

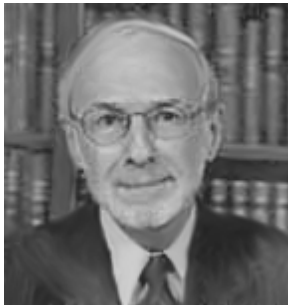


# BETH EL NEWSLETTER

The Heights Synagogue

October 2005

אלול 5765 \ תשרי 5766



Rabbi Moshe Adler

## Learning to Say, "Thank You"

While watching TV coverage of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, we sometimes see survivors giving thanks for their survival, even though their homes and those of many others were destroyed. "At least I'm alive!" "Thank God I found my husband!"

shouldn't a sage and saint of his greatness have grieved for the townspeople? How could he cheerfully say to his students, "See? I survived. Doesn't that tell you that everything God does is for the best"?

The Talmud (B'rachot 60b) quotes a teaching of Rabbi Akiva and illustrates it with an anecdote:

"Let a person always accustom himself to saying, 'Whatever the Merciful One does, He does for the best.'" Rabbi Akiva was once on the road. He came to a certain town and looked for lodgings but was offered none. He said, "Whatever the Merciful One does, He does for the best." He went and spent the night in the open field. He had with him a rooster, a donkey, and a lamp. A gust of wind came and blew out the lamp, a weasel came and ate the rooster, and a lion came and ate the donkey. He said, "Whatever the Merciful One does, He does for the best." That night a gang of robbers came and took the inhabitants of the town captive. He said to [his students], "Didn't I tell you, 'Whatever the Holy One, blessed is He, does is all for the best'?"

Cut to the twentieth century. Around 1969, Arthur Waskow published a new haggadah entitled *The Freedom Seder*, in which – by combining traditional seder texts with contemporary examples of struggles for freedom – he made a major Jewish ritual come alive for youth who sought meaning in their Jewishness but were alienated from Judaism. (In doing this, Waskow opened the door for many kinds of tailor-made haggadot to come, right up to Noam Zion's *A Different Night*.)

On first looking through *The Freedom Seder*, I was impressed. Then I came across a poem written by a sixties "revolutionary" who declared she does not thank God for taking her people out of Egypt because He did not also take every other oppressed group out of its own "Egypt." This poem bothered me, though initially I saw no logical reason for feeling that way. After all, here was a young Jewish woman whose appropriation of her people's Exodus had created for her an emotional bond with other oppressed peoples. And doesn't the Torah command us to love the stranger, on the grounds we know how strangers feel?

*(continued on page 3)*

Rabbi Akiva found his faith in God's benevolence vindicated by his having been spared the fate of the townspeople. But

**From Nili  
and me  
to the entire  
BE-THS  
family:  
L'shanah  
tovah  
tikatevu  
v'tehatemu**

**- May you be  
written down  
for a  
good year.**





**Jack Valancy**

**QUESTIONS?  
CONCERNS?  
COMMENTS?  
COMPLAINTS?**

**As always, please do not hesitate to contact your President by e-mail [president@bethelheights.org](mailto:president@bethelheights.org) or home telephone (216) 371-1439**

**HELP US STAY IN TOUCH! Please be sure we have your current contact information: phone number and home and e-mail addresses. Send changes to Blanche Valancy, [blanche@valancy.com](mailto:blanche@valancy.com) or call her at (216) 371-1439**

**E-Mail Newsletter: If you'd like to get the pdf e-mail version, contact [news@bethelheights.org](mailto:news@bethelheights.org) (You must have the free Acrobat Reader in order to open the attachment.)**

President's Perspectives...

# The Wisdom of the Group

For most of August through the beginning of September, I was immersed in reading and compiling the results of our Member Survey. (So much so, that I submitted this column a few days late. Sorry, Carol!) By the time you read this, we will have had our town hall meeting and brainstorming session to develop solutions to problems identified by our Member Survey. After the High Holy Days, our Board and committees will begin implementing these solutions.

