



CONGREGATION

BETH ISRAEL

MAINE'S OLDEST SYNAGOGUE - SINCE 1888

MISSION STATEMENT

Congregation Beth Israel is a vibrant egalitarian and progressive Jewish community. We welcome Jews from all backgrounds, their partners, families, and those seeking to live Jewishly. We encourage active participation in synagogue life by each member according to their individual interests and abilities. We empower our members through prayer, learning, community friendships, and the Jewish imperative of Tikkun Olam—repair of the world.

CONTACT US OR DONATE

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AUTUMN IN MAINE IS A GOOD TIME TO COME TO SHUL!

The leaves are changing, the temperatures are chilling, and our days are shorter. We're getting our sweaters out of the closet and getting our wood ready for our fireplaces and woodstoves.

Some of us are probably still going to be taking down our sukkahs, while we drink apple cider and pumpkin spice lattes.

After the intensity of the High Holidays, it's nice to have some breathing space this year before Chanukah arrives. Come to shul, learn some Torah. Our classes will be kicking off soon, as well as our themed programming centered on "Respecting and Protecting Creation." We have some great JCEA-sponsored programming for the kids in October.

If you're one of our snowbirds, don't forget that you can get our livestream wherever there is Internet!

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RABBI'S MESSAGE FROM KOL NIDRE 2021

BILL SIEMERS

"Jewish study and teaching, Jewish learning and education—they are dying out among us. This assertion may offend many ears, but in making it I feel myself one with the best among the youth, and among the old too—thank goodness for the last, for otherwise I should not feel sure of myself."



Though one can surely imagine someone saying this today, **these** are the words of Franz Rosensweig, one of our great minds, who wrote them 100 years ago. He wrote them in a world in which the greatest Lithuanian yeshivot still stood. His native Germany was home to great academic seminaries, the orthodox and the not quite orthodox. And as he wrote them, institutions of great Jewish learning that stand today were being founded in Israel and the New World.

Rosensweig knew of these institutions and their scholarship; he contributed to the scholarship! Jewish learning was living, but Rosensweig could see that it was irrelevant to the world of most Jews, the very place where it is required to live. For 200 years and more, Jewish thinkers had sought to organize a curriculum that would be at the heart of "regular" Jewish life, the program for the so-called "Jews in the Pews". The theoretical content of Jewish learning is infinite but the day is short. What is the corner of knowledge that the masses have to master? What should be taught in the children's Hebrew school? What should the rabbi assume the congregation knows of and is interested in? And what is the point of Jewish education anyway? Is it so Jews will be an ethical people? That they can read the Siddur? That they will be inspired to perform social justice? Support Israel?

The questions are perennial and the answers manifold. Rather than attempt to give his own answer, Rosensweig was convinced we were looking at the question backwards. He felt that we cannot define the curriculum without addressing the existential motives that inspire Jewish learning.

*"But how is this to be done? By beginning modestly—the only way one can begin with very large things that, one feels sure, must be all-inclusive or else cannot exist at all. What is intended to be of limited scope can be carried out according to a limited, clearly outlined plan—it can be "organized." The unlimited cannot be attained by organization. That which is distant can be reached only through that which is nearest at the moment. Any "plan" is wrong to begin with—simply because it is a plan. The highest things cannot be planned; for them readiness is really everything. Readiness is the only thing we can offer to the Jewish individual within us, the individual we aim at. Only the first gentle push of the will—and "will" is almost too strong a word—that first quite gentle push we give ourselves when in the confusion of the world we once quietly say, "we Jews," and by that expression commit ourselves for the first time to the eternal pledge which, according to an old saying, makes every Jew responsible for every other Jew. **Nothing more is assumed than the simple resolve to say once: "Nothing Jewish is alien to me"—and this itself is hardly a resolve but almost nothing more than a small impulse to look around oneself and into oneself. What each will see then no one can venture to predict.**"*

Every Jewish curriculum begins with the desire to be Jewish, to be with Jews. **Let nothing Jewish be foreign to me.**

I have the great advantage of never having had a formal Jewish education. My journey began in the Penn Bookstore when I came across a copy of *BHS (Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia)* - the academic edition of the Hebrew Bible. Leafing through it I could understand nothing! I signed up for the class that used the book, but was encouraged to learn Hebrew before I began any study of the Hebrew Bible. That was the beginning of an incredible adventure, during which I studied whatever I could. My home community was and is the Jewish Studies program at Penn, but over the years I wandered into other institutions. Over the next three decades besides Hebrew I studied Arabic, Aramaic and Akkadian, the history of all of these languages and literatures, and the relationships between. I met the Rabbis while I studied with rabbis, and I was introduced to philologists, scientists and philosophers who held forth in a 3000 year-old conversation. I was fortunate to study with the frum as well as with absolute heretics. The different places I learned at all had their agendas but I never wavered from mine: **Let nothing Jewish be foreign to me.** It's been a fantastic ride.

