



BETH EL

The Heights Synagogue

NEWSLETTER

May 2010

אייר \ סיון 5770



Rabbi Moshe Adler

You Were There

As we prepare to celebrate Shavuot, the festival of the Giving of the Torah, we recall Moses' words to the Israelites (Deuteronomy 4.9-10):

But take utmost care and watch yourselves scrupulously, so that you do not forget the things that you saw with your own eyes and so that they do not fade from your mind as long as you live. Make them known to your children and to your children's children: The day you stood before HaShem your God at Horeb [Sinai], when HaShem said to me, "Gather the people to Me that I may let them hear My words."

Had the words of the Torah come to us from Moses alone, then although his prophecy was authenticated by signs and wonders, were a prophet or a dream-diviner to arise among us and command us to act in a manner contrary to the Torah, and produce a sign or wonder to authenticate his words, a doubt about the Torah would arise in people's hearts. However, since the Torah reached us directly from its divine Source, with our own eyes and ears perceiving the event and no intermediary reporting it to us, we can give the lie to anyone who would cast doubt on it.

In his Torah commentary, Nachmanides classifies this passage as a positive commandment, a "thou shalt," in which we are told:

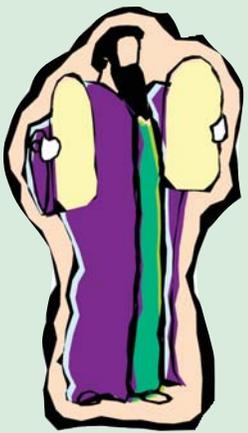
Make sure you remember from where these commandments came to you. Do not forget the Standing at Sinai, where you yourselves saw and heard the lightning and thunder, and experienced His glory and greatness, and His words which you heard from within the fire. Make known to your children and your children's children forever all the things you saw at that glorious Standing.

The Standing at Sinai, and our collective memory of it, are what give the Torah its claim on our loyalty. We were there, we personally received the divine teaching, and we therefore know that no one – neither a miracle worker nor the bearer of a supposedly new and improved Torah – can ever undermine its authority. Just as the memory of the Exodus enables each person to view himself as if he had just left Egypt, the memory of the Sinai event enables each person to view himself as if he had just received the Torah.

We are bidden to perpetuate not only the Torah itself, but also the memory of the Sinai event. Nachmanides explains why:

For Judaism, belief in the One God is intimately bound up with belief in His Torah. "You have been shown to know,"

(continued on page 3)



Shavuot
May 18-20
 ו' - ז' סיון
מועדים
לשמחה

Beth El - The Heights Synagogue builds vibrant Jewish community.

We welcome all in participatory, traditional, egalitarian worship and learning.



Jack Valancy

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

Please do not hesitate to contact President by e-mail president@bethelheights.org or home telephone (216) 371-1439

HELP US

STAY IN TOUCH!

Please be sure we have your current contact information. Send changes to Bela Fischer, info@bethelheights.org or call her at (216) 320-9667

KEEP UP WITH THE NEWS!

JOIN THE

BE-THS LISTS!

Send an e-mail to Leon Adato, communications@bethelheights.org if you need help with signing up.

E-MAIL NEWSLETTER:

If you'd like to get the pdf e-mail version, contact news@bethelheights.org

Why We Have an Elevator

Buying our building was a stretch. We had been worshipping together at the Mayfield JCC since Fall 1998. By 2003, the novelty of being “the shul in a box” was wearing thin. We needed a place of our own.

We practiced welcoming all from our earliest days. Though our operating budget was tight, we found money to enable a member’s developmentally disabled child to receive a Jewish education. We are committed to one another.

As we planned our purchase of the building, we decided to install an elevator or other Shabbat-compliant lift to enable us to welcome those unable to climb the stairs. We also considered whether to repair or replace a Greek revival style structure grafted on to a Gothic style main building. The steep stairs were crumbling, and the paint on the portico was peeling. This “front entrance” had not been used for years. Though it cost more, we chose to build a new, accessible main entrance that included an elevator. We chose to welcome all.