Why bother? Don't we already know what our members want? Aren't we doing what we can to meet their needs? The answer to both questions is "yes and no".

More than half our members returned their surveys, and expressed a wide range of views on a variety of topics. We agree about some things, like our sumptuous Kiddush and our informative newsletter, and disagree about others. Most people included comments about things they like and dislike about our congregation; what we should do more, what we should do less, and what we should do differently. While many comments expressed frequently

discussed views, others thoughtfully articulated less common views. Some members praised, others were quite critical.

Together, we are reconciling our different views. We are not only talking to each other, we are listening to each other. The process takes time, energy, and engagement. We are a congregation that uses the wisdom of the group to accommodate our varying preferences and tolerances, likes and dislikes.

Together, we are building and improving a home for worship, learning, and community that will continue to be an attractive option for the Cleveland Jewish community.

I will keep you informed of our progress through this column. Members will also receive periodic letters from me describing our work together.

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Blanche, Zev, and I wish everyone in the Beth El – The Heights Synagogue community a new year filled with good health, peace, and love. L'shana tova!



## Mailing Help Is Greatly Appreciated

Blanch Valancy thanks Gerson and Kimberly Carr, who were the entire mailing crew for the September newsletter. Blanche asks that anyone who is interested in helping with this task – and you need not be available every month, occasionally is just fine – please contact her directly at <[blanche@valancy.com](mailto:blanche@valancy.com)> or 216-371-1439. Yes, it's a chore that needs to be done, but it is also a time to schmoose and become better acquainted with other members.

(*Learning to Say, "Thank You," continued from page 1*) Then it struck me: it was the sentiment, "I don't thank God for taking us out of slavery." Such bagel-and-lox existentialism is reminiscent of the Miami Jewish woman who sees her little grandson swept out to sea by a wave, cries out to God for justice, sees the little boy miraculously swept back to shore by a second wave, picks him up, and shouts at God, "He had a hat!"

When someone liberates you from slavery, you thank him. If that someone is God, you will probably want to supplement your thanks with a prayer for other enslaved people as well. Such a prayer would indicate that your experience of slavery and liberation has sensitized you to the needs of other people. But first you give thanks for what God has done for you.

When Rabbi Akiva used his deliverance from captivity as a way of teaching his students that God is benevolent, he was not ignoring the suffering of those who had been taken captive. He was thanking God for the favor he had received, and teaching his students to do likewise.

Rabbi Akiva was acting on good precedent. When

Jacob prayed for God to save him from the wrath of his brother Esau, he said, "I am unworthy of all the kindness that You have so steadfastly shown Your servant" (Genesis 32.11). When Moses told the Israelites of how he had asked God to let him enter the promised land, he said, "*Va-et'hanan*, I pleaded for grace" (Deuteronomy 3.23), on which word Rashi comments, "Although the righteous can base their case on their good deeds, they ask God to grant their petition as a free gift."

Someone who has recovered from a serious illness or returned from a potentially dangerous journey is called to Torah and says the blessing *ha-gomel*: "Blessed are You...who do acts of kindness for those in Your debt – who have done me every kindness." We are always in God's debt, though out of His love for us He rarely collects and often forgives.

We pray that God, in His grace, may heal the hurts of the storm victims and of the Gaza evacuees and help them rebuild their lives. May God grant us a new year in which there are peace and prosperity here, in Israel, and the world over.



## MALTZ MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE TO OPEN OCTOBER 11, 2005

Northeast Ohio is already renowned for its many landmark institutions – the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, the Cleveland Museum of Art, Playhouse Square. On October 11, 2005, a unique new cultural center will debut – the **Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage**.

Developed by the same team behind the International Spy Museum in Washington, D.C., the Maltz Museum will illuminate the achievements, history and traditions of the Jewish community through stunning state-of-the-art exhibitions. Compelling personal stories and oral histories will be brought to life through original films, computer interactives, special effects and dramatic exhibitions.

