



# Chadashot Ha'am

January 2013

Tevet/Sh'vat

## A Message from Rabbi Saks

A few weeks ago I had the privilege of spending a week in Israel with a small group of rabbinic colleagues. While I can't possibly go into all of the detail of my trip in this short article, I want to share a few of the highlights. After spending Shabbat in Jerusalem and exploring some of the ancient history of the City of David, we went south to visit the communities of *Moshav Netiv Haasarah* and *Kibbutz K'far Aza*, two communities that sit right on the Gaza border. At both places we heard about the impact of the recent rocket fire on their communities and, in particular, on their children, whose kindergarten buildings are reinforced to serve as bomb shelters.



More important, though, was the message we heard from each of our hosts. At *Netiv Haasarah*, Raz told us about growing up in that community in the 1980s and how Gaza was the closest city. He would travel to Gaza with his family to eat at restaurants, go to the beach, and spend time with Arab friends who lived there. Today, when his five-and-a-half-year-old son comments on the violence, he strives to teach him that not everyone on the other side of the border is a terrorist. He asks himself, "How can I raise my kids not to hate? While there are bad people, they do not represent everyone." While looking over at a former Israeli settlement on the other side of the border, Raz remarked,

"Regardless of what I think of my neighbor, if I ensure that he has a quiet life, then I will have a quiet life."

Israel is so much more than its current politics and its conflict with its neighbors. This is one of the most important reasons why I plan to lead us on a congregational trip to Israel in 2014. In addition to standing in solidarity with Israelis most affected by the recent escalation, we also encountered the incredible things that Israel is doing today. On our day in Tel Aviv, we met with a professor at Ben Gurion University who, in his spare time, volunteers with Hotline for Migrant Workers, a non-profit organization that is dedicated to promoting the rights of undocumented migrant workers and refugees. We learned of asylum seekers who flee Sudan and Eritrea, make their way through northeast Africa and Egypt and eventually arrive at Israel's border in the Sinai. When these refugees and asylum seekers arrive, Israel wrestles with what place they should have in Israeli society. At the same time, Israelis recognize that as Jews, we have had to flee lands in which we were not welcome; we were chased from our homes and waited 2000 years to return. Israel makes sure these refugees are not turned away. This part of our trip reminded me of the work of our Social Action Committee, our event last year with the Burundi drummers, and the empathy that we can feel as a Jewish

community for the refugees and asylum seekers here in southern Maine.

On our last day in Israel, we volunteered with *Leket*, an organization that gathers unharvested produce from Israel's fields and redistributes it to the hungry in Israel. *Leket* is the Hebrew word for the gleanings that the Torah requires us to leave behind for those who are in need when we harvest our produce. Our volunteer work with *Leket* involved sorting tomatoes, eggplant and lettuce to send to food programs throughout the country. Much of the produce that *Leket* collects would rot on the vine without the efforts of this organization. *Leket* ensures that less food is wasted and fewer go hungry while bringing Torah values to life by feeding tens of thousands of Jewish and Arab Israelis every year.

These are some of the incredible experiences that I had during my short visit to Israel. Over the coming months and year, you will have opportunities to learn about other exciting and powerful experiences that we can have together as a congregation in Israel: visiting Israel's ancient and modern historical sites, volunteering with social justice organizations and bringing Jewish values to life, praying together in Jerusalem. Please mark your calendar for February 2014 and begin saving. I really hope you'll join us... next year in Jerusalem.

## President's Message - Lisa Pierce

There was a moment during our recent *Chanukah* celebration when I looked around the sanctuary and felt a surge of gratitude for our Bet Ha'am. The seats were filled with happy faces, glowing in the lights of the many, many menorahs that lined our windows. The light from the hundreds of candles danced in the windows and reflected back on the raised hands of excited children who were fully engaged in helping Rabbi Saks tell his *Chanukah* story in just the right way. The joy in the room was contagious, and I was delighted to be there.