Fundraising was challenging, and our members and friends responded generously. (Their names are on the leaves of the tree mural outside our sanctuary’s main entrance.) Yet, as our construction deadline approached, we were short by approximately the cost of the elevator. At the eleventh hour, we received a major grant from the Cornelia Schnurmann Foundation that enabled us to meet our budget.

The elevator we chose was a new design that cost less, and required less room, than conventional models. Unfortunately, the design was so new that it took a while to

get the elevator operating, and it frequently needed repairs.

Our elevator brought happiness when our new, accessible main entrance opened in June 2005. Each Shabbat, members and friends unable to climb the stairs to our sanctuary and social hall joined us in worship and learning. We welcomed them at services and education programs for the next two years.

The heavy storms that tore through Cleveland on August 7, 2007, severely damaged our synagogue. Falling branches ripped 18 holes in the flat roof above our sanctuary reading table. Water damaged our ceiling, walls, and carpeting. A light fixture fell. The elevator shaft flooded, and water damaged the elevator.

Negotiating our insurance settlement was challenging. We corrected drainage issues in the elevator shaft, but we did not receive the full amount needed to repair our elevator. Early this year, the elevator company contacted us with good news: Most of the repairs would now be covered by warranty, and our maintenance agreement would cost less, too.

Our elevator may be running by the time you read this. After close to three years, we will be able to welcome members and friends who have been kept away by our synagogue’s stairs. We have missed their good company in worship and learning. We are dedicated to our founding principle of welcoming all. We have overcome challenges and benefited from good fortune. We give our time, talent, and money to our vibrant Jewish community. We have an elevator because this is who we are.

(You Were There, continued from page 1)

says Moses (Deuteronomy 4.35-36), “that HaShem alone is God; there is none beside Him.” How have you been shown to know this? “From the heavens He let you hear His voice to train you; on earth He let you see His great fire; and from amidst that fire you heard His words.” It was when He gave us His Torah that we met HaShem face to face, and so we can settle for no other god and no other Torah.

How did the revelation occur, and how was its content transmitted over time? Our Sages, of blessed memory, entertained more than one possible theological model for speaking about such matters, as their disciples have done ever since. No matter how one works out the details, however, it

is not a human cultural artifact alone but a divine teaching that we preserve (often at great cost) and from which we draw ever-new inspiration.

On the first night of Shavuot, Jews in Cleveland and around the world will gather for late-night Torah study. This gathering, known as *tikkun leyl shavuot*, is a kind of *sefer* for the mind and soul, when we re-enact the giving of the Torah, just as on Passover we re-enacted the Exodus.

In that spirit, I invite you to Beth El – the Heights Synagogue for a Shavuot night “Sinai reunion.” It’s your Torah.

Hag sameah – happy Shavuot.



We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us.

Marcel Proust

Late-breaking news:

Our elevator has been repaired and is now running once again!

Thanks to: Laura Gooch, Russell Berusch, Ed Small, and Marvin Palevsky.

Lunch and Learn on May 8

Hillel and Shammai

After kiddush on Saturday, May 8, member Alan Lerner will lead a discussion of the ideas of Hillel and Shammai.

Hillel and Shammai are best known for their different approaches to *Halacha*, ideas that continue to be relevant to our time. They were both prominent rabbis in the late Second Temple period, and went on to establish respective academies of *beit* Hillel and *beit* Shammai. This Lunch and Learn will explore the known history of this epic pair and their later academies. We will also begin to understand the implications of how they approached *Halacha*, and why every college campus has an organization named for Hillel, but not Shammai. Lastly, their basic approaches to ethics will be compared and contrasted.

