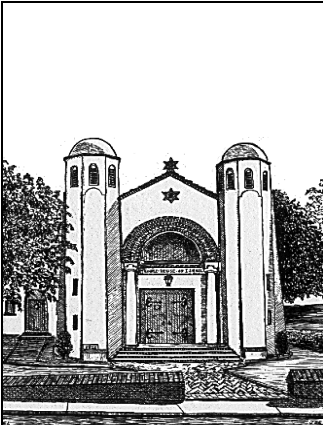


# Temple House of Israel Bulletin

*A Member Congregation of the Union for Reform Judaism*  
15 North Market Street, Staunton, VA 24401 (540) 886-4091  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1412, Staunton VA 24402  
[www.thoi.org](http://www.thoi.org)

*Our mission is to perpetuate Jewish life and identity through a welcoming community of spirituality, learning, service, joy and worship.*

Tevet > Shevat , January 2010



## From the President

Dear Members and Friends,

Our thoughts and prayers go to the Brand families on the loss of Rafael, who passed away on December 9<sup>th</sup>. Rafael as husband, father, grandfather, brother, and uncle will be missed by our congregation as well. May his memory be for a blessing.

Your support in providing Christmas Eve dinner at the Valley Mission was overwhelming. Thank you to all those who participated in so many ways with special thanks to Eric Stamer for steering us and providing the know-how to make the evening a success and to Lou Boden, chair of the Valley Mission Board of Directors for bringing this opportunity to us (although I'll admit to being a bit intimidated by the numbers: 100 people to feed with only 44 member families in our congregation).

As we begin 2010, please join in the Rabbi's adult education initiatives, in prayer during Shabbat Services, in social action, tzedakah and mitzvot. Please be aware of the needs of others within our congregation and within the communities in which we live.

Remember: Never stop learning. B'Shalom, *Beth*

## From The Rabbi's Desk

My dear fellow Valley Jews and Friends,

Shalom. Chanukah is over, the days are lengthening, and we have weathered the 'storm of the century.' We know we can face whatever else this winter brings us, and that better weather, and better times are coming.

### Calendar

TEVET → SHEVAT (JANUARY)

Tevet ran from the 18<sup>th</sup> of December through January 15<sup>th</sup>, with the 16<sup>th</sup> of January being Rosh Chodesh for Shevat. Shevat will run from the 16<sup>th</sup> of January to the 14<sup>th</sup> of February this year, with the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of February being Rosh Chodesh for Adar.

### Holidays

This month other than Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh, there is only one holiday to celebrate: Tu Bi'Shevat (literally translated, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Shevat), which is on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Shevat, falling on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January. Tu Bi'Shevat is perhaps better known as Rosh Hashanah Le'Ilanot (the New Year for the Trees), or Yom Huledet Le'Ilanot (the birthday of the trees). This holiday arises out of a mitzvah (commandment) in the Torah about husbandry of orchards. We are instructed not to take the fruit of trees that have not had an opportunity to grow an adequate root system. Since the root system will develop slowly if much of the energy of that tree towards growth is directed to producing fruit, we are told not to allow the tree to produce fruit in the first few years to allow more of the energy of growth to be used for developing a strong and healthy root system. The way the sages of the Talmud determined to accomplish this mitzvah was to pinch off the flowers after pollination for a number of years. The tricky part would be to keep track for each tree just how long it had been growing since it was planted as a sapling. As a convenience and to standardize the process, a specific date was selected to 'age' all trees a year – which is how we

have the ‘birthday’ for the trees.

The date was not selected arbitrarily. Because the sages wanted to include all trees that could provide commercial products, they determined to start with a date that would include the earliest tree to flower. In the land of Israel the first tree to flower is the Almond. Once the sages settled on that tree as setting the beginning of the cycle of trees flowering for the year, they determined that they would back up the date to assure that even in very favorable or mild years when trees flowered early, they would cover the situation. They decided to use the time when the trees would be coming out of their ‘dormant’ period in the cold/rainy season, and settled on the approximate time that they believed that sap would begin rising, leading to the trees starting the process of growth (well before leafing and budding). This date was determined as the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Shevat.

The name given to the celebration, Tu Bi’Shevat, is the result of the use of the Hebrew letters to mark numeric values as well. Shevat is the name of the month. Bi or Be is a prefix meaning ‘in’. Tu is the numeric equivalent of 15, the letters Tet for 9, and Vav for 6. The vav is treated as the ‘oo’ vowel for which it can be used (as well as the ‘oh’ vowel - but it is actually far easier to pronounce too be’shevat than toh be’shevat).

