

The Shofar



March 2016
Adar I-Adar II 5776

A Message from Rabbi Jordi Gendra



Practicing without belief, or belief without practice?

Many years ago, Elie Wiesel and the Lubavitch rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, talked about having faith after the Shoah (Holocaust). Mr. Wiesel asked the rebbe: "After all these things, how can people have faith?" The rebbe retorted,

"After all these things, how can people not have faith?" Mr. Wiesel paused for a several seconds. "If this is a question, I accept it," he said, "but if this is an answer, I reject it!"

We know people all around us who practice without believing, but they do it only for the sake of tradition. It is out of respect for this tradition that many people do what their parents did before them, hoping that their children will continue this tradition after them, as if the ultimate point of ritual is to pass beliefs from generation to generation like the passage of simple folklore.

We also know those who believe but do not practice: people who find themselves engaged in a spiritual quest. They have real faith, but they have chosen not to be defined as "practitioners" in the traditional sense of the word. They deem practicing the mitzvot unsuitable for their lives, anachronistic, or just impractical.

What can we say about the disconnection between practice and belief? It is not my intention here to denounce arrogantly those who have chosen one or the other. These people are, indeed, one aspect of a precious pluralism each religious community needs. Jewish tradition often presents pluralism as necessary. And our tradition is replete with examples of this idea.

Let me just mention one: During Sukkot, we are commanded to shake, every day, four species of plants in various directions. We hold in our hands a lulav or palm branch, an etrog or citron, and the myrtle and willow branches. These four species, according to the rabbis, have different properties: one carries fragrance and has no taste, another taste but no fragrance, the third has no smell or taste and the last one has all these properties together.

The rabbinic interpretation of these properties is quite surprising: It tells us that each of the species represents a part of the Jewish people. Some Jews are not religious believers, some are believers and practitioners, and others are neither. Yet, on the day of celebration, all coexist and belong to a single community. This interpretation seems to instruct us to be tolerant of the choices of others in matters of faith and practice.

My goal here is to make us think about what binds together the terms "belief" and "practice" in Jewish tradition.

It is the mitzvot, the commandments, the actions of men and women, that are held high in supreme value, whether they are commandments concerning God or fellow humans. For example, whenever we return the Torah to the ark, we repeat this verse: *Lekach tov natati lachem torati al taazovu* — "I have given you a precious teaching, forsake not my Torah." According to one Midrash, the rabbis would interpret the verse in the following manner: "I gave you good teachings—says the Lord—you can abandon Me, but my Torah, do not abandon her!"

According to this rabbinic interpretation, if forced to choose, God would prefer our commitment to principles than to our simple faith in the Divinity. God favors our practice more than our faith. It seems that in the minds of rabbis, respect for mitzvot—religious action—creates access to the Divinity. The mitzvah is an opening to the Divine that the tradition encourages us to find both in prayer, in the sacred Sabbath, as well as in our social commitment in daily life. By acting in accordance with these principles, putting the mitzvot into action, the individual can be the *shutaf ma'assei Bereshit*—a partner in the work of creation. Humans fulfill God's action by practicing.

It follows, in the rabbinic tradition, that these two concepts of faith and practice are not mutually exclusive, since the action, in the broadest sense, is the means and the condition of the encounter with the Divine. We must believe that our practice can improve the world; that by acting, by being divine partners, we also provide evidence of faith. Jewish tradition does not say that we must necessarily believe in God to act. But it seems that when we act, God believes in us.



From the President's Desk by Debbi Ret



As I see the end of my presidency in sight, I find myself looking back on these past three years and reflecting on what they have meant to me. What is the big picture? What has been the theme of my presidency? What have these three years meant to

you? I think the answer to those questions is that I have been trying to keep Judaism not just alive, but vibrant and relevant for current and future generations. To paraphrase an old car commercial, "This is not your grandfather's Judaism."

Contrary to popular belief, Judaism has been changing and evolving since its inception in order to meet the political, cultural, emotional, and spiritual needs of the times. Even in the Chumash, Abraham, the father of Judaism, would not have recognized the religion practiced in the Tabernacle of the Exodus. And likewise, the Jews of the Exodus would not have recognized the Judaism practiced during the Middle Ages.

Which brings us to the non-Orthodox American Judaism of 2016. Here and now, Judaism is in strong competition with assimilation and interfaith marriage. We no longer live in self-contained communities with little need or desire to interact with the larger community. Everywhere we go, we are immersed in Christianity. How do we walk the tightrope of fitting in

with that culture while maintaining our Jewish identity? How do we teach our children to love Judaism, when it would be so much easier not to? We are also faced with the difficult task of assimilating the increasing number of non-Jewish spouses into our traditions, of making room for them in our rituals, while also ensuring that the rituals do remain ours.

