving willingly, generously, intentionally, actively. No wonder that we are commanded to serve God “with all our heart.” In this edition of the Shofar, we’ll explore what it means to open our hearts to give, to serve, to love.

***Pictured: a Sh’viti is a traditional piece of Judaica reminding us to “place God before us continually.” A birkat habayit is a blessing for the home. This project, a combination of both, was created by congregant, Cara Strauss, during Beth El’s monthly “Art from the Heart” program (see page 4).***

***Inset: Participants of “Art from the Heart” with their mindful coloring projects***

# COMMITTED TO OPEN-HEARTED GIVING

By Rabbi Alexander Davis



This past summer, I had the opportunity to stand under the chuppah with a number of couples. Officiating at weddings is a sacred privilege. I value the opportunity not only to conduct the rituals but to get to know each couple.

In preparation for a wedding, I meet with couples a number of times. We talk about how they met and what values they share. I review with them the symbolism and logistics of the ceremony. One part requires special explanation – the ketuba.

A ketuba is a Jewish wedding license, a legal document, signed and witnessed according to the rules of Jewish law. In some ways, it is like our modern-day civil license. It lists the place, date and names of the wedding party. It is also a piece of art. Couples work with local artists to create something that is one-of-a-kind or they find a piece on-line that suits their taste.

We might be surprised to learn that nowhere does a ketuba mention love. Some couples add that language to an English paraphrase of the text. But the traditional Aramaic version does not speak of love. How can that be? It is a wedding! While the ketuba doesn't mention love explicitly, it is implicit in the commitment the couple assumes: "I will work on your behalf, and honor, sustain and support you." That is to say, we express our love by demonstrating it. It is as if the ketuba is saying, "It's not enough to say, 'I love you.' You've got to show it."

This notion is wonderfully captured in a play on the word for love, "ahava." The rabbis teach that ahava is a conjunction of "e-hav, I will give." Indeed, there is

no love without giving. And where there is only taking, the relationship is bound to fail. Whether physical or emotional, giving is the foundation of love.

We see that message imbedded in the Torah reading for the second day of Rosh Hashana. Abraham offers Isaac, the child "he loves," to demonstrate his love for God. As the medieval Italian commentator known as the Sforno teaches, this story shows us that Abraham's love for God was not merely potential, it was not merely words; it was real.

What is true of marriage is true in many areas of life. We give birthday presents to our grandchildren, give time to volunteer organizations, give our undivided attention to a friend in need. In these and other cases, we give generously and freely as a reflection of our love. And also our commitment. That too is the message of the ketuba. A ketuba codifies a couple's pledge to support each other. It says, "I am responsible for you. I commit myself to providing for you."

Open-hearted giving. Commitment to giving. The two are not in conflict. Both are needed. Open-hearted giving creates the possibility of love. A commitment to giving creates the condition to sustain it. It's true in our relationship with our loved ones. And it's true in our relationship with our beloved congregation, Beth El.

Over the course of 5778, our Shofar editions will underscore our synagogue's new approach to giving. It is an approach that recognizes your contribution for what it is: *nedivut lev*, an act of generosity, *tzedaka*, sacred giving born out of a sense of responsibility.

Applying these categories beyond shul life, I pray that you are the giver and recipient of such love in the coming year. Thus may it be a *shana tova*, a year of goodness and blessing.

Shana Tova!

# Always a Renegade

By Rabbi Avi S. Olitzky



Rebbe Nachman of Breslov taught, practiced and spoke openly about the notion of *hitbodedut*. Loosely translated as self-seclusion, this was Rebbe Nachman's method of talking to God in an intimate and unstructured way, specifically in a private setting like a closed room or alone in the middle of the woods.

As someone who thrives on dialogue and engagement with others, it's perhaps surprising that *hitbodedut* is part of my spiritual practice, as well. However, it's rare that I find that time – or even such space – to “turn it all off” and “shut it all out.” I often need an outlet simply as a bridge to that experience. And sometimes I learn a great deal about humanity and my own Judaism from that outlet, too.

At this point in my life, playing league Ice Hockey is the one outlet when for a solid 90 minutes there is nothing else on my mind but my team (the Renegades) and trying to win. The trouble is that, unfortunately, I fractured my ankle this past summer playing ice hockey—and my season was cut short.



I can lament my time off the ice and wearing a boot, hobbling about on crutches. But it's what happened after I slid into the boards full-steam, ankle-first, that really taught me

about friendship and the giving of oneself. It's what opened my eyes to a deeper layer of giving when the heart compels us to without hesitation.

There was the doctor on my team who evaluated me sprawled out on the ice. Both teams who banged their sticks to the boards, giving me encouragement to stand. The teammates who supported me as I skated off, grimacing, one-legged. The teammates who helped me get out of my gear...or who packed my bag...or who drove my car home...or who kept my wife in the loop with texts...or who stayed with me at urgent care until the wee hours of the morning. Even the linesman who posted on my facebook wall, the friends who rearranged carpools and colleagues who drove me to meetings, or met in my home. Not to mention my amazing wife who managed our craziness without me.

To be the recipient of radical compassion is warming, humbling and powerful. It makes the pain hurt just a little bit less, and warms the heart of the compassionate actor, too. Frankly, this is why we give to others when we do give. This is why we jump to act when we can and our soul compels us to do so.

