

# The Shofar



January 2017  
Tevet-Shevat 5777

## A Message from Rabbi Jordi Gendra



### Toiling and Planning for the Future

Once upon a time the trees saw that humans were given a Rosh Hashanah, the beginning of a new year. Then the trees went to God and complained, saying: "Is not it written in your Torah that humans are like trees? If humans are like trees and trees

are like humans, then shouldn't we have a new year, too?"

Agreeing that they were right, God asked the trees when they wanted to celebrate their new year. We need the water, said the trees; therefore, let it be in the month of Shevat, because in this month Israel received the mitzvah "*When you enter the land and you plant any tree for food...*" (Lv 19:23).

This is how the first day of Shevat came to be the festival; but the trees raised the question: "During Shevat there is neither festival nor *simcha* (joy), but only the usual Rosh Hodesh. Will Shevat not have a special day?" At the end of the discussion, God concluded, and so did the House of Hillel, that the new year for the trees would be celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Shevat.

Shevat is here. One of the coldest months of the year, when nature seems to be asleep, resting and building up energy to blossom the next spring. Similarly we could look through the same lenses at the life in our synagogue. The rush around the holidays is long gone. There is nothing else to be celebrated until Purim. Community life seems to come to a stop. However, this is only appearance.

For many centuries, Jews always took special care of their synagogues because they represent the physical aspect of values and non-physical ideas. The synagogue as a *bet tefilah* (house of prayer), as a *bet midrash* (house of study), and *bet keneseh* (house of meeting) represents the heart of the Jewish identity and experience, being always at the very center of the Jewish life. This is probably one of the most cherished institutions and the most efficient tool to experience Judaism and to pass down it to the next generation.

The trees raised their point saying: "Is it not written in your Torah that humans are like trees?" It certainly can be applied to humans, but this is even truer about congregations. Like the trees, our congregation needs to be nourished today if we want it to survive, get more strength, blossom and provide shadow to the next generation. Therefore, planning becomes a crucial element in this holy endeavor.

As never before, synagogues around the country share the same challenges. There are only a few synagogues that are lucky enough not to fight with a tight budget or not to have any losses. Disagreement among members is also an

integral piece in the life of our communities. The development boom changed the demography of many counties. We live in a society that changes very quickly and we have the moral obligation to respond to these challenges, and therefore planning is needed.

A passage from the Talmud tells us that once Honi ha-Magui was walking on the road when he saw an old man planting a carob tree. Honi thought: "Carob trees need many years to bear fruit and this man probably will not be alive to eat from it." So

he asked the man: "Do you expect to be alive when the tree will bear fruit?" The man answered: "I did not find the world desolate when I entered it, and as my fathers planted for me before I was born, so do I plant for those who will come after me." As the old man from the story, we also need to do what it is so natural for farmers and gardeners: we need to plant and plan for our CBT-BI future.

When doing it, we need to keep in mind the high goals of our institution. We are working to make CBT-BI a Jewish meeting point where people of all kinds of backgrounds will find a place to experience wholeness in their lives, enjoy community, connect with each other, reflect, dream, ask questions, and seek answers.

It was Abraham Y. Heschel who reminded us that we are partners of God in *tikkun olam*, the repairing of the world. However, in order to accomplish this task we also have to be *k'lei kodesh*, holy instruments or vessels, who seek to transform our synagogue into a more spiritually fulfilling community.



## Greetings from Our Executive Board

Happy New Year everyone...again. One of the nice things about being Jewish is that we can celebrate and share lots of holidays, including those belonging to our own religious traditions, to other religious traditions, and to our country. One favorite is the New Year. Having two gives us two opportunities to look reflectively both backwards and forwards. And when we look backwards to our very recent last New Year celebration, as well as forwards into this New Year, there is a lot to feel good about, as well as a lot to do.



Since our October New Year, we have made progress toward our sanctuary renovation project. We had an open meeting to discuss people's ideas and are awaiting proposals from potential vendors who have already done site visits. We have raised \$11,000 already; so, with a bit more support, we can get this done in time for our goal. Please remember to help if you can. Most important about this project, though, is that it is fundamentally about people — making our space more accommodating and welcoming, creating

an environment that better supports religious and spiritual experiences as well as other adventures we haven't even thought of yet, and working toward our dynamic and shared future.

So many projects have come to fruition: our gorgeous new website launch, our environmentally (and financially) responsible new roof, the first round of recommendations from our strategic planning committee, and so many more festive programs that took place in December.

So much done and so much more to do. Please help us to welcome in our second New Year with your energy, enthusiasm, creativity, friendship, and support for making CBT-BI even better than it already is.

Fondly and with great appreciation,  
Lynn, Beth, Marcy and Leora



### *The Shofar*

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*The Shofar* is published six times a year: January, March, May, July, September, and November. Editorial deadline is the 15th of the month preceding publication month.

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## A Message from Wendy Marder, Educational Director



### Ring In The New Year(s)

It is a new year again, this one, 2017! Just a few short months ago I wished you a happy new year as well, the Jewish New Year 5777. How are they different and how are they the same?