"And there is indeed no other way to become completely Jewish; in no other way does the Jewish human being arise. All recipes, whether Zionist, orthodox or liberal, produce caricatures of men, which become more ridiculous the more closely the recipes are followed."

Sharing the joy of this journey is at the center of what I strive to do as a rabbi. It is my mission in the world. I spoke on the first day of Rosh Hashanah about our learning goals for the coming year which will address the Jewish mandate to care for the planet on which we are short-timers. We are committed to that, as much as we are committed to uncovering together how the tradition helps us navigate this very challenging era of polarization and shaming (the topic of the address on the second day of Rosh Hashanah). Education about Israel and the frightening rise of anti-semitism are also on the agenda. But the energy of all of these worthy endeavors flow from our existential commitment to be Jews; they rest upon our mission to learn as much as possible about everything Jewish because we are Jews.

The story is told that Rosensweig was well on the path of conversion to Christianity when his attendance at Kol Nidre awakened in him a great responsibility; if he was going to cease being Jewish he had a duty to understand what he was leaving. It was his embrace of this obligation and its implication - that he owed his experiment with Judaism the totality of his being - that gave him the "subtle push" to not accept the foreignness of anything Jewish. As we gather tonight, in person and over the web, it is an opportunity to renew our existential commitment to our people, to be our people, and to prepare for an exciting year of exploration.

Let nothing Jewish be foreign to us.

Gmar Hatima Tova.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE FROM KOL NIDRE 2021

BRIAN KRESGE

The soundtrack for my Days of Awe has recently become the late, great John Prine's final album, "The Tree of Forgiveness," kind of a perfect theme for the Days of Awe. The first song off this album is a wrenching tune called "Summer's End," which button-hooked neatly with Elul's end. The chorus resonates.



"Come on home, come on home, no you don't have to be alone, just come on home."

Family is home. CBI is family. As hopefully the pandemic is winding down, it's time for us to "come on home." We've been making that happen since June. It's not the same as it was. We're missing some faces, some voices. But we're coming home.

And now, for "give us your money," I'd like to talk about what we've done this year, and what we'll do next year to make it "home."

Since March of 2020, it's been a difficult time for leadership in this congregation. We've had some hard decisions, some personnel turnover, but we've done it together.

We've had numerous successes. We launched a new website that we're keeping current and is receiving high marks. Our social media presence is gaining us attention and attendance. Our religious school is attracting new families both to Jewish education and our congregation. Our rabbi had amazing classes that are bring adults back to Judaism, or potentially aiding Jews by Choice in joining the Tribe. We have a newsletter with a consensus that is a good representation of our congregation. We introduced new synagogue software that is saving us money and time. Our treasurer moved our books to a new and excellent system.

We've been at the fore of representing a Jewish voice in issues of the day, from the statue of a racist in front of a courthouse, to supporting Holocaust and African-American studies in the legislature, to taking a firm stand on LGBTQ issues, and yes, our unwavering, unconditional support for Israel, the only Jewish state. We've shaken our fist at anti-Semitism.

Our minyan attendance, when we were online, and from week to week, has been pretty good, too. Our live-stream is finally receiving satisfactory marks from our viewers at home, which on the shoestring budget it lives on, is pretty darn phenomenal.

And the big item: We have an upgraded facility that will serve our congregation for decades to come, and we cannot thank Carol Epstein, her family, and the committed coterie of volunteers from our congregation enough.

So that's what we've done in 5781! What is 5782 going to look like?