Those who are familiar with the process of using Hebrew letters to represent numbers, may also recall the term ‘gematriya’, the playing with numbers and words that can be done. Gematriya is the reason that we use the numbers for 9+6, rather than 10+5 to make up the value 15. The convention in gematriya is that we form numbers ordered from the largest to the smallest. To form ten plus five we would usually use the letters Yud = 10, and Hey = 5, however, these letters form the the word YAH, which a one of the names by which we refer to God, so rather than use a name for G-d, we form the value of fifteen with the letters having the equivalent meanings of nine and six.

Gematriya is also how we identify the year. When you see a Jewish calendar, it will identify the current year as 5770, and in the Hebrew it will show Tav-Shin-Ayin for this year. The values associated with these letters are: Tav=400, Shin=300, and Ayin=70. You can readily see that we don’t represent the value of 5000. The assumption is that not many of us living today will be around to see the year 6770, so the 5000 is assumed. The year is written as Tav Shin ” Ayin, with the ” indicating that this is intended as an acronym, abbreviation, or numerical value.

In the the 1600’s, the time of the Kabbalists, this observance began to take on some mystical aspects. These mystics saw the tree as symbolic, representing both the connection of heaven and earth, and the embodiment of the sefirotic emanations, the aspects of G-d’s existence that we can experience. This way of thinking has enriched the view of this observance, adding to it far more significance than merely being a day of agricultural importance. As a result, Tu Bi’Shevat has taken on the aspect over the years of not only being something like a Jewish ‘Arbor Day’; as time has passed, it has also grown to have a connection as well to a Jewish ‘Earth Day.’ This focus, combined with the mystical sense that trees are conjoined with and the bridge between all of creation, G-d, and human beings, has lent this a much more important and broad appeal, so that it is celebrated by all, not only those who keep orchards.

This is seen as a day highlighting the focus on Jewish commitments and obligations to creation; the earth, the environment, and ecology, as instructed by G-d. There are all sorts of programs, projects, and events that take place recognizing our role as stewards and caretakers for nature and the world around us. One of the earliest forms of this recognition came in the projects of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) in Israel to plant trees, drain swamps, dredge channels, plant, build, maintain natural species and varieties in the land, and generally assist in supporting the land, the flora and fauna, and those people living on it. Today these efforts include water collection and distribution systems, development of high-tech drip irrigation resources, desalinization projects, and many other approaches.

Most recently, this focus has broadened even further, and has spawned the concept of Eco-Kashrut. Those following this chain of thought see that to be Kosher (fit for use) a particular item must not only be produced in accordance with the mitzvot (commandments), but must also not be destructive or wasteful. For plants, this means that the materials used must not be harmful to the earth, so pesticides and fertilizers must be carefully considered. For meat, this implies not only that the animal must be slaughtered in accordance with Jewish law, but that it must be

treated and raised humanely. More, for the workers involved in the production of these items, their work conditions must fully recognize their needs as human beings, including fair wages, safe working conditions, fair compensation, with time off for vacations and holidays, health care, and appropriate treatment on the job and in housing provided. Some people are talking about whether Eco-Kashrut should also take into account environmental issues that arise in transportation of what we eat. This is a new and developing area of Jewish practice – another way that Judaism is responding to the world around us, modernity, science, and the conditions of the world today.

The next observances on the Jewish calendar will come on February 25<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. These are the Fast of Esther, and Purim. More on that next month.

### **Tzedakah**

I urge you to bring items and/or make donations to those in need at this time of year. The food pantries and shelters tend to run short, and items of clothing and for personal care are very much needed.

Also, please consider volunteering time at Harts, the Volunteer Farm, or at the Valley Mission, or at one of the many other organizations that seek to help those in our area who are in need.

### **Torah Parashiot**

The Torah parashiot (Torah portions) read for the period covered by this newsletter include the following in January: Vayechi, Shemot, Vaera, Bo, and Beshalach, drawn from Bereshit (Gen.) 47:28-50:26, Shemot (Ex.) 1:1-17:16, and Bamidbar (Num.) 28:9-15 for Rosh Chodesh.

The Haftarat (readings from the Prophets) in January are drawn from 1 Kings 2, Isaiah 27 and 29, 66 (Rosh Chodesh), Jeremiah 46, and Judges 4-5 (Shabbat Shirah).