As much as I admire Rebbe Nachman, my true Chasidic Master is Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev. His goal in life was *hitlahavut* – spiritual ecstasy. The Kedushat Levi, as he was known, would call out to the congregation on Yom Kippur proclaiming that his heart was on fire. I've often strived for such ecstasy and have felt that *hitbodedut* would be the path. Little did I realize that in getting injured in hockey (my ad hoc vehicle for mental *hitbodedut*) would I find such *hitlahavut* (in recognizing the compassion of my fellow human beings created in God's Divine Image).



# Jewish Art for the Heart

By Cantor Audrey Abrams

*The first chapter of Genesis is a meditation on the yearning to create; a yearning, the Biblical author intuited, that is our very birthright. It was actually a unique mythological innovation to imbue human beings with a creative spirit. – Rabbi Irwin Kula, Yearnings*

“I’m not creative” is an un-truth. We are all, according to Rabbi Kula, given a spark of creativity just by being born. How our creativity will manifest is ours to discover. It may not be in the expected forms—music, art, dance, etc. Perhaps we use our creativity gardening, building, or cooking, in business or in sports. In whatever way, this creativity, as Rabbi Kula explains, represents our yearning to “contribute something of value, to make a difference.”

The past year, a group of individuals who describe themselves as artists, dabblers, crafters, adventure seekers, or just plain curious, got together on the second Tuesday of each month to create. This was part of a series we called, Mindful Tuesdays. The goal was simple: to visually discover one’s Jewish self. Guided by a Jewish teaching and a kavannah (intention), paper, canvas, sharpies, gel pens, mod podge (fancy glue), and many random objects, became the canvas of our souls.

Some sessions were in silence, others filled with discussions. Each resulted in a unique piece of art, deepened friendships and often, a revelation of self-discovery.

We made:

- Journals to record conversations with God in a practice known as Hitbodedut (see Rabbi Olitzky’s article for more on this practice)
- A piece of Judaica used in meditation known as a Sh’viti (see front cover for Cara Strauss’ Sh’viti)
- Boxes containing “100 Daily Blessings”

- Complex colorings composed in silence
- Mystical doodling, connecting with the qualities of the white and dark spaces of the first letter of our Hebrew names
- Sculptures, called Inukshuks, made of weathered tiles, representing our journeys (See picture below) from our personal Eypgt to Sinai

These Mindful Tuesdays were one of the most heart-opening experiences in which I have ever participated. I felt so privileged to witness the creative spirit of each soul in the room. And in that space/moment, the Author of all Creation was most definitely present.

Rabbi Kula writes:

*Craft, design, make. These words are used eighty times in these passages describing the building of the tabernacle. They’re the same three words used to describe the acts of Creation in Genesis. Now it’s the people who are working hard to make a world; a house worthy of containing all that is. We, too, can create with purpose and intention. We, too, can craft worlds.*

*Whether on Tuesday or the other days of the week, may our hearts open to giving and receiving thus allowing us to craft our best possible selves and the best world called “Beth El.”*

Look for Mindful Tuesday offerings beginning in November as part of the Community Learning @ THE WELL: Mind/Body/Spirit Pathway.



My participation last year in Cantor Abram’s Mindful Tuesdays was deeply transformative. This Inukshuk, crafted in one of the monthly “Art For The Heart” classes, led by Cara Strauss and Cantor Abrams, represents my spiritual grounding. It stands as a totem in my home, reminding me to stay committed to my chosen path of mindful and meaningful living.

– Liba Zweigbaum Herman

# Lev Tov – A Good Heart

Linda Goldberg



Lev tov – in Hebrew, a good heart. What kind of person do we think of when we hear someone has a lev tov? When I hear this phrase used to describe a person, I have an image of someone who is kind, caring and compassionate. Someone who will go that extra mile to help and support others, someone who is warm and welcoming. When I think about people with these qualities, I think about our Beth El administrative and facilities staff. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce them to you and thank them for their service from the heart.

When you call or visit the shul, chances are you will be greeted by **Pam Friedman**, our Welcome Desk Coordinator. Pam is friendly, knowledgeable and will make sure you are warmly welcomed. If you call in, she will answer your questions and connect you with the appropriate department. In person, she will guide you to whomever you are here to see. In addition, Pam will also politely make sure that visitors are checked in and guided to their destination.

**Raquel Swanson** is our Office Manager and Assistant to the Executive Director. Raquel is responsible for the smooth flow of office and administrative tasks and makes sure the computers, phones and other office equipment are running well. Do you ever wonder how all the events and programs at Beth El are arranged? Raquel schedules all events and programs that take place in the building and coordinates set up with our facilities staff and catering needs with our wonderful David Hill and Sue Morales from Spirit of

Asia Catering. High Holy Days? Every square inch of space at Beth El (as well as many square inches of space across the street at our friends and neighbors Benilde - St. Margaret's) are meticulously arranged by Raquel, complete with illustrated step by step set up instructions. Did I mention there are a few other holidays throughout the year? Yes, thank you, Raquel!

Speaking of facilities, **Luke Newbauer** manages our facilities department. Whether he's greeting on Shabbat morning, directing janitorial services, working with our vendors to make sure our heating and cooling equipment is operating efficiently or introducing our new green trash, recycling and composting system, Luke is there with Jesse, Victor and Patrick to make sure we and our beautiful building and grounds are safe, comfortable and well cared for.

