

# The Shofar



July 2017  
Tammuz-Av 5777

## Seven-plus Years of CBT-BI

*Reflecting on the power of stories*



Once upon a time there was only the holy darkness, the *Ein Sof*, the source of life. And then, during the course of history, at a moment in time, this world, the world of a thousand thousand things, emerged from the heart of the holy darkness as a great ray of light. And then, perhaps

because this is a Jewish story, there was an accident, and the vessels containing the light of the world, the wholeness of the world, broke. And the wholeness of the world, the light of the world, was scattered into a thousand thousand fragments of light, and they fell into all events and all people, where they remain deeply hidden until this very day.

How do you like this story? Does it make you feel like a five-year-old kid again? That's a very important thing about stories. They touch something that is human in us and is probably unchanging. Important knowledge is imparted through stories. They are what hold a culture together. Every culture has its own unique story, and every person in that culture participates in the story. We might say that the world is filled with stories, not just facts.

Last month we celebrated the seventh anniversary of CBT-BI. The facts are the bones of the story. The facts are, for example, that several years ago, thanks to some Jews who had just moved into the area with hopes and dreams, both Beth Israel and then B'nai Tikvah started as an idea that grew, moving from temporary housing to their own buildings, then flowering into and finally merging into a full-fledged community. But that doesn't tell you about the CBT-BI journey and what's happened to us because of that, and what it means to live within a community and discover how dreams and determination can move people to do wonderful things.

The facts are that people contributed love, leadership, time, effort and money toward the growth

of CBT-BI, but the stories are about the greatness and the vulnerability of being human, the joys and the sorrows, the challenges and the successes we have shared over the past years. Because, sometimes, the only way we can make sense out of life is through the stories.

These are not like some types of stories in popular culture, brief forms of entertainment as well as information, which always have beginnings and endings. Rather, the CBT-BI story teaches us that the stories of our lives take time. Real stories take time. They tell us about who we are, what is possible for us, what strengths we might call upon. They also remind us that we're not alone with whatever faces us and that there are resources, both within us and in the larger world, and in the unseen world, that may be cooperating with us in our struggle to find a way to deal with the challenges we face.

And when I tell you that a story doesn't always have an ending but continues onward, part of my story is about your reading the story I told you earlier about the birthday of the world and how it began. That's a story I learned as a young man from my own rabbi. I learned it from him as you now are learning it from me. And while you have never met my rabbi, perhaps my rabbi will be woven into your life in some way. It may be in a very small way or it may not, I don't know, but in that sense no one's story is ever finished. Our lives are interwoven through CBT-BI, through people we've met and have never met, who have dreamed dreams and done things that have affected our lives. Those who built Beth Israel and B'nai Tikvah are part of us and CBT-BI will always be a part of our lives.

### Inside:

What I Like Best About CBT-BI	2
Our New Confirmand	3
A Tribute to Past Presidents	4
Past Presidents' Ball Photos	5
Your Vacation Tales	7



## What I like best...

*We asked the members of the executive board, "What do you like best about CBT-BI?" Here's how they responded:*

One of the things I like best about CBT-BI is that it's inclusive: Everyone is welcomed and accommodated. Young and old, all orientations and genders, able or disabled — everyone feels at home and respected. Another aspect I admire is the dedication to a spiritual approach to *tikkun olam* — fixing the world, one step at a time. Lastly, the environment at CBT-BI allows me to observe Judaism on my own terms, not according to the decrees and wagging fingers of other people. — *Leora Rothschild*

What do I like best about CBT-BI? The dinner dance honoring the past presidents, and attended by so many who came together from different places, really crystalized that for me. It's that we manage to exist and thrive in a world where stability and peaceful connection, anchored in religious traditions and shared values, seems increasingly important to me. It's the togetherness that keeps us going. I can't say it any better than John Lennon did: "A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together is reality." — *Lynn Helmer*

There are so many things I love at CBT-BI. The first thing that comes to mind: the children and their families. I am at the synagogue most Sunday mornings and I love watching the children greet each other with hugs, smiles, and warm words. In class they are so excited and enthusiastic telling the teacher about their week filled with activities.



Many burst into class with a hug for the teacher. They are eager to give tzedakah, share what they have learned and show kindness towards their friends. They discuss inviting each other to their homes for lunch, play date, or sleepover! A main focus or theme this year was showing kindness. This was evident throughout the halls, sanctuary, and classrooms.

Wouldn't it be great if we, the adults, could learn from the children? If we could be kind to each other through our words and gestures. So often, instead of greeting each other with a warm hello or embrace, we open the conversation with a complaint.

So let's learn from the children and greet each other with hugs, smiles, and warm words. Let's burst into the sanctuary with feelings of gratitude, joy, and pride that we belong to such a wonderful synagogue! Let's encourage each other to join committees and offer our services to help. Let's be excited to give tzedakah and share our nachas with CBT-BI. Invite someone who is not in your "group" to your home for brunch or dinner! The sleepover might not be such a good idea but certainly sounds like so much fun!