Well, the first and biggest is a resumption of our strategic planning. Our team of Dr. Gary Ross, Keith Manaker, Terri Lewis, and Rabbi Siemers have worked with the Executive Committee to commit to a theme this year, "Respecting and Protecting Creation." We know that environmental issues are affecting life and livelihoods in Maine, the United States, and the world. This holistic programming approach our consultants enjoined us to undertake will manifest from the Religious School to adult education, and in our services. We will have an array of exciting guests, lectures, programs, and direct action that show CBI is serious about being relevant and engaged.

That's not all! We'd like to lead from the front by supporting Afghan refugees as new Mainers. We will continue as we always have to support immigrants in the way we were once strangers in this land. We're going to host another successful blood drive. We'll continue our Salvation Army luncheons!

The House Committee in 5781 put together a 5 and 10 year plan for improvements for the original parts of our building. We are already putting these plans into action.

I'd like for all of us to enter 5782 with a renewed commitment to the core ritual functions of our congregation. Nothing demonstrates our commitment to each other more than ensuring our friends have a minyan for yahrzeits, or an audience for a simcha on the bima, whether it's a baby naming or a b'nai mitzvah.

Sometimes there's a sense of inevitability, that one of the generations in this room is "last one to leave, turn out the lights." Well, that's not inevitable. as, we, too, can continue on, especially if we continue to build, self-identify, and promote our role as THE Jewish hub for the Greater Bangor region and beyond, as we have for 133 years. Maybe there won't be as many as there were years ago, but we've got the light on, and they will come, especially if we keep turning the awesome to 11. We do this by being welcoming, expanding our horizons to youth; to interfaith families in ways that may, at times, be uncomfortable to us; by encouraging Jews by Choice, and working with our friends in the other synagogues in Bangor and throughout the state to the maximum extent possible.

And it's not glorious, front-and-center work, but the best thing we can do to future-proof this congregation, in addition to the physical work on our facilities and programming, is continue to grow our endowment. We must update our planned giving and our yearly contributions to ensure we are securing a financial future for this synagogue. When you write your Yom Kippur pledge checks this year, when you fulfill your dues obligations, and when you are looking for opportunities to be generous to Beth Israel, I hope you think of yourselves as builders. You're building our present. You're building our future. You're building a home.

Come on home.

G'mar chatima tova.

CEMETERY WEBSITE NOW AVAILABLE

As a result of the great work by the folks at Sutherland-Weston and obituary detectives, Vicki Darrah, Paula Rolsky and Michael Rolnick, the Board of Beth Israel Cemetery is delighted to announce that its new website is available for review at:

<https://bethisraelcemeteries.com/>

There are almost 1,300 family and friends interred in Congregation Beth Israel sections II, III and IV (N2, N3, N4) Tefferth Israel (TI), Toldos Yitzchok (TY), Ohavi Yisrael (OY) and "The Old Cemetery" (OC) and information for each is recorded on the site.

To find information about any specific person, please click on "Lot Search" and enter the appropriate name. As designed, the name will appear with birth and death dates and the map location. Click on the name (in blue) and a picture of the memorial stone will appear as will and the GPS lot locator.. There is also an "Obituaries" link. which you are encouraged to review.

As you look through the site, please let us know what you think and if you find any information that is inaccurate would you please let Angie in the Congregation office know.

HEBREW SCHOOL

Don't forget, Chevruta Mishpachot is now meeting every Saturday (except for Saturday, Oct. 9th) from 10am-11am. Tuesday sessions will be starting Oct. 5th. Please email Chevruta@CBIsrael.org for more information and for registration information.

Chevruta Mishpachot (sponsored by the JCEA) Let's take a walk in the beautiful fall woods and combine learning parts of Parsha Noach and Lech Lecha! We will "go forth" just as Hashem commanded Abraham and Sarah through family friendly trails and we will build environmentally friendly arks to set sail on the stream. Morah Leah will go over the highlights from both Torah portions throughout the morning so we can connect to the Torah and our environment!

This is another JCEA sponsored Chevruta Mishpachot event so all Jewish families in the Bangor (and beyond) area are invited.

We will meet at 10am on Sunday, Oct. 10th at Papermill Park, Hampden, Maine.

Congregation Beth Israel

SISTERHOOD UPDATE

Welcome to October! The High Holidays are over the leaves are turning color and falling; and, the Sisterhood is into autumn mode.

New merchandise has been ordered for the Gift Shop and Holiday Marketplace.

If all goes as planned, the latter sale event will be on Sunday, November 21.