Beth El is a busy place – we are blessed with an active congregation full of life cycle events. We are delighted to celebrate our family's births, baby namings, b'nai mitzvah, graduations, weddings, special anniversaries and more. We are also here to support our family during difficult times, illness, and end of life. Our rabbis and cantor are here for us twenty four hours a day. The same can be said for their dedicated assistants. **Liz Rappaport, Sarah Johnson and Jill Blustin** devote themselves to support Rabbi Davis, Rabbi Olitzky and Cantor Abrams whether preparing for b'nai mitzvah, classes, meetings, study groups, happy occasions, funerals and a steady stream of large events including speakers, end of summer picnic, BEMA concerts and more. There are endless details to be managed and coordinated and everyone works together as a team to ensure the success of every event and program.

Now let's talk about finances. **Jerry Frick**, our Finance Director manages our finance department, keeping detailed accounting records of all donations and transactions. Jerry is a valued member of the team that develops and manages our \$4 million operating budget. He provides timely financial information to staff and leadership, including analysis and recommendations on a daily basis.

I am honored to work with this amazing team of professionals. Every day, in so many ways, they show their passion and commitment to all of us at Beth El from the heart with a lev tov.

# Giving - From the Heart

By Dan Mosow, Beth El President



As we enter the New Year, Beth El is positioning itself to remain strong and vibrant. We have done a wonderful job welcoming people into our community. Eliminating tickets for the High Holy Days, serving Shabbat lunch each Shabbat, offering new programs through

our Community Learning @ THE WELL among other offerings, have brought new faces through our doors and engaged our current members. By lowering barriers for participation, including cost, we grew and strengthened our congregation, and touched people's lives with the beauty of Judaism and warmth of community. And that is our goal. To continue to achieve these goals, further change is necessary.

Over the past several years, the Board of Trustees has observed and discussed the changing landscape of the Jewish world. A new generation has different patterns and priorities and they understand the notion of synagogue involvement differently than our grandparents' generation. To better reflect our values and meet people where they are at, we are addressing the issue of membership as well as how it relates to giving in the following ways:

**Membership-** We want people to feel a sense of belonging so much so that they call Beth El their home. We want this to be the congregation they turn to for simchas and in times of tzurus. But we also know that we live in an era where the notion of membership is changing. Today, fewer people are joining synagogues and civic organizations. And they don't join unless they find value in it. To make Beth El an accessible and attractive choice, therefore, we welcome anyone to become a member independent of their financial commitment. All they have to do is say, "I want to join; sign me up." This doesn't mean we are not going to ask them for a gift, we will. And when we do, we hope they will give more willingly and more personally from their heart.

Don't get me wrong, financial stability is important for any organization and Beth El is no different. For those concerned with the impact this shift will have on Beth El's financial health, I want to stress a few important things: 1) There are still program fees in which we charge for things like the Aleph Preschool and B'nai Mitzvah program; 2) I believe that if we do things correctly, people who have the capacity to give, will do so generously because of their sense of responsibility to contribute; 3) And finally, I feel privileged to be able to support such a worthy cause. If someone else is unable to provide financial support to the congregation, I can do a mitzvah and help build a community in which they can participate. In other words, giving doesn't earn me privilege. It is a privilege.

Giving – we reject the notion of “pay to pray.” We want to be the kind of shul where anyone in search of learning, spirituality, or community can find a home irrespective of their ability to pay.

Of course, we have bills and ever-increasing costs that must be covered, but research indicates that people give more when it comes from the heart as a charitable contribution than when it's seen as payment of dues. That is to say, giving tzedakah feels better than paying a “Jewish tax.” Therefore, we are moving to a new financial model that eliminates dues and instead positions Beth El as a philanthropy whose mission is compelling, whose message is relevant, and whose support we feel moved to provide.

You saw that reflected in letters you received this summer. Rather than telling you how much you owe, we asked you to pledge an amount. We believe that by making you an active giver, you will be encouraged to take greater ownership of your involvement in our community.

I am asking us to change not just how we give but why we give, not just how we look at contributions but how we view Beth El. By making the idea of membership independent of giving, we seek to emphasize that our first priority is people not purses and that our primary job is to inspire Jewish living not to solicit Jewish giving. This is the heart of Beth El and I hope it touches your heart.

L'Shana Tova



# New Members

**PLEASE WELCOME**

.....  
Jill & Zach Sussman  
.....

Nancy Forester  
.....

Patricia Alonso  
.....

Jill & Jeff Rabinowitz with Sig and Brooke  
.....

# EACH OF OUR Preschool Families Contributes

By Karen Burton, Director of Aleph Preschool



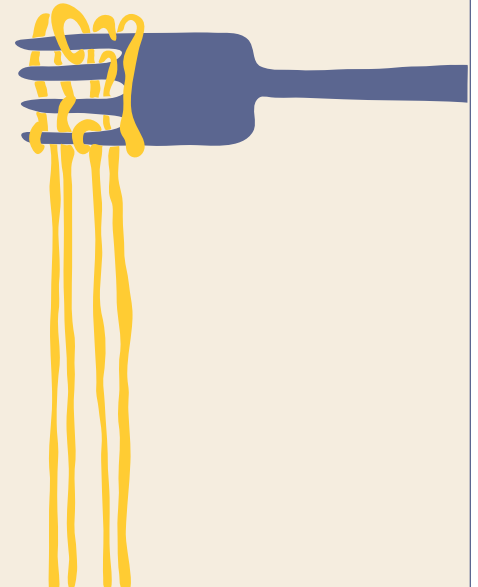
Aleph Preschool has grown over the years, and we are proud to announce we will be adding an eleventh classroom in the fall, bringing the total capacity of students to 186. Two of our many recent accomplishments are receiving our Parent Aware accreditation and beginning the process of NAEYC (National Association for the Education for Young Children) accreditation. With our tremendous and dedicated teachers and administration, we look forward to embarking on a new school year.

