



BETH EL

The Heights Synagogue

NEWSLETTER

February 2020
5780 אדר / שבט



RABBI
MICHAEL UNGAR



Building a Better You, One Piece at a Time

Last month I wrote about being the best you that you can be. It is a popular theme around the secular New Year when many are making resolutions.

Here we are in February. How many of us have already given up on our resolutions...or forgotten what they are?

There is a Jewish ethical, cultural, and educational movement that began in the 1800s in Lithuania called Mussar. The term comes from a verse in the Book of Proverbs and has come to denote the way that we conduct ourselves and how disciplined we are. Much of Judaism is focused on fulfilling Mitzvot; these commandments (often given in the Torah without any reasoning behind them) are supposed to make the world a better place. What, however, does it do for our own personal character?

The Mussar Movement focuses on strengthening the traits that make us better people. Among the traits are patience, truth, and humility. Mussar asks us to explore each of these characteristics and make them a part of who we are. Like yoga, it does not just happen; it requires practice. Mussar is not an intellectual exercise; it is about making these traits a part of our everyday lives.

In our monthly Book Discussion Group at Mac's Backs on Coventry, we began reading Alan Morinis' *Everyday Holiness*; this book is a guide to understanding these character traits and putting them to use on a daily basis. If you missed the first session in January, never fear! We began with an introduction and this month we will dive in.

Join us for a lively and enlightening discussion on Sunday, February 9, at 1:30 p.m. Read Chapter 7, *Humility*, in advance if you would like, or come as you are!

Beth El - The Heights Synagogue builds vibrant Jewish community.
We welcome all in participatory, traditional, egalitarian worship and learning.

Saturday Morning Services at 9:15 ♦ 3246 Desota Ave., Cleveland Hts., OH 44118 ♦ ☎216-320-9667

Co-PRESIDENTS



JOEL GENUTH



BUD STERN

Contact Information

QUESTIONS? CONCERNS?
COMMENTS? COMPLAINTS?
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HELP US
STAY IN TOUCH!
Please be sure we
have your current
contact information.
Send changes to
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or call
(216) 320-9667

KEEP UP WITH THE NEWS!
JOIN THE
BE-THS LISTS!
Send an e-mail to
Carol Bruml,
benews3246@gmail.com,
if you need help with
signing up.



For Your Donations in Response to the Year-End Appeal!

- Barry and Maureen Aronson, in honor of their son, Brian Aronson.
- Brian Aronson
- Sherry Ball and Marty Gelfand
- Matthew and Natalie Barratt
- Henry Bloom and Marilyn Malkin, in memory of Mary and Sol Malkin z”l and Irving Bloom z”l.
- Michael and Shelley Bloomfield
- Bill and Carol Bruml
- Frank and Jeanette Buchwald
- Susan David and Bernard Sharfman, in honor of the engagement of Harvey and Karen Kugelman’s daughter, Sonny Kugelman.
- Jacqueline Freedman
- Leon Gabinet, in memory of his sister, Marion Siskind z”l.
- Joel Genuth
- Ilene Gertman
- Laura Gooch and David Kazdan
- Judith Goodman
- Stephanie Gordon
- Fern Grunberger
- Craig and Janet Hoffman
- Sharona Hoffman and Andy Podgurski
- Ari Klein and Ditte Wolin
- Lee Kohrman
- Ruth Kurzbauer, in memory of Robert and Lisa Rates Kurzbauer z”l.
- Alan Lerner and Erica New
- Debora and Marc Lynn, in memory of Edward Crevol z”l.
- Eric Mazelis
- Anne Meyers
- Gabrielle Millas
- Stephen Pepper and Linda Tobin
- David and Judie Perelman
- Philip Piccus, in memory of Edie Piccus z”l.
- Nelson Pole
- Charlotte Price, in memory of Marvin Warshay z”l.
- Annette and Burton Randell
- Juliana Sadock Savino
- Schwab Charitable Fund: Bread and Roses Fund
- Schwab Charitable Fund: The Fersky Fund for Adult Learning
- Steven and Abbie Nagler Sender
- Eran Shiloh
- Devorah Silverman
- Melissa Simon, in honor of Joe and Mia Buchwald Gelles’ loving kindness and hospitality.
- Dolly Small, in memory of Aaron and Miriam Small z”l.
- Nina Sobel, in honor of Joe Buchwald Gelles for his multiple, multi-level contributions to our synagogue of Heart, Mind, Spirit, and Kitchen Skills.
- Bud Stern
- Murray Sussman, in memory of Connie Sussman z”l.
- David and Teri Tomberg
- Leonard Tracht
- Michelle and Rabbi Michael Ungar
- Ieda Warshay, in memory of Marvin Warshay z”l.
- Bruce and Polly Wilkenfeld