Covid precautions will be observed.

Merchandise will remain displayed through Chanukah.

In addition, "Latkes to Go" is in the works.

Watch for more info on both events.

Remember that the Gift Shop is available when Angie is in the office.

Tribute Fund donations can be sent to Janie Silver in honor or in memory of family and friends.

Memberships, including Life Memberships, can be obtained by contacting Vicki Darrah or Nanci Miller.

Stay well, stay safe, and enjoy Maine in its glorious season!

SAVE THE DATE

Chanukah Marketplace
November 21st 10A.M.-3P.M. Stayed
tuned for more information.

YOM KIPPUR PLEDGE CARDS

By now, you all should have received Yom Kippur pledge cards in the mail. For those of you who attended High Holiday services in person this year, we were unable to place Yom Kippur pledge cards on the seats in the Epstein Room. Many of you attended services via zoom or social media. Therefore, we have sent everyone a Yom Kippur pledge card in the mail.

Please write your name on the card before sending it back so that we can properly apply the pledge to your account and acknowledge your donation when received. If you prefer to send in your donation now, please enclose a check in the stamped envelope provided.

OCTOBER 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 Light Candles 5:57 PM	2 Shabbat ends 6:57 PM
3	4	5	6	7	8 Light Candles 5:44 PM	9 Shabbat ends 6:44 PM
10 Religious School Papermill Park @Hampden 10am	11 Executive Com- mittee Meeting 6:30pm	12	13	14	15 Light Candles 5:32 PM	16 Shabbat ends 6:32 PM
17	18 Board of Direc- tors 6:30pm	19	20	21	22 Light Candles 5:20 PM	23 Shabbat ends 6:21 PM
24 31	25	26	27	28	29 Light Candles 5:10 PM	30 Shabbat ends 6:11 PM

DONATIONS

GENERAL FUND DONATION

In honor of Larry & Rachel Shiro's 65 Wedding Anniversary

From Mark Kallick & David Moore

In honor of the marriage of the daughter & son-in-law of David & Grace Stern

From Mark Kallick & David Moore

In memory of Rita Baron

From Carol Lipton

In memory of Charlotte Broder

From Sherry Broder

In memory of David, Mildreth, and Scott Rapaport

From Patti Rapaport

YAHREZIT FUND

In memory of Hannah Nachum & Martin Nachum

From Lawrence & Rachel Schiro

In memory of Abe Miller

From Stephen & Ellen Miller

In memory of Florence Slott

From Kathy Slott

In memory of Ruth Butler

From Alan & Adrienne Butler

In memory of Bertha Dennis

From Ronald & Rose-Marie Dennis

DISCRETIONARY FUND

In memory of Rosalind Blumenthal

From Nathaniel Rosenblatt

In memory of Renee Newcomb

From Fay Rubin

In memory of Barbara Peters

From David Peters

In memory of Renee Rubin

From Barbara Rubin

In memory of Carol Rosenblatt

From Nathaniel Rosenblatt

In memory of John Darrah

From Alan & Vicki Darrah

In memory of Sam Rolsky, Mary Adelman, Morris Emple

From Paula Adelman

In memory of Ruth & Maurice Schwarcz

From Arthur Schwarcz

BOOK FUND

Nanci Miller

ALIYAH FUND

For Billy Miller Shabbat weekend

From Robert & Judith Miller



REDEDICATION OF THE EPSTEIN ROOM

Out of concern over COVID-19, the special kiddush to honor Carol Epstein and her family was postponed. In the meantime, we collected donations to recognize the Epstein Family with a new stone on our Tree of Life.

DONORS

Berney & Cynthia Kubetz
Miles & Sharon Theeman
Billy Miller
Leonard Minsky
Art Schwarcz
Sue & Arnold Garson
Paula Adelman
John Miller
Vicki & Alan Darrah
Eleanor Chason
Penny Lamhut & Alan Wiseman

Brian & Leah Kresge
Don & Terri Lewis
Norman Minsky
Nori & Douglas Kazdoy
Steven Mogul
Nathaniel Rosenblatt
Jay Smith
Kathy Slott
Keith Manaker

