We are in the wilderness. At this point in the cycle of the Jewish year we have just celebrated our freedom from slavery. Passover is called Zaman Heiruteinu, the time of our freedom, because we were physically free from slavery in Egypt. But our Jewish calendar tells us there is more to freedom than what our ancestors experienced at Passover.

On the second night of Passover, we begin a process of counting the Omer, counting every day from Passover until the holiday of Shavuot. This counting makes us aware that we do not achieve true freedom until we enter into a covenant with God at Sinai. This might seem counterintuitive. Isn’t freedom the ability to do what we want to do? How is it ‘free’ to have to follow all of these laws (613 to be exact!) that God has given us? An answer to these questions is found in the work of 20th century philosopher (and Jew!) Isaiah Berlin. He said there were two types of liberty, negative liberty and positive liberty. Negative liberty is freedom from external restraint on one’s actions. That is exactly what happened to us after the Exodus. We were no longer slaves, and now we were free to use our time as we wanted. But that type of liberty is not enough. There is also the concept of positive liberty, or the freedom to act. This type of freedom allows us the ability to pursue the life we want. Judaism says that the pinnacle of freedom is not negative liberty but positive liberty. By entering into a covenant with God at Sinai and agreeing to a set of rules to live by, we experience positive liberty. We are able to live our best lives by following the rules that God has set out and that have been vital to our people for thousands of years. At Shavuot we again willingly enter into covenant with God. We accept the responsibilities that this covenant entails and we are reminded of God’s responsibilities to us as well. We look forward to this moment of entering into the covenant once again.

Now, we now find ourselves in the wilderness. Free from slavery in Egypt but not yet in a covenant with God as a people. For our ancestors, this period of time was difficult. They fought with one another and with Moses. They felt disheartened and dispirited. They had difficulty living with uncertainty.

For us today, it can also feel like a time of wilderness. The shooting at the synagogue in Poway came just before our commemoration of the Holocaust. Many of us see these acts of hate and wonder what is happening to our society and our country. In this time of wilderness, Jewish tradition reminds us to look towards Sinai. Despite the difficulties of being Jewish, our religion is not one of tragedy. We are a people who celebrate together, who value community, who embrace learning, and who find joy in the midst of despair. If this feels like a time of wilderness to you, I encourage you to approach Sinai by engaging in the traditions and laws that have sustained our ancestors through difficult times and brought joy to their lives. Celebrate Shabbat with your community. Come and wrestle with the words of Torah. Visit someone who is sick. Help those in need. Light Shabbat candles. Come to our Annual Meeting. Opt into Jewish tradition and Jewish community even more than you do now. Looking at this newsletter, I am amazed at all we do as a community to build and sustain a vibrant Jewish life in Central Maine. This is a time for more. More community, more celebration, more joy, and even more questions. Journey towards Sinai with us.
TBE Schedule: May-June

Services

Note: As of June 3rd, all services and activities will be in the Shuman Education Building

Friday, May 3
6:00pm Shabbat Service
7:00pm Potluck dinner

Saturday, May 11
9:00am Tot Shabbat

Friday, May 17
7:00pm Shabbat Service with Dr. Eshagh Shaoul
7:45pm Tea & Dessert
8:15pm Persian Music

Saturday, May 18
10:30am Bat Mitzvah of Marina Friedman

Saturday, June 8
6:30pm Shavuot program

Sunday, June 9
10:30am Shavuot services with Yizkor

Friday, June 14
7:00pm Shabbat Service

Friday, June 28
6:00pm Shabbat Service
7:00pm Potluck dinner

Torah Study

Saturday, May 4
10:30am Torah Study & Kiddush Lunch

Saturday, May 11
10:30am Torah Study & Kiddush Lunch

Saturday, June 1
10:30am Torah Study & Kiddush Lunch

Saturday, June 15
10:30am Torah Study & Kiddush Lunch

Saturday, June 29
10:30am Torah Study & Kiddush Lunch

TBE Activities

Thursday, May 16
6:00pm TBE Board Meeting

Wednesday, May 22
5:30pm Soup & Study

Sunday, June 2
9:30am Annual Meeting
1:00pm Packing up the Temple for Construction

Wednesday, June 19
5:30pm Soup & Study

Friday, June 21-Sunday, June 23
Maine Conference for Jewish Life

Interfaith Activities

Every Tuesday
12:30pm Volunteering at Addie’s Attic

Thursday, May 9
11:00am Interfaith Study

Thursday, June 13
11:00am Interfaith Study

Hebrew School

9:30 am on Sunday, May 5, 12, & 19
No school on May 26

Todah Rabah

The family of Harold Shapiro wishes to express their gratitude for the support and kindness shown us by the temple community during our recent loss. Our heartfelt thanks to all.