It is our goal that as many families as possible have an opportunity to provide their children with an Aleph Preschool upbringing and be part of our Beth El community. To make this possible, we provide need-based tuition assistance. This year, we had over \$100,000 in demonstrable need. That is nearly a 200% increase over last year—and we know the need will continue to increase.

One of the ways our community addresses this need is our annual Pasta Party Fundraiser (scheduled for April 15 next year). This event, coordinated entirely by volunteers, ensures funds are available for those families in need.

Because our young families are emotionally invested in our school and our community, at the beginning of the school year, each of our Aleph Preschool families received an envelope that included 50 raffle tickets. Each family goes about selling these tickets to their friends, neighbors and family members, or, in some cases, simply makes a donation in their stead.

This fundraising effort brings our families and community together with one universal goal: making it possible for all families in our community to have the opportunity to provide their child a Jewish early childhood education.



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(scheduled for April 15 next year).





## MAKING GOALS AND STICKING TO THEM

By Amanda Awend, Director of Shorashim and Young Families Engagement

“This was something that I knew deep in my heart was important and also attainable, and I was going to give it my best shot.”

Last spring I took a professional development trip to St. Louis, Missouri. I attended a songleader boot camp led by Jewish singer/songwriter Rick Recht, and partnered with Camp Ramah and PJ Library. This was a wonderful convention where clergy, educators, and songleaders from all over the country spent several days together—praying, singing, and learning. It was a beautiful experience and an amazing opportunity.

I was learning so much and collaborating with incredible professionals. Not only was I connecting with all of these people, but I felt like I was reconnecting with myself.

In addition to all of the beautiful melodies I learned and the amazing personal and professional connections I made, the biggest takeaway from this workshop was the very last session I took. Each one of us sat down privately and made a goal for ourselves and set up a plan to successfully follow through with this goal. This was a time of true reflection and honesty...but was I up for the challenge?

I came back from this convention with such motivation and drive. As a working mother of two, I know that it can be a difficult task to

follow through on everything. However, this was something that I knew deep in my heart was important and also attainable, and I was going to give it my best shot.

With the High Holy Days upon us, this is a great time for us all to set a goal and make realistic plans to make it happen. What are you passionate about? What is important to YOU? Perhaps this year, you want to become more involved in the synagogue community or attend services more frequently? Maybe this is the year that you will finally set up that monthly chavurah. Whatever it is, go for it!

We must all do our best not to let excuses get in the way. Nothing is more important than the balance of personal health and personal growth. From this, we can be better partners, better parents, better people.

As we hear the shofar blast this year, let it be a startling call to stir our hearts to do and to move. This is not only a time for self-reflection, it is time for a call to action.

Look deep inside your heart, and ask yourself what you can do for yourself to make this the best year yet—for you and for your circle.



# Nourished by Giving

By Mary Baumgarten, Education Director

Tzedakah and giving to others is one of the mainstays of Judaism and Beth El. We see that principle exemplified in the B'nai Mitzvah program.

As part of our b'nai mitzvah program this past year, families volunteered at STEP and Second Harvest. They found their experience to be uplifting and rewarding and some returned to volunteer additional times. These families also donated toiletries for our "Sandwich Man" project for months, enabling us to pack 637 toiletry bags to donate for distribution to the homeless.

For our post-b'nai mitzvah students, our Fiterman Mitzvah Corps teach eighth graders about tzedakah and philanthropy. This past year, the Mitzvah Corps allocated \$3900 to four organizations.

In both of these examples, we see Beth El consistently reaching out to others in need. But it is equally necessary to look inward. And here too, Beth El families are generous and giving. For example, week after week, b'nai mitzvah families sponsor the kiddush and congregational Shabbat lunch.

When there is not a bar/bat mitzvah, Women's League sponsors the lunches. Women's League works hard for our shul and helps in many ways by funding a variety of needs.

We are grateful for the generosity of our b'nai mitzvah families and our Women's League. They do more than feed our bodies. This special time strengthens our community by deepening our relationships.

I am inspired by our b'nai mitzvah students, their families and by Women's League members. Indeed, we can all learn from their example.

As Director of the Fiterman B'nai Mitzvah Program, my concern is the Jewish future and raising a generation of practicing and intentional Jews. There is much work to be done and we do our part in educating, engaging, and connecting Jewish youth and their families to our synagogue and to Judaism. How can you "give from the heart" to insure that our efforts continue to succeed?

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their families and by Women's League members.  
Indeed, we can all learn from their example.

# USY'S TWO PRONGED SOCIAL ACTION APPROACH: Breadth and Depth

By Andrew Freeman, Youth Director



As a result of evolving our youth lounge to house our growing Aleph Preschool, we are compelled to think more broadly about how and where our teens spend their time. One aspect of our youth department that is in the process of truly benefiting from this change is our Social Action program. With the new structure in place, BERUSY will explore ways to become more deeply involved in the broader community.