Why Be Religious?

So why are human beings religious?

Sounds like a deceptively simple question with a long, complex answer better suited for a book by a 19th century philosopher than for a synagogue newsletter article by a 21st century co-president who, while thoughtful and highly educated, has no degrees in philosophy. I can hear some of you groaning at the thought that I may actually attempt such an answer within a newsletter article.

Fear not. I'm going to treat the question as simply simple, though I will confess to inspiration from William James, one of my favorite philosophical writers. People are religious because many have "religious experiences," that is, experiences that make them feel connected to a transcendent reality that subsumes the space and time of everyday experiences (and the space-time that is apparent only when relative velocities approach the speed of light).

And being conscious of their mortalities, people want to believe that by being in touch with and in harmony with that transcendent reality, they glimpse God, please God, and lay claim to an existence when they no longer live in space and time.

The openly difficult questions are how to characterize religious experiences and how to explain their existence in scientific terms. For the former, go read William James yourselves. For the latter, ask Richard Zigmond or some other accessible neurobiologist for recommended readings, though I doubt anyone feels s/he has any truly satisfying answer.

So how does one acquire religious experiences?

Sounds like another deceptively simple question. But again, one that can be treated as simply simple. They happen; just be open to their possibility. Of course you can try to pursue them directly through prayer and the performance of explicitly religious rituals. I can't say I've had great success in that route but seeing all the lit menorahs on the table during the Hanukkah party sent a shiver of delight up my spine and a brief sense of sharing an experience not just with those in the room but past and future people. A more powerful and memorable experience came in church. No, I wasn't attending a service but a concert with Jinjoo Cho performing the Tchaikovsky violin concerto with the Blue Water

Chamber Orchestra. Her eyes rolled back in her head as she nailed the solo part's opening double stops, and I felt as though she was a direct conduit of Pyotr to me, even though he died nearly 130 years ago and thousands of miles from where I was. Many factors contributed to the intensity of the experience, starting with the sheer visibility of stringed instrument music-making – one doesn't get to see what the lips, tongues, larynxes, lungs, and diaphragms are doing when people play winds, brass, or sing, and keyboard players and percussionists can't mess with the pitch and volume of a note as it is played – and ending with the dumb luck of finding seats in the second pew, no more than 10 feet from where Cho was sawing away at her fiddle. But recounting the particular space-time circumstances that helped me feel I was on a transcendent plane does nothing to diminish the memory of having that feeling of transcendence.

So what if you aren't having or haven't had religious experiences? Don't sweat it. Tomorrow is another day. And anyway, as Rabbi Ungar noted in a sermon, these experiences, while memorable, are transitory. Life's great challenge is to marshal the will to live well day in and day out. It's great to have intense experiences that inspire good daily living, but who wants to deal with someone who enjoys intense experiences and ignores his/her responsibilities to him/herself and others on a daily basis? So I sign off for this month in favor of trying to learn a few more measures of music in advance of a rehearsal with friends and cleaning up the kitchen I messed up to prepare a pleasing, nutritious dinner, which will fuel my ongoing efforts to convey the joy of learning to resistant children in poor communities.

Joel Genuth, Co-President

Chesed Reminder

If you have need of, or know anyone who may have need of assistance from Chesed please email, call, or just speak to a member of Chesed: Honey Massey (216-659-4381) or honey_joy@sbcglobal.net, Fern Grunberger (216-346-2027), Erin Rocchio (erin.rocchio@gmail.com), Lenny Tracht (216-703-2101), or Scott Wachter (216-256-3723).