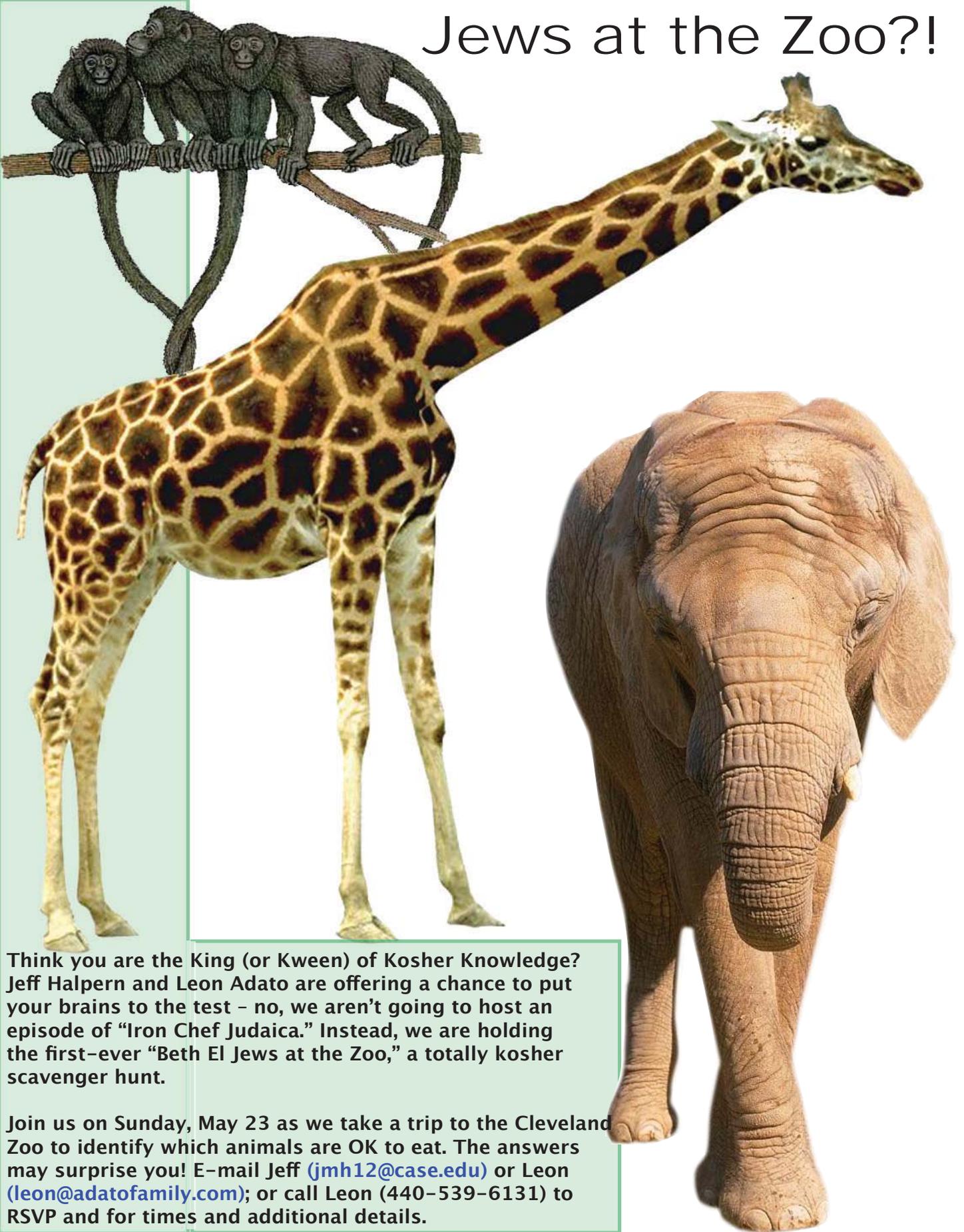


Alan Lerner is a member of Beth El – The Heights Synagogue and has served as Treasurer for the past year.

Alan grew up on Long Island, and attended the Hebrew Academy of Nassau County from K – 12, then went to Touro College for one year. Alan attended Cornell University as an undergraduate, followed by Cornell Medical School. He did his residency at University Hospitals of Cleveland.

Alan is married to Erica New, and has three children, Zachary, Claudia and Noah. He lives in Shaker Heights and is a Professor of Neurology at Case Western Reserve University.

Jews at the Zoo?!



Think you are the King (or Kween) of Kosher Knowledge? Jeff Halpern and Leon Adato are offering a chance to put your brains to the test - no, we aren't going to host an episode of "Iron Chef Judaica." Instead, we are holding the first-ever "Beth El Jews at the Zoo," a totally kosher scavenger hunt.

Join us on Sunday, May 23 as we take a trip to the Cleveland Zoo to identify which animals are OK to eat. The answers may surprise you! E-mail Jeff (jmh12@case.edu) or Leon (leon@adatofamily.com); or call Leon (440-539-6131) to RSVP and for times and additional details.