Presently, our Heschel Honor Society members demonstrate their commitment to G'milut Chasadim (acts of kindness) by engaging in monthly volunteer hours, most often organized by our chapter. This is about breadth—that is, our teens have a unique experience every

time they go out and volunteer, and are exposed to many different charitable organizations in our community.

The evolution of our youth lounge compels us to think about depth and not just breadth. Our teens will have the opportunity to make a stronger, longer impact for one particular organization that they select individually. We realize it is time for us to spend more active energy participating in the community and this is the perfect year to do so. This campaign was launched at this year's YOW (Youth Outreach Weekend) when several of these organizations were highlighted based on what our teens felt was most important. They did not pick an organization based on what was organized or recommended to them. They selected based on how they related to the cause and its importance. In addition, each month, USY will explore an important Social Action topic in depth.

We take to heart Rabbi Tarfon's teaching that while it may not be our duty to complete the work neither are we free to desist from it. We sing these words during our zmirot and ruach sessions. And we embody these words in our chapter.

We truly value how we are able to give back and what we are able to do for our community. Breadth and Depth is our new mantra. We hope many USYers and potential members take advantage of the new opportunities we have to offer and help us take part in the work of repairing the world.

We truly value how we are able to give back  
and what we are able to do for our community.

# B'nai Mitzvah



**October 7, 2017 / 17 Tishrei 5778**  
Sukkot Shabbat Chol ha-Moed

## **CECELIA ROSE COHEN**

סיסי רוניה בת בנימין הכהן ודינה לאה  
Daughter of Dina & Matthew Cohen

*Cece has always had a passion for Judaism and her Jewish heritage. As a bat mitzvah, we are excited to watch her continue to learn and do mitzvot.*



**October 14, 2017 / 24 Tishrei 5778**  
Bereshit

## **ALIYA GRACE DAHLIN**

עליה הדר בת חיה  
Daughter of Bernie & Adina Dahlin

*We are so proud as Aliya reaches this important milestone – a journey that began when she was named on the bimah at Beth El and will continue as an integral part of her identity throughout her life.*



**October 21, 2017 / 1 Cheshvan 5778**  
Noach

## **NOAH AVRAHAM RUTMAN**

אברהם בעריל בן דניאל ואביבה רייזעל  
Son of Daniel Rutman & Andrea Weisberg

*Noah is a kind, caring person who honors his Jewish heritage by helping others. He especially enjoys spending time with the elderly, and entertaining them by playing piano. Noah is very happy to share his upcoming special day with family, friends and teachers.*



**October 28, 2017 / 8 Cheshvan 5778**  
Lech-Lecha

## **ALYSON MARA WEINBERG**

חנה נירית בת ישראל חיים והינדע לאה  
Daughter of Heidi & Eric Weinberg

*Alyson approached her bat mitzvah studies with her usual enthusiasm and joy, always with a big smile. We are very proud of her and excited to share her special day!*



**November 4, 2017 / 15 Cheshvan 5778**  
Vayera

## **ISAAC ELLIOTT CANTOR**

יונה אליעזר בן יצחק ושושנה  
Son of Susan & Bruce Cantor

*Isaac is an exceptional young man and a high achiever in everything he undertakes. This has been evident in his bar mitzvah studies as well. Isaac has been serious, diligent and motivated as he prepared for his bar mitzvah. We are so proud of him.*



**November 11, 2017 / 22 Cheshvan 5778**  
Chayei Sara

## **JOHANNA TOVAH KAPLAN**

חנה טובה בת רפאל ושרה רבקה  
Daughter of Laura & Ross Kaplan

*Johanna is a hardworking and focused student. We look forward to watching her enter Jewish adulthood.*

# B'nai Mitzvah



**November 25, 2017 / 7 Kislev 5778**  
**(Shabbat Minchah)**  
Vayishlach

## **EVA HALAYNE COFMAN**

חווה חנה בת דוב יוסף וישראלה

## **ILISE JORDAN COFMAN**

עליזה יוכבד בת דוב יוסף וישראלה

Daughters of Tricia & David Cofman

*For Eva & Ilise, becoming B'not Mitzvah means taking on more responsibility in the Jewish community and with their family. They are working on becoming even better sisters to each other and are excited to celebrate together.*



**December 16, 2017 / 28 Kislev 5778**  
**(Chanukah: Day 5)**  
Miketz

## **JOSI RIAN FITERMAN**

שרה אהבה בת יחיאל ומניה

Daughter of Amy & Jack Fiterman

*Josi has a zest for life! She shares this sparkle and love with everyone around her! We look forward to watching her enter Jewish adulthood.*



*Mazal Tov to Tyler Schmidt and the USA Gymnastics team who took silver at the 2017 Maccabiah Games in Israel!*

*Mazal Tov to Josie Berman and the USA Water Polo team who took silver at the 2017 Maccabiah Games in Israel!*

Mazal  
Tov!