The special Shabbat in January is Shabbat Shirah, the Shabbat of Song, January 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> (the 15<sup>th</sup> of Shevat) on which we read the Song at the Sea, which is based on the song of Moses following the parting of the Sea of Reeds and the destruction of the army of Pharaoh, found in Shemot (Ex.) Chapter 15.

In February the Torah Parashiot will be Yitro, Mishpatim, Terumah, and Tetzaveh, drawn from Shemot (Ex.) 18:1-30:10, and Devarim (Deut.) 25:17-19.

Haftarot read on Shabbatot (Sabbaths) in February include selections from Isaiah 6-7, 2 Kings 11-12 (Shabbat Shekalim), 1 Kings 5-6, and 1 Samuel 15 (Shabbat Zachor).

### **Rabbinic Educational Initiatives**

Please note that the offerings for adults continue this month. There are several on the calendar, including a new one. Watch the bulletin for information on upcoming classes and courses each month.

First, on January 10<sup>th</sup>, Sunday, at 2 to 3 pm, we will have the next in the series on *Women in the Tanakh* (Bible). This will be held at Beth El. All are welcome to join in our conversation.

Starting Sunday January 24<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm at THOI, we will begin a discussion group around a book. This is not the regular time – in future weeks we will meet at 6 pm at THOI, rather than 2 pm. I am changing the time for this one session because I have to leave Sunday evening for a conference on Monday. The title of the book chosen is Witnesses to the One: The Spiritual History of the Shema by Rabbi Joseph B. Meszler. The publisher is Jewish Lights Publishing ([www.Jewishlights.com](http://www.Jewishlights.com)) You can probably find this book online or in major book stores in both paperback and hardback, but if you have any difficulty, please let me know and I will see if I can suggest any way to make it easier to find it. I have suggested that the folks at the Sacred Circle bookstore in Staunton get several copies. This book looks at the Shema through the eyes of Jewish thinkers through the ages (something like the book “G-d was in this place, and I, i did not know” by Lawrence Kushner). All who are interested in this discussion are welcome to join in. I think you will find this book worth reading. I expect to meet more or less every other week for an hour and a half, or two hours at most, to discuss one of the ten thinkers and/or chapters.

We will see how far we get. This is open to congregants from both THOI and Beth El, and anyone else who wishes to participate.

### **Congregational Trip to Israel**

At this point, we are looking at just over a year to the planned congregational trip to Israel, open to members of Beth El and THOI, as well as family and friends who want to join. I am hoping this trip takes place in late February or March of 2011. If you think this sounds interesting please speak to me.

### **Events**

Here is a list of the items about which I am aware in the next month.

- *Thursday, January 7<sup>th</sup>* at 12-1:30 pm is the next meeting of the Interfaith Association. This meeting will be in the Park View Mennonite Church, NOT the EMU West Dining Room as usual (Winter break). A lunch will be available for purchase, probably \$5/person. The menu is still being decided as I write this. Please feel free to attend this meeting, and invite others. The program for this meeting has changed due to the illness of one of the presenters. Details are still being worked out. I can't yet tell you (at this early moment) what the program will be (which among several options will be finalized), but I hope you will trust that it is something that will be of interest.
- *Thursday, January 7<sup>th</sup>* at 7 pm. Adult Education at Beth El.
- Rabbi-led Shabbat Shacharit (morning) service at THOI on *Saturday January 9<sup>th</sup>* at 10 am, with a pot-luck luncheon to follow (featuring latkes for all as a result of the cancellation of services for Chanukah on December 18<sup>th</sup>). This is a change of date for the service previously announced as January 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- *January 10<sup>th</sup>*, Women in the Tanakh/Bible discussion group at 2 pm at Beth El.
- *January 15<sup>th</sup>*, Friday evening, SHORTY youth group will offer a dinner as a fundraiser at 6 pm. Following the meal and a brief Birkat Hamazon (grace after meals), SHORTY members will lead the Shabbat service, starting at 7:30 pm.
- *January 16<sup>th</sup>* at 10 am at THOI is the next Kinderlachen (preschool play group) meeting. Open to anyone in the community with a child of appropriate age. If you can, please RSVP to [RabbiJoeB@Hotmail.com](mailto:RabbiJoeB@Hotmail.com) or 540-886-4091 for planning purposes in acquiring supplies.
- *January 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>*. SHORTY Ski Weekend at Beth El. SHORTY youth group will lead the Shabbat service at 7:30 pm, with participation by the SHORTY Advisors, as well as by Massimo Lagoda as Ba'al Kriah (leyner/reader of Torah and/or Haftarah).
- *Sunday, January 24<sup>th</sup>* at 2 pm at THOI will be the first meeting of the book discussion group, to talk about the book *Witnesses to the One: The Spiritual History of the Shema*. Future meetings will be at 6 pm.
- The week of *January 25<sup>th</sup>*, for the first time, will be the appearance of a monthly column by Rabbi Joe in the *Shenandoah and North Fork Journals on Jews and Judaism*.
- *Friday, January 29<sup>th</sup>*, Rabbi-led Shabbat service at 7:30 pm at THOI.
- *Saturday, January 30<sup>th</sup>* is Tu Bi'Shevat, the birthday of the trees.