Tefillah, tzedakah, teshuvah (prayer, charity, and repentance) are the earmarks of Rosh Hashanah — not exactly what comes to mind amidst the fireworks, partying, and noisemakers of the midnight/all-night parties of December 31st/January 1st. And though we do blow horns at midnight, the blasts of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah are a bit more complicated and thought provoking.

Contemplation of the past year and promises for the future are similar, even though New Year's resolutions on January 1st usually begin with "I will go to the gym everyday," and on Rosh Hashanah it is

usually something like, "I will say I'm sorry for all that I did wrong and to whom I wronged."

The Jewish New Year is celebrated in synagogue and around the table with family and friends, with special food, particularly round and sweet things, apples and honey and lots of wine. January 1st is a litany of fast food, dips, and fried concoctions, accompanied by whatever BYOB is available.

We have a custom called *tashlich*, which involves throwing away our symbolic sins into a body of water with pieces of bread. Is this perhaps where throwing streamers and confetti came from?

Did you know that the Jewish New Year really begins with Passover? We were freed to begin a new life — sounds like a new beginning to me.

Regardless of how and when you celebrate, happy New Year one and all. May 2017 bring peace, health, and happiness to all the world, and to each and every one of us.

Wendy

## Sisterhood News by Luba Veytsman and Allison Harris



Our Sisterhood held its annual Vodka and Latkes event in early December. This event has been one of our most popular, and this year was no different — a fun night was enjoyed by 35 of our members!

We announced at this event that our Sisterhood is donating \$500 to the Kindergarten through 2nd grade Tuition Fund to help CBT-BI continue providing free tuition to families and children in these grades.

Our Nut Fundraiser did very well and we are looking forward to doing this fundraiser again in the future. Thank you to all who participated.

On December 11th we held our annual Holiday Bazaar, which included displays from our Judaica shop and many great local vendors. Thank you to all

who participated and helped us make the bazaar another great success!

Sisterhood presented gifts to all of the Hebrew school children at the Chanukah party in December.

We have many fun upcoming events planned. On January 15th, we will have an afternoon of creativity and ceramics at Family Clay Time in Turnersville.

The Sisterhood Board is also planning to host a book club event at the end of February. We are open to any book (and movie) suggestions. Please contact us with your ideas.

When March comes it will be time for our second annual Women's Seder. This will be a very fun event that you won't want to miss — more details to follow soon. Please look for emails regarding all of our upcoming events and remember that we are always happy and open to any of your suggestions.

Your co-presidents,  
Allison and Luba



## CBT-BI Skating Party



Sunday, January 8, 2017

12:30 - 2:30 PM

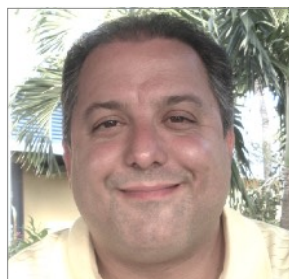
Deptford Skating Center, 510 Deptford Ave., Westville  
(856) 845-7353 • [www.deptfordskatingandfun.com](http://www.deptfordskatingandfun.com)

\$8.50 for paid PTO members; \$10 for non-PTO members  
Includes skating admission, Funzone (ages 10/under),  
inflatables (12/under), pizza slice, and drink

Skate Rentals: \$4.65 plus tax; Skate Mates: \$4 plus tax

RSVP/Questions: Allison Harris ([aharris888@comcast.net](mailto:aharris888@comcast.net))

### Men's Club News by Jordan Harris



Although the cold outside makes me think warmer thoughts, I am looking ahead to our upcoming spring events.

Men's Club members can continue to look forward to our monthly breakfast meetings where event ideas are planned and discussed

over good food and conversation, either at area diners or at CBT-BI. Our card and game nights, held usually on the last Thursday of every month, continue to draw members looking for a fun evening out.

In April, we will be taking a tour of historic Jewish Philadelphia and its murals. Art fanatics will not want to miss this trip to the "Mural Capital of the U.S." Lunch or dinner at one of the area's quality restaurants will follow the tour.

In April, Men's Club and Sisterhood will co-sponsor their second "A Discussion with the Doctors." At this event, CBT-BI members who are medical professionals will share their specific knowledge and answer your questions. I will be promoting this event as fully as possible throughout March and I know that with Sisterhood's assistance, this will be one of the best attended events of the year.

We are also in the planning stages of organizing a fall bus trip to the infamous and haunting Ground Zero site in lower Manhattan. After touring one of the most devastating grounds in our nation, a possible stop for lunch or dinner at Katz's Delicatessen on Manhattan's Lower East Side may be just what is needed to lift spirits afterwards.

So, with spring not too far away, the Men's Club is just getting warmed up in bringing members together for a good time. See you at the next event!





## 2017 Hebrew School Sneak Preview

by Wendy Marder



January in our religious school means that it is mid-year and curriculum goals need to be assessed along with students and teachers. It is a time to begin planning for next year and the Rabbi and I sit down and put together a preliminary calendar and also discuss what we can do to both motivate and educate our children and families.