Fondly,
Doretta, Jeffrey, Laksana, Linda, Mikayla, & Jakob
Rabbi Asch can be serious – protesting for social justice, leading a Yom Hashoah service at the Holocaust and Human Rights Center, or joining her colleagues on the board of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. But “Rabbi-t” Asch can also be fun and silly, especially around Purim time!
What’s Happening at TBE

The New Rabbi

By Chuck Cohen, President

I hope the title of this article didn’t scare anyone! This isn’t an announcement that Rabbi Asch has left us or that we are looking to hire a replacement. Rather it’s the name of a book by Stephen Fried that tells the story of a temple, Har Zion, and its struggle to replace its rabbi who is retiring after more than 30 years of service. The book was recommended to me by a friend after she learned that I had been elected president of the temple. In recommending the book, my friend said that it would give a very good picture of temple politics and what I might be in for.

Har Zion is a large, 1,000+ member, Conservative Temple located in the wealthy Philadelphia suburbs. The book goes in rather lengthy detail about the mechanics, requirements, and awkwardness of filling a rabbi position. This hiring process often resembles a junior high dance. It also describes the internal conflict and struggle at the temple as it goes through a year-long odyssey to find a replacement for their long-serving rabbi, who was generally beloved but who also was ready to move on after maybe one too many years on the bimah. I highly recommend the book which is available from our Sifriyah. I won’t tell you how the book ends, in part because I hate it when people do that in book reviews, and also, in part, because I don’t know yet since I haven’t quite finished it. But for me, more than being a just “good read,” I found the book enjoyable because it helped me realize, once again, how special the Temple Beth El community is and how much I cherish it.

So, here’s my top five list of what I love about TBE (not necessarily listed in order of importance):

1. **We’re egalitarian:** We don’t put up financial barriers to participation and where you sit at holiday services is not a function of what you paid for a ticket or past financial contributions;

2. **We’re welcoming:** We recognize that there are many paths to Judaism, our Temple, and to leading a good Jewish life;

3. **We’re not political (internally):** People do things for the good of TBE and not to further their own personal agendas;

4. **We’re committed to social justice both internally and in the greater community:** In other words, we walk the walk and not just talk the talk; and finally,

5. **We have the greatest rabbi on earth:** Rabbi Asch does so many things and she does them so well and so elegantly. Which takes me back to my opening sentence and disclaimer -...

Rabbi Asch is actually leaving us; but just for a three-month sabbatical which will start in December. So, in actuality, we will need many “new rabbis” as we try to fill her very big shoes during this time period. We have already begun the planning process for Rabbi’s sabbatical. Stay tuned for details as we look for volunteers to lead services, Torah study, minyans, visit members of the congregation, etc. In other words, our “new rabbi” may be you!
What's Happening at TBE

Marina Friedman Becomes a Bat Mitzvah
Saturday, May 18 @ 10:30am

Marina Friedman is currently a 7th grader at Maranacook Middle School. Marina is a self-driven, enthusiastic, and motivated learner. She is comical, kind, and helpful. Marina enjoys academic rigor and is a straight A+ student. Her extracurricular activities include playing field hockey, ice hockey, and lacrosse for her school. Marina also has a passion for singing and has a vocal coach in Portland. She is part of chorus, Chambers, and GT music at Maranacook Middle School. Hobbies and other interests include horseback riding, fishing, art, and advocating for animals. Marina has two older brothers, Jaxon (19) who graduated Kents Hill in 2018 and is playing Juniors hockey and Grady (17) who is attending Northfield Mount Hermon Prep School. Dad is a hockey coach and Mom is a Physical Education and Health teacher at Maranacook High School. Marina has worked hard and is very excited for her Bat Mitzvah. She appreciates all of the support Rabbi Asch has provided her in preparing for this special day.

Maine Conference for Jewish Life
Friday, June 21- Sunday, June 23
Thomas College and downtown Waterville

Register for the 2019 Maine Conference for Jewish Life!
We’re thrilled to announce that our keynote speaker at this year's conference will be Amir Tibon, Washington correspondent for Ha'aretz. Amir is also the author of an acclaimed biography of Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas. We look forward to welcoming Amir to Maine this June. Don’t miss it—register today!

Questions?
Contact Mel Weiss
maweiss@colby.edu
Temple Beth Él in Augusta, Maine
Presents a night of storytelling and traditional Persian music by renowned composer and violinist

Eshagh Shaoul

Eshagh Shaoul will share stories of his life as a Jew growing up in Iran and he will perform original Persian music on his violin.