Members' Annual Meeting

Our Board encourages members of Beth El - The Heights Synagogue to let their voices be heard at our Members' Annual Meeting on Sunday, June 13, 2010:

9:00 AM – Minyan

9:30 AM – Breakfast

10:00 AM – Call to order

Election of Board members. Report and discussion of the past year, our current situation, and our bright road ahead.

Your participation helps each of us along our individual and collective spiritual paths. Please join us on June 13!

The Pasta Palooza

On Sunday night, March 28th, Beth El-The Heights Synagogue held our first ever Pre-Passover Pasta Palooza. The idea was to provide members and friends with a kosher pasta dinner on the night before the first Passover seder and to provide cooks and families alike a respite from Pesach preparations. All who attended appreciated the opportunity to enjoy a delicious meal pre-Pesach without the time involved at a crowded area restaurant. The dinner ran over a two-hour period, and therefore, people could drop in as their schedule – and cooking – permitted. All in all, it seemed that this event was a big success! Everyone savored the wonderful food prepared by our own Marvin Palevsky: pasta with marinara sauce, garlic bread, salad, and brownies for dessert. The meal and the shmoozing were thoroughly enjoyed by all, and we're hoping the Palooza will become an annual event.

Short Stories by Jewish Authors Reading and Discussion Group Growing Up Latino and Jewish

Ilan Stavans' collection of stories in *Tropical Synagogues: Short Stories by Jewish Latin-American Writers* frequently acquaints us with the world-views of youngsters and young adults as they embrace relationships within their families, in their small communities, and in their countries south of the Rio Grande. Jewish immigrants with roots in Eastern Europe created a diverse culture in Latin America over centuries. Some quite serious, some quite fanciful – many of these stories remind the reader that wherever in the world Jews are situated, it is always in a multi-cultural and often hostile society.

This anthology introduces engaging Jewish writers – many of whom are women – from Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Venezuela, Guatemala, and Mexico. Each story is briefly prefaced with information about the author and a referential base for the story, which was certainly helpful to us gringos.

Our Short Stories group will next meet on Sunday, May 2, 7:00 PM. *Benya Krik, the Gangster and Other Stories* by Isaak Babel will be discussed. Contact Sondra Jacobs, 216- 397-1481 or sondrajacobs@sbcglobal.net for additional information.



God always provides what we need, but we must be ready to open our eyes and see it.

The Midrash



Your Turn: Our Members Write

Leon Adato writes about the decision to keep a kosher home.

Preface: Leon and Debbie Adato, along with their ever-enthusiastic family, are in the process of moving to a kosher lifestyle. Leon is, of course, writing all about the experience – which you can read here: <http://goingkosher.wordpress.com/>

I'm not doing this for my health, you know!

As we have spoken to different people – young families who grew up with the practice; single individuals who took it on after they moved out of their family home; people in our situation, where their Jewish Journey has taken them to this spot – it has become clear that everyone has their OWN reasons for keeping kosher. Each reason is significant, meaningful, and most of all, connected to what that person wants out of life.

In other words, it's a selfish decision.

You can't start keeping kosher just to impress your Rabbi (or your buddy, or the cute orthodox guy down the street, or... you get the idea). You probably won't be successful with it if you do it out of some empty sense of obligation to family tradition. You certainly shouldn't consider it if you are bored on a Sunday afternoon and looking for an entertaining hobby.

Like any significant lifestyle choice, the decision to keep kosher (or continue to keep kosher, for those newly out on their own) is a personal one. People choose to keep kosher because it's something they want to do, plain and simple. Their reasons don't even have to make sense to anyone else but them. Because keeping kosher itself doesn't "make sense" in the traditional meaning of that phrase.

Kashrut, I'm sorry to say, is not – and never was – a logical decision. You see, Judaism recognizes two kinds of mitzvot (commandments) in Torah:

- *Mishpatim* are rules that make sense. "Don't Steal", "Don't leave your animal around people if you know it is violent", and "don't dig a ditch if someone is likely to fall

into it" are all good examples of *mishpatim* (and they actually are found in the Torah portion of the same name <<http://www.jtsa.edu/PreBuilt/ParashahArchives/jpstext/mishpatim.shtml>>).