*Rabbi Olitzky visits Beth El campers at Camp Ramah in Wisconsin*



*Cantor Abrams leads a pre-Shabbat Drum Circle*

*Staff Sergeant Nordstrom and Lieutenant Kriegh present a flag to our MN National Guard committee including Sue & David Magy and Pam Friedman*





# Opening My Heart to Another

By Jan Hamilton, Congregational Nurse



One can hardly describe the value of relationships. And by comparison everything else in this world pales in value. Relationships are matters of the heart being open to giving and receiving...two sides of the same coin. I'm privileged to have a role here at Beth El that allows me many opportunities to be in and grow through relationships...and I *do* consider it growing. When I was a parent of young children, I was learning from *them*. Now here at Beth El my relationships are primarily with mature adults and the elderly. There is much wisdom in aging. I appreciate all they have to share and all the learning to which I am exposed. By actively engaging and supporting the elders in our community, in the end I believe I receive more than I give. It's an honor. I'm happy to share testimonials from two congregants who have benefited from a relationship of "open hearts."

Jan Hamilton, Congregational Nurse

(If you are interested in being a buddy please contact me at [jhamilton@bethelsynagogue.org](mailto:jhamilton@bethelsynagogue.org) or 952-873-7300 ext. 7356)

## My "Buddy" Relationship with Esther Kaufman

By Caryn Goldberg

My mother passed away 5 years ago, in July of 2012. I miss her every day. I was in charge of her care the last years of her life, as my sister lives in Iowa and wasn't able to come to town as often as she would have liked. Because of this, I was able to spend a lot of time with my mother and was in charge of many aspects of her life.

Since she died, I miss having an older person in my life to give me wisdom, diverse opinions, and to take out to lunch, shopping, or just a nice, long drive on a beautiful sunny day. When I saw in the Beth El Shofar Jan Hamilton's small column about wanting volunteers to help out senior citizens, I called her right away. I had just retired in June of 2016, and though I keep busy, I wanted to volunteer at Beth El in some capacity.

Esther and I "clicked" immediately. She is feisty, funny, knowledgeable on so many topics, and just a complete joy to be with. For me, I love talking with her about her family and mine, getting her opinion on different things, and getting her out of her apartment for fun drives or a bite to eat. She has said wonderful things to me that make me feel so special and validated, and every time I see her I leave feeling so happy about myself and about (hopefully!) making her day. I hope that other people will take the time to volunteer with a senior citizen who would definitely enjoy the company.

## My "Buddy" Relationship with Caryn Goldberg

By Esther Kaufman

My relationship with Caryn Goldberg has given me a warm feeling, and at my age (95 years old), that is hard to do. It is a wonderful experience to know that someone who didn't know me is willing to get to know me and form a relationship with me.

I went into our relationship thinking that if it didn't work out for either one of us, we would go our separate ways. Well, we never had to get divorced! Not even a separation!





## MAZAL TOV TO MEMBERS WITH UPCOMING MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES

NAME	DATE	YEARS	NAME	DATE	YEARS
Sharon & David Gelperin	October 1	50	Bonnie & Edward Engler	November 7	35
Robyn & Josh Awend	October 7	10	Rachel & Bret Erickson	November 9	20
Sue-Ann & Gary Garvis	October 11	55	Stacy & Barry Baker	November 11	10
Sharon & Brad Gunther	October 18	25	Debbie & John Orenstein	November 14	35
Elanna & Justin Kaufman	October 20	15	Lisa & Jeffrey Gottstein	November 17	15
Shari & Adam Dveris	October 21	10	Libby & Steven Beugen	November 19	45
Liz & Butch Fischman	October 21	55	Heather & Jerry Goldman	December 1	15
Francine & Daniel Orren	October 23	40	Sybil & Seymour Wilensky	December 1	60
Stephanie & Rick Soskin	October 24	35	Rollye & Chuck Rinkey	December 10	45
Shari & Boris Abramovich	October 28	15	Joanie & Benjamin Rischall	December 17	45
Marcia & Allen Oleisky	October 28	55	Linda Nass-Tell & Brian Tell	December 18	35
Lisa & Andy Furman	October 31	10	Diane & Malin Greenberg	December 22	60
Judy & Jeffrey Victor	November 3	15	Marilyn & Gerald Lapidés	December 28	65

If you would like to ensure your (or your loved one's) simchah is acknowledged in future publications, please contact the Beth El Office at 952.873.7300 or [info@bethelsynagogue.org](mailto:info@bethelsynagogue.org).

### Condolences to...

**Stuart (Carolyn) Bloom** on the loss of his mother, **Arline Bloom**

**Riva (Craig) Kupritz and Eve Miller** on the loss of their father, **Beryl Miller**

**Harriet Benowitz** on the loss of her husband, **Theodore Benowitz**

**Harvey Soltan and Terry (Richard) Kleinbaum** on the loss of their wife and mother, **Rita Soltan**

**Ron (Julie Hirsch) Feldman** on the loss of his father, **Israel "Izzy" Feldman**

**Diane (Malin) Greenberg** on the loss of her sister, **Virginia Lewin**

Friends and Family on the loss of our member, **Eva Wiesenber**

**Dale Hillman** on the loss of his mother, **Audrey Hillman**

**Nettie Frank** on the loss of her husband, **Seymour Frank**

**Judy Dodd** on the loss of her daughter, **Debbie Dodd Scheppard**

**Debbie (John) Orenstein** on the loss of her father, **Marvin Kass**

*With heavy hearts we mourn the loss of these loved ones within our community. This reflects the losses in our community through July 13, 2017.*

### Mazal Tov to...

Laura & Jacob Stein on the birth of their daughter, **Ava Charlotte**, born on March 24, 2017. Proud Grandparents are **Cindy & Craig Greenberg** and **Bonnie & Arthur Stein**.