January brings our Sunday mitzvah day on the 15th, with presentations from our 7th graders and this year from Ellie Matz and perhaps a few other students. This year we will also host “Right In Your Own Backyard” — a drug addiction program sponsored by Jewish Family Services on Wednesday, January 18 at 7 PM.

February brings the holiday of Tu B'Shevat,— the “birthday of the trees” in Israel. It is commemorated in our school by having trees planted in Israel, eating fruits of Israel, and stepping up our practices for the preservation of the Earth through recycling, composting, cleaning up, etc.

March brings the holiday of Purim and lots of merriment and baking of hamantaschen. The students learn about the characters in the Megillah and perhaps relate the story of overindulgence and bullying to present-day life. Several students will read from the Purim scroll (Megillat Esther) in English and some in Hebrew. Songs and plays are all the rage. This year we will be having a DJ after a short Megillah reading on Sunday, March 12th. Party on!

With Purim over, Pesach is almost here. One month apart, the days fly as cleaning and cooking and learning the songs of the haggadah are upon us. This is also the time when taxes are due, which always has been a struggle for me (even though certainly I could do them in February).

Procrastination is not just owned by me. It is the sad truth of how so many Jews died in Europe because they didn't heed the signs of anti-semitism and were unable to escape Nazi rule in time. We commemorate this time, Yom HaShoa, right after Passover and follow it with the



uplifting celebrations of Israeli Independence Day, Yom Haatzmaut. It's been 69 years since Israel declared itself a free and sovereign state. Next year we'll have a gala celebration for the 70th, with all the synagogues and religious school celebrating on April 19, 2018!

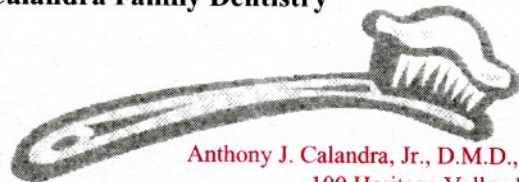
The end of the school year is marked with Mother's Day. We make cards for Dad, too, because it's not fair that we are not in school in June to do this, and one of the 10 Commandments is to honor your mother and father. We celebrate Lag B'omer, field day, re-enacting the times when Jews had to hide their Torah study in caves and played games out in the open to fool their adversaries.



On Shavuoth, we commemorate the receiving of the 10 Commandments and Torah at Mt. Sinai, but it also is affectionately known as the holiday for eating blintzes, cheesecake and first fruits of the season. These go great with coffee, which you will need if you stay up all night to study Torah, as is also tradition.

By the time we complete the cycle of the Jewish year with the late summer fast of Tisha B'Av, which commemorates the destruction of the first and second Temples, the synagogue staff is already repeating the words: “after the high holidays...” whenever someone mentions a project. Here's wishing patience, insight, strength, and a sense of humor to all of you, and especially to my colleagues, as we begin planning the 2017-18 school year and the Jewish New Year of 5778. Mazel Tov!

**Jamie H. Green, D.D.S.**  
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All are invited to an

**Interfaith Service**  
Honoring the Legacy of  
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
at CBT-BI

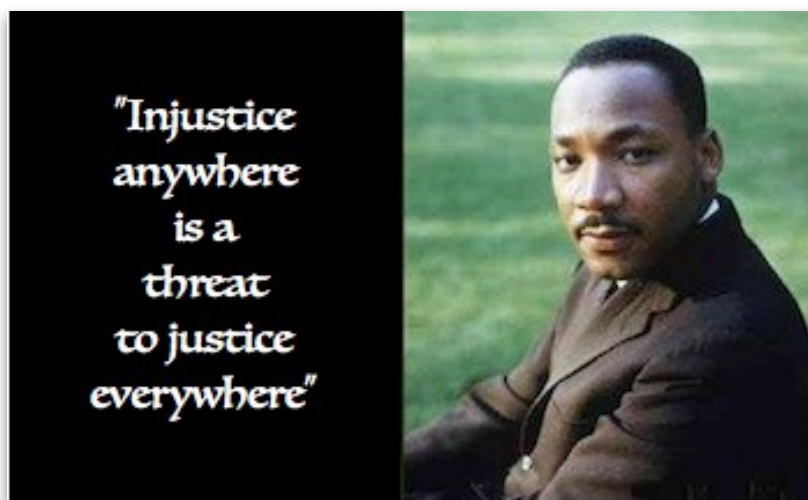
Friday, January 13  
7:30 PM  
Oneg to follow

Join us for prayer, readings, and songs.

Participants:

Congregation B'nai Tikvah-Beth Israel  
First Presbyterian Church of Pitman  
St. James Lutheran Church of Pitman  
First Presbyterian Church of Glassboro

A shortened Shabbat service will begin at 6:45 PM.  
(Tot Shabbat: 6:30 PM in the oneg room)



## Photo Album of December Events



The Sisterhood Holiday Bazaar was fun for all ages!





## Photo Album (continued)



There were smiles all around at the annual Sisterhood Vodka & Latkes event!



Page 7 top photo by Allison Harris; all other photos by Randi Wolf