OCTOBER Yahrzeits

TISHRI 5782

Name	Date	Hebrew Date
Ruth Berman	October 1	25 Tishri
Lawrence Emple	October 1	25 Tishri
Avraham Kopel	October 1	25 Tishri
Florence Lieberman	October 1	25 Tishri
Alan Shiro	October 1	25 Tishri
Doris Braveman	October 2	26 Tishri
Jack Kaplan	October 2	26 Tishri
Katherine Carver	October 3	27 Tishri
Jennie Rubin	October 3	27 Tishri
Mildred Williams	October 3	27 Tishri
Anna Abrahams	October 4	28 Tishri
Sam Rolsky	October 4	28 Tishri
Max Maltz	October 5	29 Tishri
Ida Plesset	October 5	29 Tishri
Eleanor Zaichick	October 5	29 Tishri
Alan Kelsey	October 6	30 Tishri
Shirley Saffer	October 6	30 Tishri
Nate Smith	October 6	30 Tishri

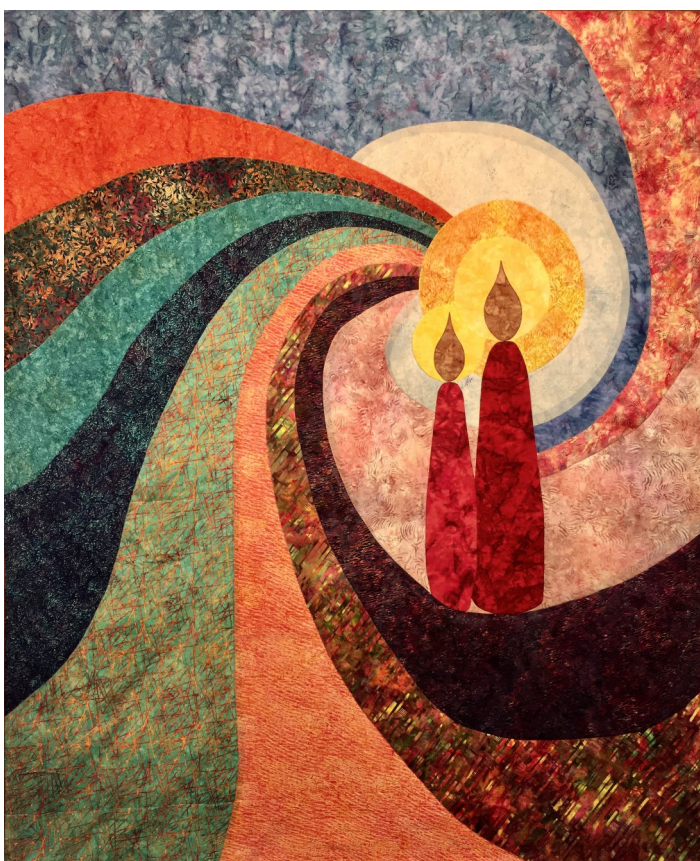
CHESHVAN 5782

Name	Date	Hebrew Date
Max Kominsky	October 7	1 Cheshvan
Bernard Rosenblatt	October 7	1 Cheshvan
Isadore Solomon	October 7	1 Cheshvan
Rose Bernstein	October 8	2 Cheshvan
Bertha Greenfield	October 8	2 Cheshvan
Abraham Brown	October 9	3 Cheshvan
Diane Emple	October 9	3 Cheshvan
Benjamin Leavitt	October 9	3 Cheshvan
George Lipsky	October 9	3 Cheshvan
Randie Lamson	October 10	4 Cheshvan
Samuel Lipsky	October 10	4 Cheshvan
Libby Strauss	October 10	4 Cheshvan
Fanny Brown	October 11	5 Cheshvan
Robert Cohen	October 11	5 Cheshvan
Benjamin Goodstein	October 11	5 Cheshvan
Tibby Viner	October 11	5 Cheshvan
Gertrude Hartson	October 13	7 Cheshvan
Toby Kaufman	October 13	7 Cheshvan
Edna Rapaport	October 13	7 Cheshvan
Goldie Ames	October 14	8 Cheshvan
Hilda Gotlib	October 14	8 Cheshvan
Samuel Finn	October 15	9 Cheshvan
Lena Friedman	October 15	9 Cheshvan