Visitors to the Museum will be immersed in the sites, sounds and rhythms of history. The rich and layered

experience will include opportunities at every step for all ethnicities and ages to learn about the similarities between the experiences of their ancestors and Jewish immigrants, enabling them to better understand their own personal history.

The Maltz Museum is located in Beachwood, Ohio, a few miles from Interstate 271 and less than 30 minutes from downtown Cleveland.

For more information about the Maltz Museum, or to set up a time to speak with the Museum's executive director, please contact me at 216.696.1686 x 4418 or [hfisher@landaupr.com](mailto:hfisher@landaupr.com). More information about the Museum is available at <http://www.MaltzJewishMuseum.org> <<http://pull.xmr3.com/p/29-D3E8/27193952/http-www.maltzjewishmuseum.org-.html>>



# Beth El - The Heights Synagogue Wins Community Improvement Award!

## Beth El - The Heights Synagogue Wins Community Improvement Award

The City of Cleveland Heights recently lauded our front entrance renovation with a Community Improvement Award. The award, now in its 30<sup>th</sup> year, recognizes individual and collective efforts to improve the city's physical environment and preserve its excellence. The Community Improvement Awards Committee selects properties that are of aesthetic, social or economic benefit to their neighborhoods, in order to encourage others to upgrade their properties. A panel of touring judges selected the synagogue as a winner in the Renovation category.

An awards ceremony was held in the City Hall atrium on Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup>. Russell Berusch accepted the award on behalf of the congregation, and expressed our thanks. Photos of all the winning properties will be posted in the City Hall atrium through October. In addition, the winners will be featured in the next edition of the city magazine, Focus. Also watch for coverage on the community access television cable channel.

Our synagogue's renovation has been part of the neighborhood's overall renaissance, including the completion of Phase II of the Euclid Heights Blvd. townhomes. "We are honored to receive this Community Improvement Award," said President Valancy. "And we are pleased to play a role as an institutional anchor in the neighborhood."

Diana Woodbridge, Chair of the CIA Committee, described our building's renovation as "...phenomenal...it blends with the neighborhood and looks like it was always there..."



*Joe Buchwald-Gelles, Marty Gelfand, Ditte Wolin, Russell Berusch, and Marvin Palevsky with the award presented by Mayor Kelley at City Hall*

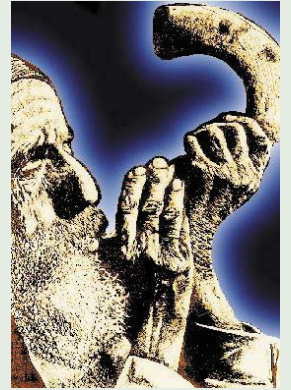
# Why Hesed? Why Not Tzedaka?

Why don't we have a Tzedaka committee? What's the difference between Hesed and Tzedaka? In the Talmud (Sukkot 49b) it states: Our Rabbis taught: Gemilut Hesed is greater than tzedaka in three ways. Tzedaka is done with one's money, while hesed may be done with one's money or with one's person (e.g. spending time with a sick person). Tzedaka is given only to the poor, while hesed may be given to the poor and to the rich (e.g. consoling a mourner). Tzedaka is given only to the living, while hesed may be shown to the living and the dead (eg. arranging a proper burial for a person who died indigent).

Because of all those who wanted to come to the September Hesed committee meeting and couldn't we will schedule one

additional meeting this fall. Please contact Cheryl Birkner Mack for details. And please remember to let Cheryl know of anyone in need of our help because of illness, a change in employment, an upcoming move or any other reason.

Cheryl Birkner Mack  
Chair of the Hesed Committee  
[cbm55@juno.com](mailto:cbm55@juno.com) or 216-932-2579



## Thanks for Donations to: תודה!

- Irving and Enid Kushner, for the donation of art work.
- Laura and Marty Rabinowitx, for the donation of perennial plants for the synagogue's landscaping.