Please join the PTO even if you don't have children in the religious school. If you do, you will share my joy of participating in events with the children. You might even laugh, giggle, learn a silly joke, and make a new friend!

— *Marcy Kaufman*

1. CBT-BI tries to be warm and welcoming, and it's small enough that I know most people and they know me, if not by name, then by sight.
2. The synagogue is close by — a five-minute drive even at the height of rush hour — and that makes it easy for our family to attend activities.
3. Our current building is much larger and more comfortable to be in than the old building on Fishpond Road.
4. The dress code is relaxed; I don't have to be dressed to the nines to attend services and other activities, and that means I'm more likely to show up.
5. We are an egalitarian congregation — we treat men and women as equals.
6. The kitchen is big enough that several people can comfortably work there at the same time without bumping into one another. It allows for a sense of camaraderie.
7. CBT-BI offers a variety of activities — something to appeal to everyone, from kids to seniors.

— *Beth Nazer*

## Mazel Tov, Bianca!

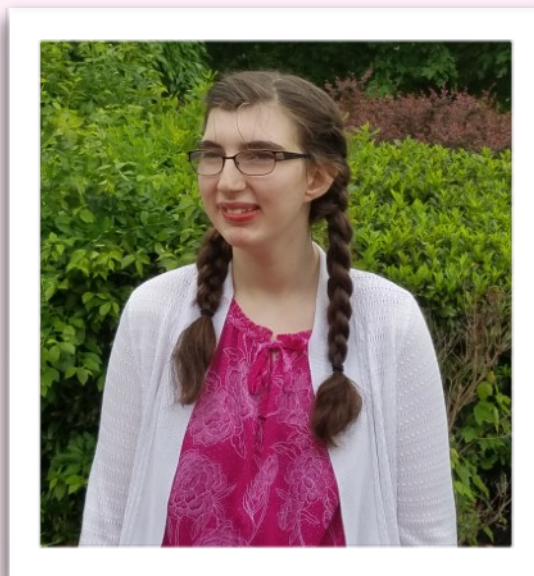
Bianca Rose Conlin, daughter of Mario and Brandy Conlin, celebrated her Confirmation in May. Bianca has four brothers: Drew, Tyler, Spencer and Owen, and a dog named Bruno. She enjoys playing with Bruno and drawing video game characters. Her favorite characters right now are Skylanders. Bianca enjoyed Hebrew school and is sorry to see it come to an end. Bianca and her family are grateful for the kindness and patience her teachers showed her. They are especially grateful to Betty London for giving Bianca her time, patience, and love over the years.

### ***Congratulations from Bianca's teachers:***

Bianca probably taught all of us, teachers and students, more than we taught her. We gained an understanding of autism and humanity, and of Bianca and her family that will stay with us forever. Angry birds, Sonic, and Skywalkers are now endeared to us because of Bianca's love for them. She was confirmed from CBT-BI but she actually confirmed our faith in people and commitment and love. — *Wendy Marder*

Dear Bianca: Your Confirmation concluded the six years that I had the privilege of studying with you. Together, we learned Jewish history, life lessons, and taking part in Shabbat services. Your art work was great and added beauty to our bulletin boards. I am going to miss the times we had together.

Congratulations and Love! — *Ms. Betty*



## Toda Raba!

The 2017 Adult B'nai Mitzvah class thanks Rabbi Jordi for his spiritual guidance; our CBT-BI family for joining us as we were called to the Torah on June 17; Diane Shapiro, Marcy Kaufman, Donna Blocher and Lori Gerstein for their help with shopping, baking and/or oneg set-up; Steve and Donna Blocher, Gail

Chaskes, Debbi Judlowitz, Behrooz Nazer, and Saul and Dina Ronsaro for ushering; Joy Symington for her catering assistance; and Bob Manfre for his invaluable help behind the scenes.

With Love,

Andi Atamian, Myra Caplan, Sue-Ann Dunn, Betty London, Beth Nazer, and Luba and Nathan Veytsman

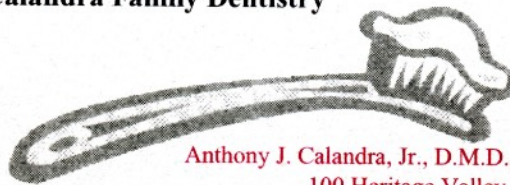
## *The Shofar*

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## Continuing the Dream...

### A Tribute to the Past Presidents of Beth Israel, B'nai Tikvah, and Sons of Israel

*Last month, CBT-BI honored all of the past leaders of the former Beth Israel, B'nai Tikvah, and Sons of Israel congregations at the Past Presidents' Ball. Below are excerpts from the keynote speech.*

Leadership, the theme of our tribute tonight, is a multifaceted word to define, and it could mean something different to each of us here this evening. Some of us would say that it is a position: executive, explorer, mover and shaker, or trendsetter. Others may say that it is the capacity to lead: organized, strong, skillful, dedicated, or influential. Still, others may say that it is the act of leading: focused, detailed, energetic, enthusiastic, and eager... among others.