I cannot say that in the past three years, I have come up with answers to solve any of these dilemmas. No one has. But in our little shul, we have formed an interfaith committee to make recommendations for the boundaries and opportunities of our non-Jewish family members, and we are revising the bylaws to incorporate these recommendations. We have significantly expanded music during our Friday night services and people are requesting that we expand it even further. We have also hired a rabbi who studied under the Renewal tradition to lead our Tot Shabbats with song and dance and a touch of mysticism. As a community, we continue to study the meaning and relevance of our texts, of kashrut, of funeral practices, and Shabbat and Holiday rituals, and make these our own.

I hope that I had something to do with the significant increase in membership and school enrollment that we have experienced during the past two years, and that this will be part of my legacy. Stay tuned next month for my farewell *Shofar* article, more specifics on what this synagogue has accomplished over the past three years, and my response to this congregation's favorite phrase...

Upcoming Events

*Click on events in **red** for more information.*

Details about other events can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

- Friday, March 4, 5:30 PM Dinner, 7 PM Service: **Shabbat Across America**
- Saturday, March 19, 7:30 PM: Purim Shpiel
- Wednesday, March 23, 6:30 PM: Purim Megillah Reading
- Sunday, April 17, 3 PM: Choral Concert
- Thursday, May 26, 6:00 PM: **End-of-the-Year Dinner**

A Message from Wendy Marder, Educational Director

It was my privilege to be part of a most amazing Shabbat and weekend of learning at Limmud NY 2016 in Stamford, Connecticut, over the Presidents' Day weekend. Uplifting and educational, as well as relaxing, the conference recharged my creative juices and energy. An all-inclusive four days with the bonus of spending time with my daughter Laura, I thoroughly enjoyed dozens of sessions, meeting up with old friends and colleagues, including Rabbi Miriam.

There is nothing like a roomful of happy people, singing, praying, learning, schmoozing, dancing, and bonding over learning Torah, celebrating Shabbat, and afterwards, havdalah. The ruach (spirit) was fantastic; those of you who know how I love to sing and dance,

Making the most of each day and healing oneself and others through communication were the heartfelt themes of the weekend.

know how great this made me feel. It was contagious and even the quietest people got involved.

How I would love to see this at CBT-BI, kind of like an extended Shabbat school or Shabbat B'Yachad. Meanwhile, some of the sessions offered are totally feasible on a one-time or ongoing basis. Wouldn't Israeli dancing be fun? Aerobics and/or Zumba set to klezmer music and movements that reflect a period in Jewish history and/or the Torah? (Think "life in the shtetl" or building the pyramids.) Laura and I attended a prayer writing workshop and were amazed at the intensity of our feelings and writing. Yiddish class was awesome and I know many congregants are interested in this. There were interactive classes, Torah study, Israeli movies, authors, rabbis, and lay leaders, all who engaged groups in different ways.

There were Shabbat and daily services of all kinds, from Orthodox to yoga set to liturgy of the siddur. Laura

and I enjoyed the renewal services along with the dramatic interactive Torah reading and the group aliyot that represented different aspects of the parsha. Even Valentine's Day was brought up in one of the presentations with "I vov you," emphasizing the power of the letter "vov" as a unifier, bringing what comes before the letter and after a completeness and carrying it forward. For example: Shalom—shin, lamed, VOV, mem. It takes a root word and expands it, like taking a relationship and making it whole and better.

Making the most of each day and healing oneself and others through communication were the heartfelt themes of the weekend. Two sayings I really love were top priority this weekend: "The past is history, the future a mystery, and now is a gift, that is why it is the *present*." Also, "Do you know the difference between wellness and illness? The 'we' instead of the 'I' makes all the difference. When we concern ourselves with others, we lose the 'I'llness.'"

Thank you for helping me attend this conference. I am excited to share the many wonderful ideas I have gleaned from my experience and hope many of you consider attending Limmud sometime.

—Wendy



Wendy with Amy Gottlieb (left), author of *The Beautiful Possible*, and Maggie Anton, author of *Rashi's Daughters*, at the Limmud Conference.

Meet Our B'not Mitzvah: Elena and Marissa Behr

Elena and Marissa are twins. They will be having their b'not mitzvah in our synagogue Saturday, April 9, a very special Shabbat, not only because it is their special day, but because we will read from three Torahs that morning. Why? Because it is Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the Shabbat a week prior to Pesach, and Shabbat. We will be starting by 9:30 am.