- *Chukim* are laws that don't make sense. They include things like: "don't wear linen and wool together;" "kill a pure red cow and use it's ashes to purify you if you touch a dead body;" "give your house back to its original owner every 50 years" ... and one of the biggest *choks* of all is the reason for this essay: "do not boil a kid in its mother's milk."

Jews don't keep kosher because it's healthier. While *kashrut* might be a healthy choice (with the price of kosher meat – not to mention kosher food in general – you may find Michael Pollan's advice easier to adhere to: "Eat Food. Not too much. Mostly plants." <<http://www.amazon.com/Defense-Food-Eaters-Manifesto/dp/1594201455>>)

It's important to keep in mind that keeping kosher isn't intrinsically healthier than eating anything you want. It wasn't some magic bullet God gave the Jews. Thousands of years of eating pigs, shellfish, bugs and even blood sausage hasn't seemed to hurt hundreds of other cultures. They're doing fine, and we're doing fine.

If you are considering keeping kosher (or if you are trying to figure out why WE want to keep kosher), I have three thoughts to leave you with:

1. Beyond the whole "it's a personal choice" thing I mentioned earlier, *chukim* are about obeying/honoring/loving God. God made some things off-limits to us. Some stuff is off-limits in certain contexts

(you should plan to have amazing sex – once you are married); some stuff is off-limits at certain times (no bread during Passover); and some things are off-limits based on the details of what they are (To paraphrase Mr. Pollan, “Eat food. Enjoy it. Just not this stuff <<http://www.jewfaq.org/kashrut.htm>>”).

2. Holiness isn't achieved through self-denial. In fact, you are more likely to be righteous if you are truly experiencing all the great things the world has to offer. Holiness is about showing that you are more than a bottomless pit of wants and needs <http://www.zazzle.com/bottomless_pit_of_wants_needs_tshirt-235845244711951572> ; that you can channel your desires and passions toward good and show restraint when asked.

3. One of the first things the Israelites say to God when they hear the Ten Com-

mandments is: *na'aseh v'nishma* (“we will do, and we will understand,” Exodus 24:7). Sure, some mitzvot are intuitively obvious. But many (as well as many other things in life) you just have to try first before they start to make sense. In some cases, you “get it” as soon as you actually get your hands dirty and start the work. Others, you have to keep doing, and some time down the road you realize that a practice has loads of meaning for you – much of which has built up around your doing it in the first place.

More to come. Of course (thank God), there always is.



Editor's Note: Leon selected this essay this month, because it ties in with the Kosher scavenger hunt at the zoo on May 23. (See page 4.)

Yahrzeits, April 2010

Iyar - אייר

Sivan - סיון

Sarah Friedman	17 Iyar	Anna Gutentag	2 Sivan
Ethel Eisman	19 Iyar	Anna Krasny	2 Sivan
Jacob Gutterman	19 Iyar	Celia Jacobs	3 Sivan
Sylvia M. Lavine	19 Iyar 5735	Sadie Rocker	3 Sivan
Samuel Herman Katz	21 Iyar	Abe Morris Abelkop	4 Sivan
Harold Saul Neuger	22 Iyar	Anna Davidson	4 Sivan
Florence Schlinger	24 Iyar	Violet Saunt	4 Sivan
Aaron Schneider	26 Iyar	Louis Mayzel	7 Sivan 5745
Nathan Valancy	26 Iyar	Reuben Schutz	7 Sivan
Miriam Zaremsky	27 Iyar	William Citron	9 Sivan
Rachel Barazone	28 Iyar	Clara Newman	10 Sivan
Mollie Davis	28 Iyar	Arnie Swertloff	11 Sivan
Donna Williams	29 Iyar	Esther Frumker	11 Sivan
Ernest Gelfand	29 Iyar 5759	Adolph Stern	11 Sivan
Goldie Lederer	29 Iyar	Anna Miliniski	12 Sivan
Elka Genuth	29 Iyar	Naomi Wolin	12 Sivan 5764
Isaac Genuth	29 Iyar	Henry Lipoff	14 Sivan
Clara Kord	29 Iyar	Max Naiman	15 Sivan
Anna Weinberger	29 Iyar	Jennie Zavell	15 Sivan
Bessie Stashower Fredman	29 Iyar 5726	Minnie Russack	16 Sivan 5745
		Jacob Haskell	17 Sivan
		Louis Noll	18 Sivan
		Max Krasny	18 Sivan



Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything.

Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.

Ranier Maria Rilke



NEWS FROM BETH EL

חדשות

JOIN OUR USHER CORPS!

If you would like to help with meeting and greeting our member, friends and visitors on Shabbat morning, we have just the job for you!

Join the Beth El Usher Corps!

All it takes is a commitment of one Shabbat morning per month.

Training is easy, and cheerfully provided.

Contact Karen Kugelman for more information.
(216) 932-5562
or Kkugelman2@aol.com

Condolences to:

ניחום אבלים

➤ Yevgenia Probst and her family, on the recent death of Yevgenia's grandmother, Klara Finkel.

Refuah Sh'lema to:

רפואה שלימה!

- Gerson Carr
- Kimberly Carr
- Marsha Katz
- Blanche Valancy
- Marsha Weisberg

Thanks for Contributions for Oh! Sullivans Tickets to:

תודה

- Michael Bloom and Peggy Sullivan
- Adina and Mark Davidson
- Eric Fryxell
- Marty Gelfand and Sherry Ball
- Laura Gooch and David Kazdan
- Arthur and Susan Greenberg
- Sharona Hoffman and Andy Podgurski
- Harvey and Sondra Jacobs
- Sarah Kamman
- Cindy and Larry Mittman
- Linda Tobin and Stephen Pepper
- Sharon Shaffer
- David and Teri Tomberg
- Ieda and Marvin Warshay
- ...and to all who paid at the door, whose names we did not collect.

Thanks to Jeff Halpern for coordinating Shavuot planning.

תודה

Thanks for April newsletter mailing help to:

תודה

- Sondra Jacobs
- Sue Klein
- Cindy Mittman
- Larry Mittman
- Miriam Palevsky
- Teri Tomberg
- Ditte Wolin

Yasher Koah to:

יישר כוח!

➤ Jeff Halpern, who completed his Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering at Case Western Reserve University. The title of his dissertation was, *Non-Planar Diamond Electrodes for Neural Sensing and Stimulating*.

Thanks for Your Contributions to! תודה

- Brian Aaronson
- Chester and Stephanie Gordon, in memory of Ed Small's father, Aaron Small Z"L, and of Marvin Palevsky's mother, Madelyn Palevsky Z"L.
- Joseph and Lila Newman, in memory of Ethel Newman Z"L and Max Newman Z"L.
- Judith and Marvin Ritzenberg, in memory of Bessie Falck Z"L.

Calling all graduates!

➤ Is someone in your family graduating at any level, from kindergarten through grad school, or accomplishing another academic achievement that I've neglected to mention? If so, please share the news with the congregation at news@bethelheights.org. Graduates at ALL levels will be congratulated in the June newsletter.



Missing:
Ladies' Tan
Trench Coat

Missing: Ladies tan trench coat, with sunglasses and black gloves in pockets. The person who took this coat by mistake from the synagogue coat-rack on March 19 left behind their similar-looking coat. Please contact Karen Kugelman, (216) 932-5562, as soon as possible. (CHECK YOUR POCKETS!)

CALENDAR, מאי 2010

אייר \ סיון 5770

SATURDAY, MAY 1, ABOUT 10:15 AM – **Learners' Service** will meet in the library, adjacent to the balcony. Topic: *Vá'yomer*, the third part of the *Shema*.

SUNDAY, MAY 2 – LAG BA-OMER

ל"ג בעומר

7:00 PM – **Short Stories by Jewish Authors Reading and Discussion Group** will discuss **Benya Krik, the Gangster and Other Stories** by Isaak Babel. (*further information on page 5*)

SATURDAY, MAY 8, AFTER SERVICES – **Lunch and Learn: Hillel and Shammai.**

Member Alan Lerner will lead a discussion about their approaches to Halacha and ethics. (*further information on page 3*)

WEDNESDAY, MAY 12 – **Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Reunification Day)** יום ירושלים

SATURDAY, MAY 15

ABOUT 10:15 AM – **Learners' Service** will meet in the library, adjacent to the balcony. Topic: *Mi Chamocha*, the Blessing of Redemption (after the *Shema*).