Meet Our Newest Members

Last month we published profiles of some of the new members who have joined our congregation within roughly the past year. The remainder of them follow, below... And we hope to have more new members to introduce in the future! We will have a Newcomers' Shabbat on February 8 to introduce many of these new members to the congregation and to celebrate the fact that they have chosen to join BE-THS with a special Kiddush in their honor.

David Druce and Karen Shulman

David Druce and Karen Shulman were fated to join Beth El –The Heights Synagogue: the bentchers at their New York wedding were made by Joe Buchwald Gelles. On a more practical note, they researched shuls in the Cleveland area before they moved here and, after just one Shabbat, decided that they loved BE-THS' traditional, egalitarian services and the warmth with which they were welcomed into the community.

David was born in Queens and grew up in West Orange, New Jersey. He attended Jewish day school and has a BA in history from Yeshiva University and an MA in Teaching from Bard College. He taught history in several New York high schools and is now a teacher at Promise Academy here in Cleveland. David loves to travel, collects stamps, and does research and writing on historical issues. Most recently he visited the former shuls in the Glenville area of Cleveland as part of a project investigating the rise and decline of Jewish neighborhoods in American cities.

Karen was born and raised in sunny Los Angeles. She also attended Jewish day schools. She has a BA in Tolerance Studies from City University of New York and an MA in Conflict Resolution and Diplomacy from IDC in Israel. She has her MBA from Baruch College. (Now we know where to go when there is a disagreement at synagogue board meetings.) Karen has put her skills into practice in international development and non-profits. She is currently working for Environmental Research Management, where she is a sustainability consultant.

Karen, like David, loves to travel; she also loves to dance. At this moment, however, travel will have to be postponed: Karen and David are busy caring for their new daughter, Leora Sadie Druce, a new sister to their toddler, Kochava Bea. When parents and kids are ready, we look forward to seeing hem at shul. Mazel tov to the entire family!

Beverly Levy

Beverly Levy comments that one remarkable thing about her life is the number of places where she has lived: She was born in Brooklyn, a first generation American, as her parents were both from Europe. They emigrated in 1913 to Mexico and then to the United States; therefore, Spanish was the language spoken in her home. Beverly's early childhood was spent in Skokie, Illinois, but when she reached high school age the family moved to Los Angeles. After only a short time there, they returned to Chicago. Beverly and her now ex-husband lived in five states in an eight-year span including, New York, Wisconsin, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania; the longest stint was seventeen years in Yardley, Pennsylvania. She has two children, one who lives in Canada and the other, in New York, with their respective families. Beverly even spent time in Israel visiting her daughter and son-in-law. She attended an Ulpan studying Hebrew and traveled to many remote places that were not on the usual tourist routes. Beverly originally planned to retire to the Carolinas but instead came to Cleveland because it is closer to her children.

Beverly's work life has been unusual: Beverly has an MS in management and human relations but worked as a Jewish educator for 36 years and now works as an insurance agent for Walmart. Her years as a Jewish educator deepened her understanding and love for Judaism. She is studying Tehillim (Psalms) and in addition has self-published a book, "Real People Listen." How nice for Beth El–The Heights Synagogue that, through Ieda Warshay, Beverly found her way to our shul, where she greatly appreciates the small, intimate feel of our synagogue.

Welcome, Beverly! We look forward to seeing you at services and other shul events.

(Continued on page 5)

CALENDAR, FEBRUARY 2020

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1 – Parashat Bo; Bill Bruml will give the d'var torah.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8 – New Member Shabbat – Parashat B'shalakh; Rabbi Ungar will give the d'var torah.

ABOUT 10:20 AM – The Learners' Torah Discussion Group will meet to discuss the parsha.

AFTER SERVICES – Special Kiddush to welcome our newest members.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9

12:15 – 1:15 PM – **Yoga at shul!** Erin and Becky will be teaching a series of yoga classes at the shul over the next couple of months. Everyone is welcome. Please bring a mat and wear clothes that you can move in! Free. No yoga experience necessary.

1:30 – 2:30 PM – **Book discussion with Rabbi Ungar** at Mac's Backs on Coventry.