The girls' Parsha is Tazria, but they will be reading the Maftir portion from the book of Exodus, which is about Passover (Pesach).

Elena and Marissa have been with us since fourth grade and now look forward to having their b'not mitzvah after working very hard with the rabbi, their dad, their poppy, teacher (Jana), and tutor (Lori). They are thankful for everyone's help.

Both Elena and Marissa said that preparing for their b'not mitzvah has helped make them better Hebrew readers. They both are looking forward to the party but are also happy to be reaching Jewish adulthood.

The girls play field hockey and softball and have two siblings and two dogs. They said that the biggest challenge for them was reading from the Torah and learning to sing their portion. They have already worked on their b'not mitzvah project—volunteering at Bayada Home Health Care—and will continue to do this over the next year.

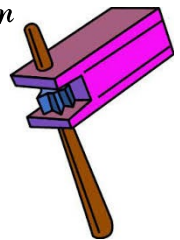
So, Mimi bat Moshe and Leah bat Moshe—mazel tov! We look forward to celebrating with you and your family and welcoming you into Jewish adulthood.



The Megillah According to Rodgers & Hammerstein



A Purim Shpiel



Saturday, March 19 at 7:30 PM

at CBT-BI

Starring the CBT-BI Choir



Join us for a humorous musical adaptation
of the timeless story of Jewish survival.

Everyone is welcome. Admission is FREE.



Welcome to CBT-BI!

New member Josh Fisher is part owner and third generation of his family business, B & B Poultry Company of Norma, N.J. The company, now in its 70th year, specifically processes egg-laying chickens, which were farmed mostly by Jewish families in the post World War II period in and around Vineland (once known as the country's Egg Basket). Norma, originally known as the Alliance colony, still houses the local Jewish cemetery, the South Jersey Holocaust memorial, and the Tifereth Israel synagogue built in 1889.

Originally from Vineland, Josh has lived in Boston, Philadelphia, and now resides in Glassboro with his dog Baxter to be closer to work and family. He enjoys swimming at the Washington Township Virtua facility, and holds a commercial pilot's license, flying his Cessna 182 often for public benefit flights such as Angel Flight and Pilots n' Paws.

Being one of the very few remaining young members of the Beth Israel Congregation of Vineland, Josh decided to look for another congregation that would fit his needs. Josh spent Rosh Hashanah with us at CBT-BI, and felt it was a perfect fit. CBT-BI warmly welcomes Josh!



Text and photo by Randi Wolf

Games! Prizes!

**CBT-BI's
Purim Carnival**

**Sunday, March 20
9:15 AM to 12:00 PM**



Megillah Reading

**Wednesday, March 23
6:30 PM**

Noise!



Fun for All Ages!

Costumes!

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The Company You Keep®

Sisterhood News by Luba Veytsman



The CBT-BI Sisterhood is growing—at this point we have 67 members!

The Sisterhood knish sale was a big success and we are planing to do it again in the future. Thank you very much to Marcy Kaufman, Diane Shapiro, Sandie Schachter, and

to all who participated in our fundraiser.

We had a great start to the year. Our January program featured spirituality and an introduction to Kabbalah, presented by Gail Tishman. It was interesting and very well attended.

In February we had a joint program with Bikkur Cholim on “Community Resources for the Elderly and Their Families.” Thank you, Myra Caplan, for organizing

this event. The program was informative and well presented. We had very knowledgeable speakers who answered all of our questions about the various services provided by the Jewish Family and Children’s Service.

This month, Sisterhood and Men’s Club are planning a lunch outing right after Hebrew School on Sunday, March 6. Please check out the flyer and come and join us. On March 29, the Sisterhood is hosting a Women’s Passover Seder, led by Wendy Marder.

In April, we are planning a trip to the Barnes Foundation. More information will be coming soon.

May’s program will be a tea party in honor of the 150th anniversary of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland. Flyers for all these programs will be coming shortly.