Louis Goldsmith	October 15	9 Cheshvan
Jules Levine	October 16	10 Cheshvan
Lillian Cummings	October 17	11 Cheshvan
Jay Dennis	October 17	11 Cheshvan
Isadore Alpert	October 18	12 Cheshvan
Sarah Fogelman	October 18	12 Cheshvan
David Melnick	October 18	12 Cheshvan
Edward Morris	October 18	12 Cheshvan
Harold Morris	October 18	12 Cheshvan
Anna Karp	October 19	13 Cheshvan
Gerald Pollak	October 19	13 Cheshvan
Bernard Cohen	October 20	14 Cheshvan
Samuel Emple	October 20	14 Cheshvan
Tibie Kapelow	October 20	14 Cheshvan
Evelyn Trozky	October 20	14 Cheshvan
Carla Cohen	October 21	15 Cheshvan
Eugene Cummings	October 21	15 Cheshvan
Connie Darrah	October 21	15 Cheshvan
Jason Stern	October 21	15 Cheshvan
Joseph Abrams	October 22	16 Cheshvan
Jacob Berson	October 22	16 Cheshvan
Pauline Burstein	October 22	16 Cheshvan
George Cohen	October 22	16 Cheshvan
Julia Epstein	October 22	16 Cheshvan
Bella Goldman	October 23	17 Cheshvan
Ruth Striar	October 23	17 Cheshvan
Julius Byer	October 24	18 Cheshvan
Mae Minsky	October 24	18 Cheshvan
Abraham Silver	October 24	18 Cheshvan
Helen Egan	October 25	19 Cheshvan
Ida Goldsmith	October 25	19 Cheshvan
Sam Rosen	October 25	19 Cheshvan
Paula Kagen	October 26	20 Cheshvan
Helen Kamber	October 26	20 Cheshvan
Ethel Schiro	October 26	20 Cheshvan
Mordecai Shapiro	October 28	22 Cheshvan
David Schonberger	October 28	22 Cheshvan
Isabelle Davidson	October 29	23 Cheshvan
Rifka Mendelson	October 29	23 Cheshvan
Stephen Striar	October 29	23 Cheshvan
Charles Share	October 30	24 Cheshvan
Sima Lapidot	October 31	25 Cheshvan
Arnold Liver	October 31	25 Cheshvan
Hana Scnhur	October 31	25 Cheshvan

OCTOBER YAHZRZETS (CONT)

Name	Date	Hebrew Date
Molly Stern	October 31	25 Cheshvan
Max Kagan	November 1	26 Cheshvan
Merle Segal	November 1	26 Cheshvan
Jennie Shafmaster	November 1	26 Cheshvan
Evelyn Segal	November 1	26 Cheshvan
Richard Libby	November 3	28 Cheshvan
Nadejda Chizh	November 4	29 Cheshvan
George Ginsberg	November 4	29 Cheshvan
Fay Goodman	November 4	29 Cheshvan
Barney Silver	November 4	29 Cheshvan



NEW FOYER TAPESTRY

If you happen to step into our original sanctuary foyer, you'll see a beautiful tapestry hanging on the wall to the left as you look at the sanctuary. Dr. Penny Lamhut made this new ornament and placed it with the help of the House Committee.

The tapestry is based on artwork created by Karin Foreman, a Santa Rosa Valley-based freelance artist.



HIGH HOLIDAY GRATITUDE

Alex and Barbara Wilde graciously provided the flower arrangements for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The congregation found that the arrangements heightened the experience.

The Bangor Police Department provided a number of officers during their shifts for the services that drew the largest number of attendees. With our Jewish institutions under increasing threat, the presence of our uniformed men and women in blue was very reassuring this year.

The Bangor Public Works Department provided barriers to shut down our section of York Street. For older congregants, this used to be a common occurrence. With the new security paradigm, it's wonderful to have cooperative partners in our city government.

Gabbaim do a lot of the work on our regular services, let alone the High Holidays. Our cadre, including Billy Miller, Kathy Slott, Nat Rosenblatt, and Nori Kazdoy were enormously flexible. Additionally, our extra Torah readers and haftarah readers did a magnificent job.

Rabbi Siemers hit it out of the park with his sermons this year; his Kol Nidre sermon is reprinted in this issue.

Ritual Committee made a lot of last-minute decisions as specific COVID issues came around. Their flexibility and ability to adapt to new circumstances is greatly appreciated.

All of You! Attendance of our in-person services and our streaming services showed that our High Holidays engaged you, our members and friends. We couldn't do anything we do without you.