Friday, May 17
7:00pm Kabbalat Shabbat and talk by Dr. Shaoul
7:45pm Dessert and tea
8:15pm Persian Music by Dr. Shaoul
What’s happening at TBE

TBE Annual Meeting
Sunday, June 2nd
9:30-11:30am

Please bring fruit or a dessert dish to share! Following the Annual Meeting, we are looking for volunteers to help pack up the synagogue from 1-4pm. Also needed are volunteers with trucks and cardboard boxes! Please RSVP to bethelaugusta@gmail.com

Soup & Study
Wednesday, May 22nd
Stories from the Talmud

Wednesday, June 19th
Who Knew? Laws and Traditions for Jewish Holidays

Shavuot
@ TBE
Saturday, June 8th
6:30—11:00pm

Join with us for learning, singing and food as we celebrate receiving the Torah. You are welcome to come for part or all of the evening. We will need some people to teach in 20 minute slots and we welcome dessert contributions. More info to come!

Shavuot Morning Service with Yizkor
Sunday, June 9th
10:30am

Join us for a morning service, reading from the 10 Commandments, and discussion as we celebrate Shavuot. We will also have a yizkor service to remember those in our families and our friends who have died.

Shavuot!
What’s happening at TBE
Hebrew School

Summer Funtensive: July 8-12, 2019
Sign up now for Jewish fun in Maine!

Plans are underway for a week of learning, playing, and adventure at our Summer Funtensive. Scheduled for July 8-12, the Funtensive provides a camping experience for Jewish kids right here in Maine. Based at Temple Beth El in Augusta, the Funtensive attracts campers from Waterville, Augusta, Bath, Lewiston, Portland, and beyond. Jewish teens and college students will work with Rabbi Asch and Mel Weiss to provide a fun and educational Jewish camp experience. Campers leave Funtensive with a sizable modern Hebrew vocabulary and other skills imparted through this immersive program. We can work with your community to provide transportation.

Hebrew School End-of-Year Picnic
Sunday, June 2nd
9:30—11:30am

Hebrew School Schedule
9:30 am on Sunday
May 5, 12, & 19
No school on May 26
**Donations**

**Building Fund Capital Campaign 2019**
- Rabbi Erica and Chris Myers Asch
- Cynthia and Gregg Bernstein
- Peter Bickerman
- Emily and Jerry Bley
- Li’el Boudreau
- Vicky and Jonathan Cohen
- Anya and Allen Goldey
- Linda and Peter Kallin
- Hildie Lipson
- Sumner Lipman
- Louis Metzger
- Suzanne and Peter Rosenberg
- Rabbi Peter Rubinstein

**Rabbi Discretionary Fund**
- Kate McLinn

**Yahrzeit/Memorials**
- Cynthia and Gregg Bernstein in memory of Jack Gustafson
- Li’el Boudreau in memory of Harold Shapiro
- Charlene and John Bridge in memory of Harold Shapiro
- Chuck Cohen and Mary Beth Paquette in memory of Milton Prager
- Chuck Cohen and Mary Beth Paquette in memory of Harold Shapiro
- Sarah and Mike Drickey in memory of Shawn Walker
- Ellen Freed and Carol Barlow in memory of Walter Barlow
- Ellen Freed and Carol Barlow in memory of Rose Golden
- Ellen Freed and Carol Barlow in memory of Harold Shapiro
- Joan and Lowell Freiman in memory of Lillian Freiman
- Anya and Allen Goldey in memory of Lillian Freiman
- Carol Graham in memory of Harold Shapiro
- Ellen Bader Kandel and Laurance Bader in memory of Charles Bader
- Janice and Carroll Moreshead in memory of Harold Shapiro
- Teresa Nichols in memory of Harold Shapiro
- Sue and David Offer in memory of Samuel L. Gershon
- Sue and David Offer in memory of Harold Shapiro
- Joan Price and Joe O’Donnell in memory of Ann C. O’Donnell
- Joan Price and Joe O ‘Donnell in memory of Henry S. Price
- Joan Price and Joe O’Donnell in memory of Harold Shapiro
- Nan Salvino and Jon Mittelman in memory of Frank Salvino
- Deborah Sandler in memory of Robert Sandler
- Beth and Steven Shapiro in memory of Rose Golden
- Beth and Steven Shapiro in memory of Harold Shapiro
- Beth and Steven Shapiro in memory of Shirley Siegel

**Building Fund**
This fund is for major repair and rebuilding of our facilities.

**Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund**
This fund helps Rabbi Asch meet special needs in the community.

**Yahrzeit/Memorials/Honoraria**
These contributions are made in memory or honor of family and friends.

**Memorial Plaques**
Remember a loved one with a memorial plaque in the synagogue.
Donation: $250
*Payment due at time of order.*

**Tree of Life**
Acknowledge a life milestone in a special way by adding a personalized, inscribed leaf to the Tree. Donation: $36.
*Payment due at time of order.*

Please make checks payable to Temple Beth El. Indicate the fund to which you want to contribute and mail to TBE, Box 871, Augusta, ME 04332. Undesignated checks will go to the General Fund. *Temple Beth El accepts Visa & Mastercard.*

Please contact the office with any questions.
May Yahrzeits

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Refuah Sh’lemah (Get Well) to:

Julius Goos
Michael Libby
Judy Plano