Shari Robbins & Heather Brey on the birth of their daughter, **Logan Addison**, on April 13, 2017. Proud Grandmother is **Lori Tenebaum**.

Tyler & Omer Abramovich on the birth of their son, **Liam Gavriel**, born on May 12, 2017.

Meredith & Adam Bank on the birth of their twins, **Sloane Amelia** and **Samuel Alexander**, born on May 30, 2017.

Marie Koppy & Mike Grindle on the birth of their daughter, **Colette Marie**, born on Friday, June 23, 2017.

Layne & Daniel Zagorin on the birth of their daughter, **Sadie Irene**, born on June 28, 2017. Proud Grandparents are **Marilyn & Ralph Shapiro**.

Boaz & Udi Tal on the birth of their daughter, **Maya**, born on July 11, 2017.

# Beth El Synagogue Foundation

*Ensuring the vitality of our congregation now and in the future*

## Aligning Action with Intent

By Matt Walzer, Director of Charitable Giving



The Beth El community is a special place – one where many of us have spent all, or significant parts of our life, including many milestones. One of the things that makes Beth El unique are the many voices of the congregation. Each summer, these voices come to life with our Summer Darshanim program – when members of our community give D'verei Torah during Shabbat morning services. Though “giving” is often talked about with regard to donations and philanthropy, this opportunity provides our community with a way to give of their time – and to connect more with Judaism.

This past summer, I was given the chance to participate in this program and I found my assigned parshah (Balak) to be particularly pertinent given my role with charitable giving at Beth El.

I've included my words below and hope it encourages dialogue about our evolving culture. I look forward to discussing with you further in the coming months.

### Values and Principles / Saturday, July 8, 2017

Today's parashah, Balak, is one of only a handful of Torah portions named after any one individual. When I began to look into the importance of the message being sent, it was a challenge for me to understand the significance of the story and how it relates in a relevant way to today.

The story plays a lot like a Disney story many of us would watch with our kids – or, for those who are familiar with Balak, more like Shrek given the role of a talking donkey. We have the bad evil king – Balak. A for-hire prophet – Balaam. Of course, his talking donkey. The Israelites. And, then there's God.

So, a 90-minute movie condensed to 30 seconds is the big bad king, Balak, hired the prophet, Balaam, to curse the Israelites. Why? It doesn't matter – the guy is evil, that's why. Balaam, essentially a “yes man,” agrees to, and rides his talking donkey to fulfill his commitment to Balak. Ultimately, good defeats evil, because God takes over in a couple ways – one, by trying to get the donkey to take Balaam off course – and, two, when Balaam finally makes it through the obstacles in front of him to allow him the opportunity to curse the Israelites, God intervenes and has Balaam bless them. Great – beginning, middle, end, everyone lives happily ever after. But, that's not the lesson I take from this...

I hear this story, and while Balaam appears to be a coveted resource – someone people are paying to deliver an important message – I see someone weak. Weak in values as he demonstrates in being a “gun for hire” – willing to say whatever someone will pay him to say. Weak in principle as exhibited by his lack of values. And, weak in authenticity. And, while the end result has him bless a group of Israelites, we knew it was disingenuous, because God had to intervene in order for it to happen. But, the people being blessed don't seem to question this – why?! This troubles me. You may have heard Rabbi Olitzky say before that, “Judaism isn't about blind faith – it's about a leap of faith.” I believe as people we have a responsibility to hold people accountable. Are their words genuine and authentic? Do the actions that follow align with said words? And, don't we have a responsibility to question our peers and leaders when

something seems off? Now, we know because we get to debate this story in hindsight that Balaam's actions end up aligning with his words – but only because of God's intervention. And, this is when accountability becomes important – remember, he was hired – and took the job – to curse the Israelites. Along the way, he disrespects his era's “uber drive” – the Donkey – for trying to steer him away from cursing the people. And, then he arrives, God helps make sure a blessing occurs, and the people seem none the wiser.

Bring this story to the modern era and we have more purview into people's actions. We have more access to information. And, we should question things when things don't seem to “add up.” Not only should we question – with proper decorum – we should encourage and teach others to do the same. Both in members of our own cohorts, as well as others.

As a skeptical member of the “Generation Me” cohort, I'm, of course, looking for a way to connect this all to my life. So, it comes to me – as someone that works in the world of philanthropy, I often have detailed insight and unique perspective on needs of organizations and how they are communicated to supporters and potential supporters. In today's highly scrutinized world, it is more important now than ever that tzedakah be secured with more than the right “message” – because, intent is at the root of what both the organization's needs are as well as the donor's interests. Then digging deeper into what this means for Beth El specifically, and I think about what we've communicated, and how that aligns with our intent.

We have talked for decades about being a warm and welcoming congregation in philosophy and vision. It's in the upcoming months that you're going to learn about Beth El's plans to better align this philosophy and vision with our business practices. Our job over the summer is to open our eyes to ourselves and who we really are. Balaam's eyes were closed, and he saw himself as a hired gun. But, once his eyes were fully open, he saw himself as living potential for blessing and a curse – hope and aspiration. Our eyes at Beth El are open, too, and our hope is that it will be clear to you, as well as the rest of the community how we are working to ensure that our actions align with our words.