The group is currently discussing Alan Morinis' "Everyday Holiness," but just began this discussion last month and welcomes all to join them.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10 – Tu BiSh'vat

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15 – Parashat Yitro; Sharona Hoffman will give the d'var torah.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22 – Parashat Mishpatim; Rabbi Ungar will give the d'var torah.

ABOUT 10:20 AM – The Learners' Torah Discussion Group will meet to discuss the parsha.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25 – Rosh Hodesh Adar

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29 – Parashat Terumah; Polly Wilkenfeld will give the d'var torah.

AFTER SERVICES – Lunch and Learn with Shelley Costa Bloomfield, accomplished mystery writer.

SATURDAY, MARCH 7 – Parashat Tetzaveh; Rabbi Ungar will give the d'var torah.

MONDAY, MARCH 9 – Erev Purim

(Member Profiles, continued from page 4)

Anne Meyers

When Rabbi Ungar came to Beth El –The Heights Synagogue, we not only gained a Rabbi but also a new member, Anne Meyers. Anne has relatives in Columbus who attended High Holy Day services at the synagogue where Rabbi Ungar officiated. When Anne realized that Rabbi Ungar had accepted the pulpit at BE-THS, she decided to join us. Her friendship with Linda Tobin was also a catalyst for her to join our congregation.

Anne was born in Brooklyn but grew up in Utica, New York. She got her undergraduate degree in psychology at Ohio State University and her juris doctorate at Capital Law School. Before she began her law practice, Anne founded a firm that manufactured housing insulation. She has had a distinguished law career of over 40 years, beginning with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. After serving with several prestigious law firms here in Cleveland, she opened her own practice in 1995, now known as Meyers, Roman, Friedberg, and Lewis. She sold the practice to her partners seven years ago but continues to practice there. In her free time (it is remarkable that she has any!), she loves to travel to countries in the developing world and to read; she is also engaged in politics and with several non-profits. Two of her three children live in Cleveland so there are also always family activities.

Welcome, Anne!

Profiles by Honey Massey

NEWS FROM BETZ EL

חדשות

Refuah Sh'lema to:

➤ Harvey Jacobs

רפואה שלימה!

➤ Marsha Katz

Condolences to:

➤ Susan David and Bernie Sharfman, on the recent death of Susan's mother, Vivian David Wantuch z"l.

ניחום אבלים

Congratulations to:

➤ Lisa Berusch and Russell Berusch, whose daughter, Elana, is engaged to Andy Grayson. The couple met at Ohio State University and currently resides in Denver, Colorado. A May 2021 wedding is planned.
➤ Bruce and Polly Wilkenfeld, whose seventh grandchild was born on January 9. Parents are Josh Wilkenfeld and Rachel Bergstein of Silver Spring, Maryland.

מזל טוב!

Yasher Koah to:

➤ Marty Gelfand, who was elected unanimously by his colleagues on South Euclid City Council as President Pro Tem (another name for Vice President) on January 2, after being sworn in to a 3rd term on Council. And on January 7, at the 2020 Democratic Party Caucus, Marty was elected by fellow Elizabeth Warren supporters to a slate of delegate candidates for Senator Warren to go to the Democratic National Convention in Milwaukee in July. We won't know if Marty will get to go to the convention until the March 17 Ohio primary, depending on whether Senator Warren gets enough votes in Ohio's 11th Congressional District.
➤ Sharona Hoffman, who recently published a new article. It is: *What Genetic Testing Teaches about Predictive Health Analytics Regulation*, published in the North Carolina Law Review's December 2019 issue. She also just published an op-ed about specialty drugs, entitled "High-Priced Specialty Drugs: Exposing the Flaws in the System." It can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/tpfof5>.

י"שר כוח!

Thanks for Contributions to:

➤ Rabbi Moshe Adler, in memory of Nechama Shultz-Shalit z"l.
➤ Sherry Ball and Marty Gelfand, in memory of Marty's uncle, Sanford Gelfand z"l.
➤ Bill and Carol Bruml, towards the new playground,

תודה!

in honor of D.B. Shuck's second birthday.