Thank you to the volunteers who helped to make that celebration so festive: Erin Koepf, Jill Epstein, Peter Scott, Andy Abrams, Priya Natarajn, Jessica Butzel, Deborah Stone, Amy Iris, Josie Pierce, Molly Stone, Emma Tabenken, and Katherine Otterson.

May the bright lights and the warmth of being together this season carry us forward through the rest of the winter.

As we open the calendar to 2013, I have lots of congregational activity to report.

I'll start with another thank you to the over 270 of you who filled out our recent strategic planning survey. Our participation rate for this survey far exceeded our expectations. It is truly awesome to have such extensive feedback as we begin to prioritize everyone's hopes and dreams into a cohesive and manageable plan for Bet Ha'am's future. I am proud of our community for responding so thoughtfully and so creatively. It is also exciting to see that new ideas



flowed as easily as the affirmations of our cherished values. I think we will find it easy to maintain the essence of who we are as a congregation while we also find new ways to open our doors a little wider to embrace the changing world around us.

As we start our year by contemplating changes and improvements for our congregation, our office is also going through some big changes. We are upgrading our synagogue software to fit the new era. In just a matter of weeks, we'll have a new look to our website and you will have more interactive features at your fingertips, including access to your synagogue records, religious school details and adult learning information. Stay tuned for more information about how you can be connected with Bet Ha'am right from the comfort of your own desktop! And we appreciate and thank you in advance for your patience as we all get up to speed with the new system.

We are leaping into the future in more ways than one. In addition to the excitement of the strategic planning effort and new bells and whistles in the office, our Board and our committees are planning lots of exciting things for the first part of 2013. Later this month, we will welcome NYU's Jewish a cappella group, *Ani V'ata*, including former Bet Ha'am student Kelsey Krull. We have a

gala fundraising dinner dance planned for April 6, where we will honor Ken Lehman and enjoy live music with the Time Pilots. Plans are also underway to welcome Rabbi Mark Washofsky as this year's Bernstein Scholar-in-Residence during the weekend of April 26 to 28. In the weeks ahead, please look for announcements about the following: a brand-new adult learning mini-series, a Passover workshop, Adult *B'nai Mitzvah* classes, social action programming to raise awareness of issues for which we can make a difference, and more.

We start 2013 with 360 member families, an ambitious agenda, the lights of the season in our eyes and love in our hearts. The warmth and enthusiasm when we get together are tangible, and the bonds we are forging in the process will make our embrace of the future that much stronger. It's going to be a great year.

### Chadashot Chai-lights

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**Congregation Bet Ha'am**

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**Executive Committee**

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 Lisa Munderback, Vice President  
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 Tim Boulette, Past President

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 Michael Messerschmidt  
 Jeremy Moser  
 Perry Newman  
 Jane Snerson  
 Steve Steinbock  
 Nathan Szanton  
 Deborah Tillman Stone

**Office Hours:**

Tuesday - Friday, 9:00 AM-4:00 PM  
 The office is closed on Mondays.  
 Building Use: All meetings, events or gatherings  
 must be scheduled with the office.

**Office extensions and email addresses:**

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## From the Religious School Director

### Orly Mendelson Biggie



During December, our fifth graders and our evening Religious School students welcomed special guest speakers to Bet Ha'am.

The fifth grade's speakers were linked to the students' *Tikun Olam* studies. After raising \$140 in a bake sale the students decided that the funds should be split

between two very worthy organizations: the South Portland Cancer Center and *Konbit Sante*, an organization that helps provide medical services in Haiti. The money raised by our students will help *Konbit Sante* buy prenatal vitamins for Haitian women. Doug Watts, the teacher of the *Tikun Olam* unit, invited representatives from both organizations to speak with our students. The students learned about the many services and types of support provided to people in our community affected by cancer. They also learned more about Haiti, which has very high rates of poverty.