A MIDRASH ON THE COVENANT AT SINAI

CONGREGANT SUBMISSION BY ARNOLD BERLEANT

What makes the Jewish people universally significant is our tradition, repeatedly affirmed in the Torah, of God-given moral responsibilities. Monotheism, the acceptance of exclusively one deity, (always so difficult for people to accommodate) is the key because it sets up a single standard, a moral law, and universal responsibility. It has been central to our survival as a people, and I am convinced that it is the moral and practical imperative essential today for the survival of human civilization and the human species, itself, in the precarious future that we now confront.

This midrash is based on the covenant between God and the people of Israel at Mount Sinai after Moses ascends the mountain alone and brings down the Tablets of the Law. God declares, through Moses, the conditions of a covenant with the Israelites: that they shall be His people and God their only God, whose commandments they will obey. Foremost among the commandments and the mitzvot in the Hebrew Bible are injunctions to treat people honestly and fairly, to do justice, to care for the widow, the orphan, the sick, and the elderly, and to give hospitality and treat the stranger fairly. The ancient Israelites agreed to this covenant and, though with occasional backsliding, have survived as a people three and a half millennia to the present day. There is, then, one God whose law is supreme, a God of love and justice, and a holy people who are obligated to obey that God by acting humanely in order to endure as a people. It is a view aptly described as ethical monotheism.

We live in a time of constant, world-endangering conflict, conflict between individuals, groups, religions, nations, and ideologies. These conflicts are not just local but have international entanglements, and they occur in the shadow of constantly spreading nuclear armaments and political instability. Moreover, such conflicts are taking place in a world harried by a global epidemic and by climate change that engulfs the entire planet.

In this midrash, God is a metaphor for the Good. Good is the supreme value, single and unique, the moral law that enjoins us to help, sustain, and be concerned for the well-being of all humans. Now philosophers and theologians cannot *prove* the injunction to pursue such a good or any other highest value. They can only affirm it. But just as the survival of the Israelites as a people depended on acquiescing in and obeying the covenant by acknowledging their one God as the Supreme Lawgiver, so, too, the survival of humanity rests on accepting a single supreme Good—human well-being—unqualified by nationality, gender, religion, or any conflicting value. For the plain fact is that such conflicts can be overcome, and all humanity can flourish only by universally acquiescing in **the law of human good**, unqualified, and unperturbed. We all must agree together or, in our present condition of nuclear stockpiles, a raging pandemic, the impending exhaustion of the earth's resources, global warming, an all-disclosing global information web, and self-important warring ideologies, we shall all perish together.

The covenant at Sinai was the defining event in Jewish history for the survival of Israel as a people. The world stands today before a virtual Sinai where our very human survival is at stake. This midrash takes this biblical event as a metaphor for the present state of the world, a condition in which the survival of human civilization and the human species, itself, is imperiled. The covenant at Sinai represents the challenge that confronts every group and every nation today. The ancient Israelites agreed to that covenant. Despite frequent backsliding but with the admonitions of their prophets, they returned to its observance and have survived as a people to the present day. This supreme value of human good, for whose pursuit the Jewish people have been castigated under the guise of false epithets and claims, has remained pure over misrepresentation and persecution.

I am convinced that unless humans everywhere recognize the precariousness of our condition at the present time, and unless we acknowledge a universal standard of good, not only will no group, ideology, or nation continue to exist as an entity, but we humans, individually and collectively, will jeopardize our very existence as a species. Like the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, we'll face extinction for pursuing the self-indulgent ethic of individual gratification and in-group privilege, self-interest, and power at the expense of others. Shall we humans of all colors, tongues, and traditions rise to the challenge of universal good?

Congregation Beth Israel
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CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL

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Bernard Miller	Gabbai
Nathaniel Rosenblatt	Gabbai
Kathryn Slott	Gabbai
Nori Kazdoy	Gabbai
Leah Kresge	Director of Youth Education

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OFFICERS OF THE CONGREGATION

Brian Kresge	President
Nori Kazdoy	Vice President
Penny Lamhut	Treasurer
Nanci Miller	Secretary

SERVICE SCHEDULE

Monday, Thursday, Friday - 5:30 p.m. **(Online)**
Saturday - 10:00 a.m.
Sunday - 9:00 a.m. **(Online)**