- Molly Brudnick
- Saul Genuth
- Ilene Gertman
- Barry and Joyce Hoffer, in memory of Rachel Faye Hoffer z"l.
- Nancy Levin, in honor of Rabbi Michael Ungar.
- Gary and Marilyn Magden, in memory of Sadie Magden z"l.
- Stephen Pepper and Linda Tobin, in memory of Sidney Russack z"l.
- Adam and Samantha Probst
- Leslie Rosen
- Juliana Sadock Savino, to the Kiddush Fund.
- Shirley and Shlomoh Sherman, in memory of Bernard Sherman and Frances Rosa z"l.
- Eran Shiloh
- Barry Starr
- Bud Stern, towards the new playground.
- Bud Stern
- Rivka Taub, in memory of Asher and Tzipora Preiss z"l.
- Leonard Tracht
- Michelle and Rabbi Michael Ungar, in honor of Arielle Palevsky's graduation from Cleveland State University.
- Beth and Scott Wachter, to the Kiddush Fund, to cover the cost of chocolate.
- Beth and Scott Wachter, towards mailing costs.
- Beth and Scott Wachter
- Ari Wilkenfeld, "Chag Sameach to Bruce and Polly, from their family."
- Anonymous

Thanks for Kiddush Sponsorships to:

➤ December 14 Lunch and Learn – Bill and Carol Bruml

תודה!

Thanks for Simcha Kiddush Sponsorships to:

➤ December – Nina Sobel, in honor of her birthday.
➤ February – Philip Piccus, in memory of Edie Piccus z"l.

תודה!

Thanks for Mailing Help to:

➤ Joe Buchwald Gelles
➤ Arlene Magar
➤ Bud Stern

תודה!

➤ Lenny Tracht
➤ Beth Wachter

Yahrzeits, February 2020

שבת

Alex Simon Ziskind	6 Sh'vat
Isaac Bruder	7 Sh'vat
Eugene Goodman	7 Sh'vat
Ethel Newman	7 Sh'vat
Leon Stern	9 Sh'vat
Max Fromson	10 Sh'vat
Blumi Zavelowitz	10 Sh'vat
Louis Sobelman	11 Sh'vat
Dorothy Neuger	11 Sh'vat
Jacob Wilkenfeld	13 Sh'vat
Fannie Levine	13 Sh'vat
Pinkas Zavell	13 Sh'vat
Sonny Lerner	14 Sh'vat
Marilyn Protus Fischer	16 Sh'vat 5748
Mary Malkin	17 Sh'vat
Madelyn Palevsky	17 Sh'vat 5770
Julius Kammen	17 Sh'vat 5707
Charles Auerbach	17 Sh'vat
Isadore Fromson	17 Sh'vat
Anna Genuth	18 Sh'vat
Beatrice Schweickert	18 Sh'vat 5757
David Muszynski	18 Sh'vat
Gayle Kuhr Sharpe	18 Sh'vat
Abraham Margolis	19 Sh'vat
Howard B. Cohen	19 Sh'vat
Mathilda Mendelow	19 Sh'vat
William Berkman	19 Sh'vat 5739
Rose Reiss	20 Sh'vat
Jerome Bernstein	20 Sh'vat
Dora Kazdan	21 Sh'vat 5716
Edith Gelfand	21 Sh'vat 5737
Abraham Louis Brudnick	21 Sh'vat 5747

Laszlo Leichtman	21 Sh'vat 5749
Abe Lipoff	21 Sh'vat
Scott Mendel	22 Sh'vat 5771
Robert Starr	22 Sh'vat 5775
Dan Shoham	22 Sh'vat 5778
Scott Mendel	22 Sh'vat 5771
Meyer Goldberg	22 Sh'vat 5765
Helen Haskin	23 Sh'vat
Sam Cohen	24 Sh'vat
Leonard Glazer	24 Sh'vat
Irvin Lerner	25 Sh'vat
Jules Pepper	25 Sh'vat
Joy Rosewater Bruml	25 Sh'vat 5774
Rae Beckenstein	27 Sh'vat 5753
Sarah Starr	28 Sh'vat
Irving Bloom	29 Sh'vat 5753
Emanuel Mills	29 Sh'vat
Phil Mishinsky	29 Sh'vat
Eleanor Gelfand	30 Sh'vat 5773
Edith Bertman	30 Sh'vat
Dorothy Samuels	30 Sh'vat