Our evening Religious School students and their parents participated in an amazing talk with Edith Pagelson, a Holocaust survivor who moved to Maine a few years ago to be closer to her family. Her story of survival was a difficult one to hear, but her optimism and positive outlook on life were inspiring. As time passes, there are fewer and fewer Holocaust survivors to share their stories and we are grateful that Mrs. Pagelson was able to come to Bet Ha'am.

## Edith Pagelson, Holocaust Survivor



## Schedule of Services

### Friday, January 4

*Kabbalat Shabbat Service* 7:30 PM

### Saturday, January 5

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

*Parsha Shemot*

### Friday, January 11

*Family Kabbalat Shabbat* 6:30 PM

### Saturday, January 12

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

*Parsha Vaera*

### Friday, January 18

*Kabbalat Shabbat Service* 7:30 PM

### Saturday, January 19

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

*Parsha Bo*

### Friday, January 25

*Kabbalat Shabbat Service* 7:30 PM

### Saturday, January 26

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

*Parsha Beshalach*

## Religious School News

**Thank you** to last month's substitute teachers: Theresa Yudaken and Roy Rosenberg.

**Thank you** to Amy Rovin, Cybele Brooks, Andi Summers and Tracy Silverman for wrapping our teachers' *Chanukah* gifts.

**Thank you** to Nancy Goldberg, Gretchen Knowlton, Andy Abrams, Jodi Welch, Martha Ollove, Michelle Albahary, Trish Wasserman, Faith Moritz, David Bass Clark, Elise Richer, Sue Cohen, Joyce Tabenken, Avni Young, Lauren Kropp, Wendy Hayes, Sherri Carignan, Andrew Kosak, Lisa Tabenken, Pam Weiss, Brett Stillman and Jacob Sperber for all their help with our *Chanukah* morning celebration. I hope you enjoy some of the pictures from our celebration. (See pages 5 & 6).

### Shabbat Dinners in January:

Second graders will participate in the Family Service on January 11. A *Shabbat* pot luck dinner will begin at 5:30 PM. Please RSVP by January 6.

Seventh graders will lead the Friday evening service on January 25. A *Shabbat* pot luck dinner will begin at 6:30 PM. Please RSVP by January 20.

### Family and Parent Programs:

The last session of the second grade Family Connection will be on Sunday, January 6, from 9:30 AM to noon.

Rabbi Saks will lead a special study session with parents of third grade students on Sunday, January 13, from 9:30 - 10:30 AM.

## Social Action Committee News

The Social Action Committee will meet on January 17 at 6:30 PM at Bet Ha'am. All are welcome.

The Social Action Committee is working with local organizations to help meet some of the needs of new Mainers from around the world. Portland Adult Education (PAE) has a great need for volunteers to assist in classrooms and to work as tutors with students from more than 80 countries who are learning English. Tutors work with students on reading, writing, math, job skills such as preparing a resume, and preparation for the citizenship test.

Tutoring sessions take place at PAE at 57 Douglass Street in Portland. A volunteer training session is scheduled at PAE on January 25 from noon to 2:00 PM. For more information, please contact PAE's volunteer coordinator, Moey Burchenal, at [burchm@portlandschools.org](mailto:burchm@portlandschools.org) or at 874-8155.

## The Leevees Concert



## Religious School Chanukah Program



## Strategic Planning Update

Community response to the Congregational Strategic Planning Survey has been exceptional. **More than 270 people completed the survey!** Most survey respondents also shared insightful comments about every aspect of synagogue life in addition to checking the boxes. We will thoroughly review and analyze all of this input. The Board and the Strategic Planning Team will have an initial discussion of the survey results at the January Board meeting and a full report of the results will be available to the Congregation.

Our nine congregant study circles each completed and submitted reports of their research and recommendations during December. These reports reflect many hours of work by the more than 70 congregants who participated in the study circles. We send a huge thank you to all of you. These reports are an excellent resource for anyone interested in a comprehensive view of Bet Ha'am today and will be used extensively in formulating our Strategic Plan. They have a wealth of ideas to help the Congregation thrive in the years ahead. Copies of the reports are available in a Strategic Planning notebook in the Library.