## TZEDAKAH

Tribute donations to Beth El funds honor friends and family, commemoration of significant events, memorialize loved ones and provide essential support to the congregation. Endowment funds provide permanent funding where needed most or for a specific purpose. Endowment funds are held in the Beth El Foundation. Funds for immediate use are used to support specific programs or projects, are for general use and are spent in their entirety. To make a donation, or to establish a new fund through our Foundation, please contact Matt Walzer at 952.873.7309 or at [foundation@bethelsynagogue.org](mailto:foundation@bethelsynagogue.org).

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Sam Sandler  
Herb Schein  
Morton Schein  
Phillip Blumenfeld  
Nathan Schwartz  
Nathan Schwartz  
Rose Schwimmer  
Abe Baker  
Joyce Segelbaum  
Arnold Bernath  
Rose Selnick  
David Selnick  
Berta Vayman  
Clare Schwartz  
Robert Schwartz  
Jacob Friedman  
Sylvia Nairn  
Blanche Silverman  
Celia Marofsky  
Vera Udell  
David Snyder  
Cheryl Snyder  
Gloria Stein  
Della Marcus  
Regina Zidel  
Isadore Swirnoff  
James Tapper  
David Trach  
Melvin Sadoff  
Sophie Walensky  
Mitchell Walensky  
Ronald Geller  
Dorothy Reiff Wener  
James Goldberg  
Abe Wilemsky  
Nate Winer  
Irene Winer  
Esther Wolfe



# UPCOMING AT BETH EL

Below is a sampling of only some of the upcoming events at the synagogue. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend. Look for more details in future *Hakol* and *Kesher* publications, and as always, feel free to call the Welcome Desk at 952.873.7300 for additional information.

SEPTEMBER	
1	Kabbalat Shabbat Summer Style
2	Summer Darshanim – Andrea Nadel-Tikh
4	Labor Day
20-22	Rosh Hashanah
29-30	Yom Kippur
OCTOBER	
1	Bethelers “Man of La Mancha” at Theater Latte Da
15-26	Eastern Europe Trip
25	Aravah Alumni Community Event
29	Bethelers “The Music Man” at Artistry
NOVEMBER	
10-11	Beth El - AIPAC Israel Shabbaton featuring Amb. Dan Shapiro
16	Ragamala Dance Performance with Tamara Nadel and Cantor Audrey Abrams (The Well: Cultural Arts Pathway)
18	USY Dinner Theater
19	USY Lunch Theater
27-12/1	Kar Ben Book Fair
DECEMBER	
1-3	B’nai Mitzvah 5th and 6th grade Shabbaton
7	“Heroes Among Us” speaker series: An Evening with Brendan McDonough
13	First night of Chanukkah
WINTER LOOKING AHEAD	
Jan 30	1/30 Tu Bishvat Seder
Mar 1	3/1 Purim (contact Cantor Abrams if you want to be part of the Purim Shpiel)

ONGOING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES	
The Well: Center for Learning – Check Beth El website for most up-to-date information	
Rashi to Rembrandt – meets monthly (The Well: Cultural Arts Pathway)	
Mindful Tuesdays – every Tuesday beginning in November (The Well: Mind/Body/Spirit Pathway)	
Apples and Honey; Adult Learning – 1st Shabbat each month	
Nosh and Drash – 1st and 3rd Monday each month (The Well: Jewish and Israeli Studies Pathway)	

ONGOING SERVICES	
<p><b>EREV SHABBAT</b> (Friday evening) Kabbalat Shabbat ...5:45 pm</p> <p><b>YOM SHABBAT</b> (Saturday) Shacharit .....9:00 am Minchah 5:45 pm</p>	<p><b>SUNDAY</b> Shacharit .....9:00 am (Chevrah Breakfast) Maariv.....5:45 pm</p> <p><b>DAILY MINYAN</b> Shacharit .....7:00 am Maariv.....5:45 pm</p>



**Beth El**  
SYNAGOGUE

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## Save the Date

### THE ANNUAL BETH EL SYNAGOGUE AIPAC ISRAEL SHABBATON

November 10-11, 2017

### Daniel Shapiro

U.S. Ambassador to Israel (2011-2017)



Appointed by President Barack Obama, Daniel Shapiro served as the United States Ambassador to Israel from July 2011 until the end of the Obama Administration. Among Shapiro's major contributions were negotiating the \$38 billion Memorandum of

Understanding for U.S. military aid to Israel, unprecedented public outreach in fluent Hebrew to Israel's diverse communities, and 40 percent growth in U.S.-Israel trade.

Currently, Shapiro is the Distinguished Visiting Fellow at Tel Aviv University's Institute of National Security Studies.

## HEROES AMONG US

### AN EVENING WITH BRENDAN MCDONOUGH

DECEMBER 7, 2017 | BETH EL SYNAGOGUE



On June 30, 2013, while Brendan McDonough – “Donut” as he’d been dubbed by his team – served as lookout, they confronted a freak, 3,000-degree inferno in nearby Yarnell, Arizona. The relentless firestorm ultimately trapped his hotshot brothers, tragically killing all 19 of them within

minutes. Nationwide, it was the greatest loss of firefighter lives since the 9/11 attacks.

On October 20th, Only the Brave will hit theaters, recounting this brave and tragic story and on December 7th, Brendan will serve as our next Heroes Among Us speaker.

[www.besyn.org/onlythebrave](http://www.besyn.org/onlythebrave)