אדר

Rabbi David L. Genuth	1 Adar 5734
Sam Buchwald	1 Adar
Sol Goldstone	1 Adar 5722
David Beckerman	1 Adar
Mary Rachel Linden	1 Adar
Clara Miller	1 Adar
Rose Rock	2 Adar
Kurt Brandes	2 Adar
Frances Goldberg	3 Adar 5770
Sylvia Protus	4 Adar 5731
Molly Glazer	4 Adar

Learners' Torah Discussions

Shabbat morning for Learners continues! Rabbis Barry Starr and Michael Ungar will co-facilitate every other week during Torah Service time. We will be **Searching for Meaning in Midrash**, based on the book by Rabbis Michael Katz and Gershon Schwartz. Texts will be provided; Midrash is the interpretation of biblical verses or passages meant to fill in the blanks in stories or legal issues. Hebrew knowledge is not required. Join the fun and discussion as we dig deep into the meaning of Torah.

We meet twice a month in the Community Room, after the Torah is taken out and the portion is introduced (about 10:20 am to 10:30 am), and rejoin the service in time for the d'var torah.



Shabbat Playdate



Now Weekly!
11:00-11:45 am
in the
Childcare Room

Jewish-themed
singing
and stories
for children
7 and younger.



Deportation: An American Holocaust

Honey Massey writes that her nephew, Claudio Saunt (the son of her deceased brother, Jim, and his first wife, Paulette), has written a book about the deportation of the Creek Nation, known as The Trail of Tears. The book, *Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory*, will be published in March. Claudio wrote to Honey to say that he was inspired to write this book after reading the letters written by Honey's father, his grandfather, Zoltan Saunt. Honey says her father was a real letter writer and keeper of documents. A Hungarian Jewish engineer from the "old country," Zoltan left Hungary right before it became impossible to get out. There was much correspondence between him and his family back home. Only after the war did he find that all his family had perished in Auschwitz. Honey received all of the documents and letters when her mother died. She kept them, and when she reconnected with Claudio after a long period in which they had lost touch, she told him about all the correspondence. Over the course of a year, Bud Stern scanned all the information to Claudio, and Claudio had much of it translated into English. He said it was a treasure trove of information, and that there was a story to be written. Honey says she awaits the story, and, in the meantime, she is happy that Claudio saw a connection between what he learned about her father's family and this terrible tragedy in our American history. The prologue to Claudio's book is below:

I was inspired to tackle this project when I inherited a cache of letters from my grandfather, who escaped from Hungary to Cleveland, Ohio, in December 1937. He corresponded with his parents and siblings in Sátoraljaújhely, in northeastern Hungary, until 1944, when the Nazis deported them to Auschwitz. Reading through the letters, I began to reconsider the deportation that occurred a little over a century earlier near my home in Athens, Georgia. Some of the town's main streets – Lumpkin, Clayton, Dearing – bear the names of local figures who played national roles in this earlier deportation. There are several striking similarities between the expulsion of indigenous peoples in the 1830s and the state-sponsored mass deportations of the twentieth century in Turkey, Greece, Germany, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere. In both periods, administrators described the inevitable march of "civilization," the "necessity" of deporting populations that could "only with difficulty assimilate," and the "grandiose" plans that they had devised to address the situation – arrogant language that masked the brutality and disarray of their efforts.

Honey Massey writes about her nephew's forthcoming book, which was inspired by the holocaust.

Your Turn: Our Members Write

The Secrets of Mystery Writing

Join Shelley Costa Bloomfield at the Lunch and Learn on February 29, when she addresses a few points about writing (and reading) mysteries. What makes the writing of mystery stories particularly difficult? Is there a place for humorous murder mysteries, or are they just in bad taste? Is there some transcendent value in mystery stories that make them somehow essential to our understanding of what it means to be human? According to British mystery doyenne P.D. James, the enduring appeal of the mystery story is that the crime is solved "not by good luck or divine intervention. It's solved," she points out, "by a human being. By human courage and human intelligence and human perseverance. In a sense, the detective story is a small celebration of reason and order in our very disorderly world."