During the winter and spring, we will have continuing opportunities for congregant input as we draft and refine our Strategic Plan. Please feel free to share your thoughts at any time with Elaine Falender, Strategic Planning Team chair, [efalender@gmail.com](mailto:efalender@gmail.com), or with any other member of the Strategic Planning Team. We look forward to having everyone's participation!

## Adult Library News

**January is a great time to roast chestnuts on an open fire, cozy up and read a book. Recent acquisitions to the Bet Ha'am adult library are:**

- *A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism*, Phyllis Goldstein
- *Tomorrow's Synagogues Today: Creating Vibrant Centers of Jewish Life*, Hayim Herring, funded from the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund
- *Women's Lives, Women's Legacies: Passing Your Beliefs and Blessings to Future Generations, Creating Your Own Ethical Will*, Rachael Freed, donated by Rabbi Saks
- *Heartmates: A Guide for the Spouse and Family of the Heart Patient*, Rachel Freed, funded from the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund
- *The Heartmates Journal: A Companion for Partners of People with Serious Illness*, Rachel Freed, funded from the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund
- *Das Pintele Yud (Archival Yiddish sheet music, circa 1909) - the great hit of Thomasfrefsky's Peoples' Theatre*, donated by Jane Snerson

### Invitation and request for new Library Committee members

The next meeting of the Library Committee will be on Thursday, January 31, from 1:00-3:00 PM in the Bet Ha'am Library. We invite you to join the committee, bring ideas on how to grow the library, plan events that the library might sponsor, and suggest titles and authors the library "must have."

**Mazel Tov** to Bernice Lukas, Kimberly Eames and Julie Meltzer, our new library card owners and book borrowers.

**A Friendly Reminder:** The list of overdue books is growing. Please return or renew books that you have. Thanks.



Family Chanukah activities

## Join the Bet Ha'am Donor Gallery

We invite you to join the Bet Ha'am Donor Gallery today! We have many needs and many ways for you to contribute. If you have an event you would like to celebrate, a person you would like to honor, a *yahrzeit* to remember, or you just want to help support our programs, please fill out the form and send it along with your check to Bet Ha'am. Include an address if you would like an acknowledgement to be sent.

Our Donor Gallery listing should read:

Please acknowledge to: \_\_\_\_\_

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Fund choice (please check one):

- Annual Fund  
 General Fund  
 Rabbi's Discretionary Fund  
 Adult Library Fund  
 Berkowitz Open Door Fund  
 Building Capital Campaign  
 Cohen Fund for Worship & Learning  
 Goldfinger Fund for Israel Travel  
 Religious School Library Fund  
 Rosalyne S. & Sumner T. Bernstein  
     Scholar in Residence Fund  
 Sandmel Education Fund  
 Tutor Fund  
 Youth Fund

### ***Bet Ha'am Donor Gallery***

#### **We thank our generous contributors**

##### **Annual Fund**

- Gene & Jeanne Grindlinger
- In memory of Sadie Newfield by Howard & Pamela Glass
- Barbara & Michael Frost
- In honor of Noah Goren becoming *Bar Mitzvah* by David & Kim Goren
- In appreciation of Rabbi Saks as Noah became *Bar Mitzvah* by David & Kim Goren
- In appreciation of Sharon & Perry Newman as Noah became *Bar Mitzvah* by David & Kim Goren
- In appreciation of Jon Lockman as Noah became *Bar Mitzvah* by David & Kim Goren
- Tim Boulette & Brianna Twofoot
- In memory of Gerry & Ruth Tabenken by Lee & Lisa Tabenken
- Dan & Ann Rose
- Alan & Karen Lukas
- Susan Paris