We look forward to seeing you at one of our events!
Shalom,
Luba

Jewish JUMBLE

by Randi Wolf

PAKHIP
[] [] [] [] []
Jewish headcovering

LZKUT
[] [] [] [] []
An uncoordinated Jew

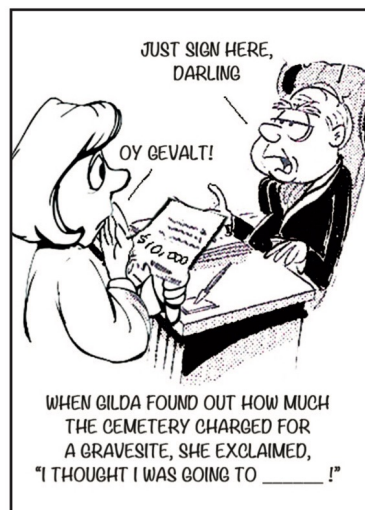
ZAMTHO
[] [] [] [] []
Jewish “cracker”

FOING
[] [] [] [] []
Dishonest businessman, a thief

Print Your Answer Here:

SEE SOLUTION ON PAGE 8

Unscramble the four jumbled clues, one letter to each square, to form four Jewish words. To make it easier for the kinder, definitions are below each clue.



Now, simply unscramble the letters in the circles to reveal the answer to the above cartoon!



Toda Raba!

Thank you to all who sent good wishes and donations in honor of Laura and Ben's engagement. We are so thrilled, not only for the blessing of our daughter and future son-in-law, but for the love we are surrounded with.
—Wendy and Ami Marder

Save the Date

Saturday, April 23, 6:00 PM:
Second-Night Community Passover Seder
Details to Follow

The Shofar

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The one event you won't want to miss!

**The CBT-BI Choir
and
The College/Community Chorus
of Rowan College at Gloucester County**

Present

An Afternoon of Inspirational Music

**Sunday, April 17 at 3:00 PM
at CBT-BI**

**60-plus voices under the direction of Norma Meyer of CBT-BI
and Lawrence DePasquale of the college/community chorus**

Featuring:

Hear My Prayer

Felix Mendelssohn

Hava Nashira (Let Us Sing Together)

Johannes Ockeghem

The 23rd Psalm

Andrea Jill Higgins

and much more!

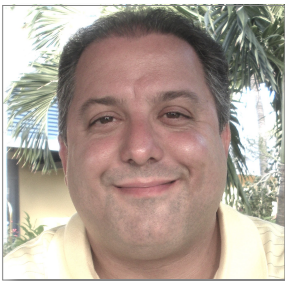


Admission is free.

Donations are appreciated and will go toward
the purchase of a new electric piano for CBT-BI.



Men's Club News by Jordan Harris



The cold days and long nights of winter are still with us, but the Men's Club is already thinking ahead to spring's warmer temperatures and longer days.

The winter season has been active, with strong attendance for our monthly breakfast meetings (held on

the first Sunday of the month) and for our card/game nights (sponsored on the fourth Thursday of each month). The Men's Club continues to try many of our area's terrific diners in search of the perfect spot to find great food along with great conversation for our meetings. We are also offering bridge as an alternative to our customary poker games on our game and card nights when available.

The next few weeks are going to be a hotbed of activity for the Men's Club. On Sunday, March 6, the Men's Club will be co-sponsoring a luncheon get-together with Sisterhood at the Peking Buffet in Glassboro. All members of the congregation have been invited to attend. This event, held after the dismissal of students from the Sunday school, helps to bring all generations of CBT-BI together for an afternoon of wonderful conversation and food.

The Men's Club will be welcoming spring with a visit to the Battleship New Jersey on the Camden waterfront in April. This is expected to be one of our strongest events of the year, allowing members to visit

one of South Jersey's primary attractions while paying homage to those who have fought to keep our freedom and make us safe. Other potential trips later in the year include a visit to the World War II museum in Washington, D.C. and a trek across the Delaware River to attend a Philadelphia Soul indoor arena football game.

One of the best ways for members to have an input on event ideas and planning is to attend our monthly breakfast meetings, usually held on the first Sunday of the month at either area diners or CBT-BI. It is a great forum to present ideas for future events or offer suggestions on how the Men's Club can be improved. The meetings are also a terrific avenue for socialization; very often, our discussions can go from synagogue matters to sports to politics in a very short period. Great discussions while enjoying breakfast—a splendid way to start a Sunday.

As I have mentioned in previous columns, if you have not had the opportunity to attend a Men's Club event or have not been in a while, please take the opportunity to attend one of our breakfast meetings, bring your game skills to our card/game nights or check the calendar for some of our upcoming events.



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**Jewish
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Solution:

Jumbles: KIPPAH KLUTZ MATZOH GONIF

Answer: **PLOTZ**

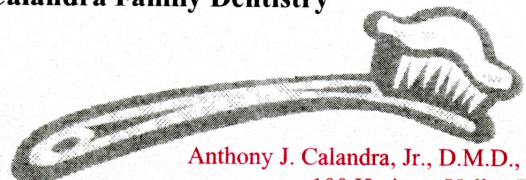
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