“Some one ought to do it, but why should I?” –



## October Yahrzeits

### OCTOBER 1 TO OCTOBER 7 27 ELUL TO 4 TISHRI

Albert Weinstein 2 Tishrei 5730  
Sara Weinstein 3 Tishrei 5726

### OCTOBER 8 TO OCTOBER 14 5 TISHRI TO 11 TISHRI

Eric Falck 5 Tishrei 5758  
Elias Greenhut 7 Tishrei 5718  
Carl Wasserman 7 Tishrei 5720  
Blossom Levit 9 Tishrei 5721  
Marcella Wachter 10 Tishrei

### OCTOBER 15 TO OCTOBER 21 12 TISHRI TO 18 TISHRI

Harry Abrams 12 Tishrei 5716  
Irene Cowan 15 Tishrei 5732  
Harry Dolusky 15 Tishrei 5694

### OCTOBER 22 TO OCTOBER 28 19 TISHRI TO 25 TISHRI

Carola Jacobs 19 Tishrei  
Bertha Shifrin 21 Tishrei 5721  
Pearl Peninah Pasternak 22 Tishrei  
Herbert Oppenheimer 22 Tishrei  
Isaac Warshay 22 Tishrei  
Lenore Singer 23 Tishrei 5760  
Blema Beitman 24 Tishrei 5706  
Eva Naiman 24 Tishrei 5713

### OCTOBER 29 TO NOVEMBER 4 26 TISHRI TO 2 CHESHVAN

Freida C. Brody 26 Tishrei 5701  
Leo Guzik 26 Tishrei 5735  
Mirmie Ginsburg 27 Tishrei 5734  
Henry A. Hollander 28 Tishrei 5725  
Mary Ann Gordon 29 Tishrei 5731  
Ethel Neuger 29 Tishrei 5734  
Sam Tepper 29 Tishrei 5703  
Sam Dworkin 30 Tishrei 5732  
Marvin Dubin 30 Tishrei  
Ben Tepper 2 Heshvan 5718

“Some one ought to do it, so why not I?”  
Between these two sentences lie whole centuries of moral evolution.

Annie Besant



# NEWS FROM BETH EL

# חדשות

## Kol Ha Kavod to:

כל הכבוד!

- Aliza Mack who recently donated 12 inches of her hair to “Locks for Love” a program which uses donated hair to make wigs for children undergoing chemotherapy, etc.

## Refuah Sh’lema to:

רפואה שלימה!

- Stephanie Gordon

## Thanks for Contributions to:

תודה!

- Nili Adler, in memory of her mother, Nehama Shultz-Shalit Z”L, who was born on Shabbat Nahamu.
- Carol and Howard Berusch, in honor of the 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. David Meyer.
- Carol and Howard Berusch, in honor of Mr. Robert Kwaitz’s 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- Russell and Lisa Berusch
- Henry Bloom and Marilyn Malkin, in memory of Robert Gooch Z”L.
- Clara Dick, in appreciation of Rabbi Moshe and Nili Adler.
- Louis Gray
- David Kazdan and Laura Gooch Philanthropic Fund of the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland
- Andre and Victoria Kelberg, with prayers for the recovery of Nicole Rann
- Merav Kimmelman
- The Wachter family, in memory of Robert Gooch Z”L.
- Marsha Weisberg
- Anonymous, to the Adult Education Fund.

## Thanks for Kiddush sponsorship to:

תודה!

- Bill and Carol Bruml, who sponsored dessert after Kabbalat Shabbat services on September 2, in celebration of Bill’s job at Laurel School.

## Thanks for your help to:

תודה!