### **Pastoral Care and How You Can Participate**

**Pastoral Care:** If you feel a conversation with the rabbi on any topic would be of benefit to you, please be in touch to make an appointment. You can call or email Rabbi Joe as listed elsewhere in this newsletter.

**Participation:** Please know that we always seek congregant and guest participation in services throughout the year. If you are interested in leading a lay service, or in taking a role in a service, please be in touch with Lisa Solod, Beth Young, Don Chodrow, Ellen Werther, or Rabbi

Joe. If you have any questions about an Oneg Shabbat, please be in contact with Marsha Pillet or Rosalie Waterman. If you are interested in leading singing for our services, please be in touch with Sarah Grove-Humphries, who is ably coordinating music for worship at THOI.

Roles in services include: reading Torah or Haftarah (Hebrew and/or English), serving as Gabbai (the “MC” conducting the Torah service), an English reading, or having an honor. The honors are conferred in our services include being called up for an Aliyah (saying the blessings for the Torah or the Haftarah reading; there are a few restrictions on who may have this honor), serving as Hagbah (lift, hold, and carry the Torah), Gelilah (undressing and dressing the Torah), Petichah Usegurah (opening and closing the Ark), and candle lighting with the blessings (usually the Oneg host/ess(es)). Please remember that these roles are honors which we wish to confer upon our members, and when you have one please keep in mind that we are counting on you to be there to help us make our services special.

**Celebrations:** If you are interested in studying for and celebrating an adult B’nai Mitzvah, or in learning to leyn (read/chant) Torah and/or Haftarah, or to lead services, or serve as a gabbai, please be in touch with the rabbi.

**Jewish Study:** If you are interested in or wish to consider conversion, or you just want to learn more about Judaism (whether you are Jewish or not), please be in touch with the rabbi.

**Caring Committee:** This group has been doing wonderful things in helping and supporting those in our community who may have some needs for assistance or support. If you can volunteer, please speak with Rosalie Waterman, Lou Boden, or Beth Young.

**Chevrah Kadishah:** This group functions to prepare and dress a body for burial in accordance with the Halachic (Jewish legal) requirements, showing care and concern for the deceased. Members are not publicly acknowledged nor is it made public who has been involved in this mitzvah. Thank G-d, we have not had too many opportunities to respond, but we do need to be ready when the need arises. If you have any interest in participating in performing this mitzvah, please speak with Rabbi Joe.

#### **Closing Message**

As we experience the cold of the weather around us, may we each find warmth in those we encounter, and feel the embrace of those we love.

*Rabbi Joe Blair*

#### **Reaching the Rabbi**

The rabbi is available by appointment. If you wish to meet or speak with the rabbi, please email or call to set an appointment time. In that way, the rabbi will be able to respond and give you his full attention, as you deserve. Please note: the rabbi does not read or respond to email on Shabbat or holidays.

In the event of an emergency, the rabbi may be contacted by telephone. In that case, please call the cell phone number listed: if you reach voicemail, please leave a message, speaking clearly, with your name, telephone numbers, the topic, and if an emergency, please be sure to express the need for an urgent response. The rabbi will respond as soon as possible.

Rabbi Joe’s Email:  
Beth El Congregation  
Temple House of Israel  
Cell phone (Please use this # for emergencies)

[RabbiJoeB@hotmail.com](mailto:RabbiJoeB@hotmail.com)  
540-434-2744  
540-886-4091  
434-981-3959