Roll all three into one person, and you will find an effective leader, one who creates an inspiring vision of the future, then motivates and stirs others to reach that vision.

Such a leader is pro-active, and solves problems. Leaders may think analytically, yet they have the foresight to blend logic with the passion of shared values to build something that is meaningful to others as well as to themselves.

A leader is directly and indirectly involved in the process while coaching, encouraging, and supporting others...and ultimately, a community is born, grows, and survives. It is like a bonfire: We can start it, but the question is, "How is it sustained for continued warmth and nourishment?" It may take a village at first, but with a plan, with guidance, with persistence, and by getting our hands dirty, the flame survives and so does the community.

Sixteen families in Turnersville had a vision in 1972. They formed the Washington Township Jewish Community Center Association, known later and founded as Congregation B'nai Tikvah in 1974.



Many years prior, in 1922, a similar dream came to fruition in Woodbury when another group of visionaries formed the Woodbury Hebrew Congregation. As their vision continued to grow through the years, the congregation later became known and founded as Beth Israel Congregation in 1928.

In that same year of 1922, a group of Lithuanian immigrant women spearheaded the movement to purchase a building in Clayton and open a synagogue so that they could be included in the worship services, which were previously denied to them in an all-male orthodox shul five miles away. With their expansion in 1956, Sons of Israel became a Conservative congregation.

The long established Beth Israel Congregation and nearby Congregation Sons of Israel, joined by Congregation B'nai Tikvah, AND fueled by the commitment and service of their presidents, spirited and nurtured a Jewish presence in southern New Jersey, which thrives today in Congregation B'nai Tikvah-Beth Israel, chartered in 2010.

This evening, we honor the compassion and strength of the presidents of those synagogues. They signed on, determined to ensure the continuation of the dreams born so many years before... not solely for themselves, but for family, friends, neighbors, and for those they may never know.

— Donna Blocher



## Past Presidents' Ball, June 4, 2017

Photos by Bonnie Wireback





## Past Presidents' Ball





## What's your favorite/most interesting vacation destination?

The most interesting trip we ever had was when we won a 10-day trip to Portugal, courtesy of the NJ Winegrowers. If you want to find out how, check out their Passport program.

Fortunately, the trip had few constraints, except staying within the Winegrowers budget and working with their travel agent. She suggested we choose small group tours that interested us from Viator, and she put together the rest from there. It was a great idea and some of our small group tours were just the two of us, the others were filled with interesting people. We walked on ancient castles where knights and crusaders had roamed, strolled beautiful seaside walks, and ate lots of lovely meals — mostly in outdoor cafes. We drank a lot of wine and Port.

— Karen & Steve Kurtz



After we retired in 2006, we planned a cross-country road trip in our minivan. In the fall of that year we visited many wonderful sights along our route, but the national parks in Utah were our overwhelming favorites. Of Arches, Zion, and Bryce Canyon, remote and undisturbed

Arches National Park stood out with its 2,000 natural arches and a landscape of sandstone that is constantly swept by wind and water. We spent two days exploring the park. We did the scenic drive; we walked trails to see many arches, including Landscape Arch, a 306 foot-long beauty that is in danger of crumbling, though not in our lifetime. We walked through fins of red rocks on thick, red sand to view an arch called Sand Dune (see photo). We stayed in the charming town of Moab, which is surrounded by mountains and filled with restaurants and shops selling Native American crafts. Arches and Moab have created an indelible image we will always cherish.

— Diane & Art Shapiro



*Continued on Page 8*

## Your Vacation Tales

*Continued from Page 7*

The most unusual place our family visited was Antelope Canyon in Page, Arizona, near the northern border of the state. It is a "slot canyon" that looks like a crevice in the earth, and you must descend down a steep ladder to reach the canyon floor. The canyon's orange-toned walls have eroded into beautiful shapes by rainwater and sand that rushes through it. Beams of light from above make the walls appear like flowing and billowy drapery. As a photographer, I felt like I was in heaven! Earl and Payton were fascinated as well, and enjoyed jumping from wall to wall, where you could barely get any footing. It took us six hours to get to this place, which is practically in the middle of nowhere on Navajo Nation land. Definitely worth the trip! — *Randi Wolf*

If a magnificent blue sky, emerald waters, white sand beaches, snow-capped mountains, every fun activity imaginable, restaurants from around the world, accommodations to please every taste, and friendly local residents are appealing to you, then you need to visit our 50th state. Hawaii is not just the island that contains Honolulu. It includes several islands, each one containing its own charm.

You'll sun bathe on black sand beaches, helicopter and observe an active volcano, and play golf on some of the world's best courses. There's something wonderful to do day and night. Whatever your idea of a wonderful vacation spot is, Hawaii is the place for you to go. — *Paul & Kaye Bunkin*

### Up next:

#### What's on your bucket list?

Send your answers to Lisa Parker,  
editor@cbtbi.org.

Responses will appear in the next Shofar.



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