##### **Capital Campaign**

- In memory of Sheila Ravitch Gitlitz on her *yahrzeit* by Lee & Jamie Broder
- In memory of Joseph Ravitch on his *yahrzeit* by Lee & Jamie Broder
- In memory of Arleen Lichtenstein on her *yahrzeit* by Jo Ann & Wayne Goodman
- In memory of Richard & Sylvia Miller on their *yahrzeits* by Jo Ann & Wayne Goodman

##### **Rabbi's Discretionary Fund**

- In appreciation of Rabbi Saks by John & Beryl Cole

##### **General Fund**

- In memory of Howard Glass's mother by Paul Mistler, Robin Hamilton & Crystal Parlin
- In memory of Charles Cole by John & Beryl Cole
- In appreciation by Leslie Girmscheid & Barry Blumenfeld

##### ***Zecher T'zaddik L'vrachah***

- Condolences to Annette & Noel Goodman, Jonathan & Janel Goodman, and Madeline Goodman on the loss of Jacqueline Arlene Bleier
- Condolences to John & Beryl Cole on the loss of John's father, Charles Cole

# JANUARY 2013

| Sun  | Mon   | Tue   | Wed   | Thu  | Fri   | Sat   |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|---|
|  |   | 1   | 2<br>Morning <i>Minyan</i><br>7:00 AM                                       | 3  | 4<br><i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i><br>Service 7:30 PM   | 5<br>Torah Study<br>9:00 AM<br>Worship Service<br>10:00 AM  |
| 6<br>Religious School Grade 1-6<br>9:00 AM-Noon<br>Grade 7-10 5:00-7:30 PM<br>Grade 11-12 Program<br>5:00 PM   | 7<br>Office Closed  | 8   | 9<br>Morning <i>Minyan</i><br>7:00 AM                                       | 10<br>Adult Learning<br>Committee<br>7:00 PM                             | 11<br>Grade 2 Class<br><i>Shabbat</i> Dinner<br>5:30 PM<br>Family <i>Kabbalat</i><br><i>Shabbat</i> Service<br>6:30 PM                    | 12<br>Torah Study<br>9:00 AM<br>Worship Service<br>10:00 AM   |
| 13<br>Religious School Grade 1-6<br>9:00 AM-Noon<br>Grade 7-10<br>5:00-7:30 PM   | 14<br>Office Closed                                       | 15<br>Garden<br>Committee<br>5:30 PM<br>Executive<br>Committee<br>6:30 PM | 16<br>Morning <i>Minyan</i><br>7:00 AM<br>Education<br>Committee<br>7:00 PM | 17<br>Gala Committee<br>6:30 PM<br>Social Action<br>Committee<br>6:30 PM | 18<br><i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i><br>Service 7:30 PM  | 19<br>Torah Study<br>9:00 AM<br>Worship Service<br>10:00 AM   |
| 20<br>Religious School Grade 1-6<br>9:00 AM-Noon<br>Grade 7-10 5:00-7:30 PM<br>12:15 PM community pizza<br>lunch and performance by<br>NYU's Jewish a capella<br>group, <i>Ani V'ata</i> | 21<br>Office Closed                                       | 22<br>Board of Trustees<br>Meeting 6:30 PM                                | 23<br>Morning <i>Minyan</i><br>7:00 AM                                      | 24   | 25<br>Grade 7 Class<br><i>Shabbat</i> Dinner<br>6:30 PM<br><i>Kabbalat Panim</i><br>7:00 PM<br><i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i><br>Service 7:30 PM | 26<br>Torah Study<br>9:00 AM<br>Worship Service<br>10:00 AM<br>Tu b'Shevat Seder<br>and Potluck Supper<br>4:00 PM |
| 27<br>Religious School Grade 1-6<br>9:00 AM-Noon<br>Grade 7-10 5:00-7:30 PM<br>Grade 11-12 Program<br>5:00 PM  | 28<br>Office Closed<br>Membership<br>Committee<br>7:00 PM | 29  | 30<br>Morning <i>Minyan</i><br>7:00 AM                                      | 31<br>Library Committee<br>1:00 PM                                       |   |   |