<b>Women's Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our December WG meeting was converted to an online forum. If you were not included in the notes please forward your E address to Marsha Pillet ( macmeda@ntelos.net) so you can be included .</li> <li>• Our condolences to the Brand Family and thanks to those WG members who were able to help with the post funeral luncheon.</li> <li>• The challah baking class is being rescheduled.</li> <li>• We are hosting an <b>oneg luncheon</b> rescheduled for January 9th following the morning Shabbat service. It is now a potluck. Contact Ruth for questions (886-2252)</li> </ul>																																																				
<b>Yarzheits</b>	A-H main dish A. David Biatch Abraham Weinberg Abraham Weinberg Arthur Kaufman Augusta (Gussie) Switzer Daniel Seligmann Emily Schorsch Morton Sloane	I-P Fruit Ethel Weinberg Johanna Weinberg Lamartine Strauss Leah Frank Marjorie Edelman Milton Finkel Morris Degen	Q-Z Veggies Pauline Prince Robert Davis Roberta Weber Sarah Margolis Solomon Switzer Sophie Cohen Pearl Ruttenberg																																																		
<b>Donations</b>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Lou &amp; Ellen Boden</td> <td>General Fund</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Mazon</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gordon &amp; Linda Boden</td> <td>Valley Mission Dinner</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gregory Ciszek</td> <td>Valley Mission Dinner</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Asher &amp; Laura Jean Brand</td> <td>Valley Mission Dinner</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Raphael &amp; Shirley Brand</td> <td>Valley Mission Dinnner</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Martha &amp; Doug Degen</td> <td>Valley Mission Dinner</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>IHO Beth &amp; Rich Young</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>IMO Raphael Brand</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Yizkor</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Alan &amp; Vicki Goldenberg</td> <td>Valley Mission Dinner</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Yzkor</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Art Goldsmith &amp; Jan Kaufman</td> <td>Valley Mission Dinner</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Yizkor</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Laura &amp; Mark Mandeles</td> <td>IMO Melvin &amp; Marian Lewis</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>IMO Dr.Stanley &amp;</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Francine Mandeles</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rachel Peretz Combs</td> <td>IMO A. David Peretz</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rachel Peretz Combs</td> <td>General Fund</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ken Schwartz</td> <td>Valley Mission Dinner</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Margie Schwartz</td> <td>IMO Joseph, Frieda Bernstein,</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Philip David, Irving, Larry &amp;</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Jerry Lee Schwartz</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Raphael &amp; Dinane Witorsch</td> <td>Donation</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Beth &amp; Richard Young</td> <td>Yizkor</td> </tr> </table>			Lou & Ellen Boden	General Fund		Mazon	Gordon & Linda Boden	Valley Mission Dinner	Gregory Ciszek	Valley Mission Dinner	Asher & Laura Jean Brand	Valley Mission Dinner	Raphael & Shirley Brand	Valley Mission Dinnner	Martha & Doug Degen	Valley Mission Dinner		IHO Beth & Rich Young		IMO Raphael Brand		Yizkor	Alan & Vicki Goldenberg	Valley Mission Dinner		Yzkor	Art Goldsmith & Jan Kaufman	Valley Mission Dinner		Yizkor	Laura & Mark Mandeles	IMO Melvin & Marian Lewis		IMO Dr.Stanley &		Francine Mandeles	Rachel Peretz Combs	IMO A. David Peretz	Rachel Peretz Combs	General Fund	Ken Schwartz	Valley Mission Dinner	Margie Schwartz	IMO Joseph, Frieda Bernstein,		Philip David, Irving, Larry &		Jerry Lee Schwartz	Raphael & Dinane Witorsch	Donation	Beth & Richard Young	Yizkor
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<b>Editor</b>	<p>Submissions for the Temple House of Israel monthly newsletter are due to the editor the 20<sup>th</sup> of every month prior to publication. Suggestions, news, corrections and complaints can be sent to the editor, Martha Degen at <a href="mailto:bulletin@thoi.org">bulletin@thoi.org</a>.</p> <p>In order to keep expenses down the majority of our membership receives their newsletter online. If you are unable to receive it online please request your copy to be sent through the USPO. Read The Bulletin online at <a href="http://www.thoi.org">www.thoi.org</a> .</p>																																																				

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Caring Committee Lou Boden	255-5555	caring-committee2@thoi.org

<b>January 2010</b>						
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3	4	5	6	7 Interfaith Meeting 12:00 Adult Education @ Beth El	8	9 Rabbi Led Shabbat Shacharit @ 10:00 Oneg lunch to follow
10 Women in the Bible @ Beth El 2:00	11	12	13	14	15 SHORTY Dinner 6:00 Rabbi Led Service @ 7:30	16 Kinderlachen @ 10:00
17	18	19	20	21	22 SHORTY Ski Weekend @ Beth El Jan. 22 – 24th	23
24 Discussion Group @ 2:00	25	26	27	28	29 Rabbi Led Shabbat @ 7:30	30 Tu Bi Shevat