AFTER SERVICES – **Jeff Halpern's parents, Robin and William Halpern, will sponsor a luncheon kiddush in celebration of Jeff's graduation** and the completion of his Ph.D.

TUESDAY, MAY 18 – EREV SHAVUOT

8:24 PM – Candle-lighting

8:42 PM – Sunset

9:24 PM – *Tzet ha-kochavim* (Nightfall)

Tikkun leyl Shavuot

תקון ליל שבועות

8:00 PM – Nili Adler will lead the first session: *Jerusalem in Modern Hebrew Poetry*.

9:00 PM – Ma'ariv

9:30 PM – Holiday dairy dinner

10:30 PM – Rabbi Moshe Adler will lead the second session: *The Eye of the Beholder: Midrashic Views of Revelation*.

11:30 PM – Learning continues with further sessions.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 19 – SHAVUOT

שבועות (ו' - ז' סיון)

9:15 AM – **Shavuot Shaha**rit (morning service).

THURSDAY, MAY 20 – SHAVUOT

9:15 AM – **Shavuot Shaha**rit (morning service), with **Yizkor**.

יזכור

SATURDAY, MAY 29, AFTER SERVICES – **Monthly Simcha Kiddush.**

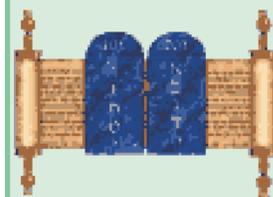
SATURDAY, JUNE 5, ABOUT 10:15 AM – **Learners' Service** will meet in the library, adjacent to the balcony. Wrap-up for the year.

SUNDAY, JUNE 13, 9:00 AM – **Members' Annual Meeting**

9:00 AM – Morning minyan

9:30 AM – Breakfast

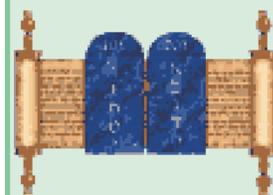
10:00 AM – Call to order



When night
hath set her
silver lamp
high,

Then is
the time
for study.

Philip James Bailey



JOIN US FOR TIKKUN LEYL SHAVUOT LEARN, EAT, CELEBRATE WITH YOUR BETH EL FRIENDS

Tuesday, May 18, 2009 ~ Erev Shavuot

Our *tikkun* is designed for those of you who like to learn with friends, but also need to grab a little shut-eye. As in past years, we will begin with some study, break for a brief Erev Shavuot service and delicious dairy meal, and continue studying late into the night – but not too late; we can go home and get some well-deserved sleep. We reconvene at 9:15 AM for Shavuot morning services.



Nili Adler will lead off our study session at 8:00 PM, with *Jerusalem in Modern Hebrew Poetry*. Other favorite teachers from our congregation and our community will continue teaching after dinner, until about 2:00 AM. Watch your e-mail for additional *tikkun* topics.

Schedule:

- 8:00 PM – **Pre-tikkun Study Session, led by Nili Adler:**
Jerusalem in Modern Hebrew Poetry
- 8:24 PM – **Candle Lighting** (“*ner shel yom tov*” and “*she-he_heyyanu*”)
- 9:00 PM – **Erev Shavuot Ma’ariv service**
- 9:30 PM – **Holiday Dairy Dinner**
- 10:30 PM – *Tikkun Leyl Shavuot*, a study session in celebration of the holiday.
Rabbi Moshe Adler will lead the second session:
The Eye of the Beholder: Midrashic Views of Revelation.

If you would like to come for the Shavuot dairy meal, the cost is \$12.00 per person. Please send checks to the synagogue by May 10 or RSVP to the synagogue at 216-320-9667.

Yes, we are coming to the festive Shavuot dairy meal, Tuesday, May 18, 2010.

Name _____

Phone number _____

Number of: adults attending _____

Total amount enclosed (\$12.00 per person) _____

Please send checks to the synagogue by Wednesday, May 10.
3246 Desota Ave., Cleveland Heights, OH 44118