- Lisa Berush for leading Kabbalat Shabbat Services on September 2.
- Beth and Scott Wachter, Karen Kugelman, Marsha Weisberg, and Abby and Jeff Halpern for facilitating our Labor Day minyan, which included a Rosh Hodesh service and was followed by a light breakfast. **Yasher Koah** to Maia Wachter, who sounded the shofar at the conclusion of the service.
- Joe and Mia Buchwald Gelles, Frank and Jeanette Buchwald, the Bloomfield family, Peggy Sullivan (and children), and Janet Korb (a Schechter parent), who prepared countless dozens of vegetarian egg rolls for sale at the Beth El – The Heights Synagogue’s booth at the Schechter Rib Burn-off, and to Karen Kugelman, Abby and Jeff Halpern, Marsha Weisberg and her sister, and to Rabbi Moshe and Nili Adler, who staffed the booth on Labor Day.
- Merry Lugasy and Lisa Berush for organizing the first Three-Paring session on September 7. Merry made vegetarian kreplach, and says that she, Marvin Palevsky, Cheryl Birkner Mack and Shelley Birkner had a nice discussion on tshuva, while they ate them.
- Merry Lugasy for help with the annual congregational picnic at Forsest Hills Park on September 11.

## Noah Natan Schmitt

## Will Become Bar Mitzvah

Noah Natan Schmitt will become Bar Mitzvah on October 15, 2005. Noah is a seventh grade honor student at Brady Middle School in Orange. He enjoys music, especially rock and roll, and is studying the guitar. He also plays cello. In fact, for his mitzvah project, he performed on the cello for residents of Montefiore. At Camp Ramah, Noah was known to his friends as “DJ Schmitt” for his role as radio host. He has a great sense of humor, and a funky fashion sense.

Noah is, by nature, theatrical. Other interests include cooking and playing football. Noah attends Cleveland Hebrew Schools, from which he will graduate this spring. He lives with his two brothers, Levi and Gabriel, his parents, and his dog, Cookie.



# Welcome, to New and Returning Members

**Abigail Halpern** is a New Member. Abigail Halpern graduated last May from Columbia University with a degree in Art History/Visual Arts and from the Jewish Theological Seminary with a degree in Jewish Art and Visual Culture. She is originally from Cincinnati. In July, her marriage to Jeffrey Halpern brought her to Cleveland and Beth El—the Heights Synagogue.

Abby was recently hired to teach ESL (English as a Second Language) to five Israeli students at the Agnon School. She also teaches religious school at Temple Emanuel and Bethaynu. She enjoys Israeli dancing at the JCC on Wednesday nights, painting, drawing, and going to museums.

Abby loves Beth El because of its participatory and friendly atmosphere. You can hear her beautiful voice reading Torah almost any week she is in town.

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Welcome to new member, **Sue Wolpert**, who recently joined Beth El - The Heights Synagogue as an associate member. The importance of having a traditional/egalitarian synagogue where women participate fully and men and women participate together spurred her to join us. She is also a member of Kol Halev, the Reconstructionist Community. Sue is a Spiritual Director; she works with people interested in opening their personal relationship to the Divine. She and her husband, Raymond Lesser, also publish *The Funny Times*. When she describes herself, she says it is the place where left politics and spirituality meet.

Sue is looking forward to getting to know people in the Beth El community. We welcome her.

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Welcome back, Judy! **Judy Bergmann** was invited to Temple Beth El services, by Marv and Ieda Warshay, and became a member just before Temple Beth El sold its building. She enjoyed the services and she has been with us through the merger, the Mayfield JCC, and now in our own Beth El – The Heights Synagogue home. She is a vital member of the Short Stories by Jewish Authors Discussion Group.

Judy worked as a social worker at several of the local hospitals, including Mount Sinai pediatric and psychiatry departments, University Hospitals, Euclid General and the Veterans' Administration Hospital in Brecksville. In between it all, she took 5 years off to raise her young family

Judy has four daughters, who are literally spread across the northern tier of the United States: Katonah, New York; Skokie, Illinois; Topeka, Kansas; and Seattle, Washington. So when we don't see her at services, she's probably traipsing across the country visiting some of her eight grandchildren, five girls and three boys.

Judy tried retiring in Florida, but with all her friends and family back in Ohio she returned to the Cleveland area. Besides, the weather and the synagogue are much more to her liking.



# CALENDAR, OCTOBER 2005

אלול 5765 \ תשרי 5766

- Sunday, September 25, 10:30 AM – **Town Hall meeting** and brunch. Baby-sitting provided. See President's Perspectives, page 2 (and letters sent to members' homes), for further details. Come and give your input!
- Monday, October 3, 7:00 PM – **Rosh Hashanah** evening services ערב ראש השנה
- Tuesday, October 4, 8:00 AM – **Rosh Hashanah** morning services ראש השנה  
7:00 PM – **Rosh Hashanah** Evening services
- Wednesday, October 5, 8:00 AM – **Rosh Hashanah** morning services ראש השנה
- Friday, October 7, 6:30 PM – **Kabbalat Shabbat** services, followed by a brief kiddush. קבלת שבת
- Sunday, October 9, 7:00 to 8:30 PM – Short Stories by Jewish Authors discussion group will meet to discuss stories by Sholem Asch. See below for details.
- Tuesday, October 11 – **Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage** opens to the public.  
Further information at [www.MaltzJewishMuseum.org](http://www.MaltzJewishMuseum.org).
- Wednesday, October 12, 6:30 PM – **Yom Kippur, Kol Nidre** services יום כפור, כול נדרי  
Drop-in childcare available, free, 6:30 to 9:30 PM.
- Thursday, October 13 – **Yom Kippur** יום כפור  
8:00 AM – **Morning services with Yizkor** יזכור  
4:30 PM – **Afternoon services, Minchah and N'ilah**  
Approximately 7:45 PM, the **shofar** will be blown to signal the end of Yom Kippur. This will be followed by Ma'ariv, Havdalah, and a light congregational break-fast
- Saturday, October 15 – **Noah Schmitt will become Bar Mitzvah**. His parents, Bill and Ilana Schmitt, invite the congregation to luncheon following services.
- Sunday, October 16, time TBA – Help build and decorate our sukkah.
- Tuesday and Wednesday, October 18 and 19, 9:15 AM – **Sukkot** morning services סוכות
- Sunday, October 23, Time and Locations TBA – **Annual Sukkah Hop**
- Tuesday, October 25  
9:15 AM – **Shemini Atzeret** morning services with Yizkor שמיני עצרת  
7:15 PM – **Simhat Torah / hakafot** שמחת תורה \ הקפות
- Wednesday, October 26, 9:15 AM – **Simhat Torah / hakafot**, morning service שמחת תורה \ הקפות
- Saturday, November 19, 9:00 PM – **Matisyahu** will perform Hassidic Reggae at the Odeon Theater  
[http://www.hasidicreggae.com/index.php?section=news&album\\_id=10](http://www.hasidicreggae.com/index.php?section=news&album_id=10)

All services held in our fully accessible building at 3246 Desota Avenue, Cleveland Heights  
(Parking available on the street, or in nearby Boulevard Elementary School lot)  
For more information, call Beth El – The Heights Synagogue at 216-320-9667

## Short Stories by Jewish Authors Miniseries to Resume

On Sunday, October 9, 7:00--8:30 p.m., the Short Stories by Jewish Authors Reading/Discussion Group will discuss four stories by Sholem Asch:

“A Divorce” – from the collection, *Tales of My People*.  
“The Mother’s Reward,” “The Rebel,” and “His Second Love” – from *Children of Abraham*.

If you would like to participate in this group at 1481 Blackmore Road in Cleveland Heights, please read at least three of the four stories and RSVP to Sondra Jacobs, 216-397-1481 or [sondrajacobs@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sondrajacobs@sbcglobal.net). The books are available at the libraries but if you prefer to have xerox copies, they can be provided for a small fee. Other possible authors, whose works may be discussed this year include Philip Roth, Saul Bellow, and Steve Stone.