



# Chadashot Ha'am

February 2014

Adar 5774

## A Message from Rabbi Saks

During our final session with this year's Bernstein Scholar-in-Residence, Dr. Nehemia Polen, we learned about what it takes to raise a *mensch*. *Mensch* is the Yiddish word for a human being, but culturally it means much more than that. It implies a good person, a fine and upstanding citizen, someone who has integrity and honor.



One gem of wisdom that Dr. Polen shared has stuck in my mind. Being a *mensch* doesn't mean being a saint. It doesn't demand perfection. It is a quality that any ordinary person can embrace. Of course *tzaddikim* (righteous people) and saints are often *menschen* (the plural of *mensch*), but the converse isn't always the case. Dr. Polen described a *mensch* as the neighbor to whom you would give your house key when you go out of town. If your mail needs to be collected, if your fish need to be fed or if your pipes freeze, you don't need or want Mother Teresa on the job. You want the *mensch* in your neighborhood to take care of things while you're away.

Last fall at our High Holy Day services, I spoke about the importance of relationship in the success of our congregation. There are synagogues that fill their calendars with programs and then hope that people will show up. Successful congregations fill their communities with relationships and let the programming flow from the connections created. Over the course of the coming months, we will gather in neighborhood meetings to get to know one another, to find and become the *menschen* in our communities and to build Bet Ha'am connections in our own backyards.

By the time you read this, we will have had three neighborhood meetings hosted by members of our congregation. These gatherings are designed to provide opportunities to connect and reconnect with one another, learn who from our synagogue family lives in our vicinity and become informed about the progress of our Strategic Plan as Bet Ha'am prepares for the years ahead. I am looking forward to these meetings and

looking forward to engaging with each of you in deepening bonds in our community and gathering your input on the next steps of our Strategic Plan.

Some of you have received an invitation to a neighborhood meeting near your home; others of you have graciously offered to host such gatherings at your houses. If one of our neighborhood meetings is not yet on your calendar, please keep an eye out for your invitation in the coming months. If you'd like to host a get-together at your home, please contact Andrew Kosak ([andrew.kosak@gmail.com](mailto:andrew.kosak@gmail.com) or 729-0207). I look forward to connecting with each of you in the months ahead.

*Pirke Avot* teaches us that Rabbi Hillel was accustomed to teaching, "B'makom she'in anashim, hishtadel l'hiyot ish." (In a place where no one acts like a *mensch*, strive to be a *mensch*.) There are *menschen* all around us and each of us possesses the ability to be a *mensch*. To find one another, we can begin by reaching out.

## President's Message - Lisa Munderback

I recently saw a message in the listserve for synagogue presidents that alerted me to a special event in London this month. It is the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the Czech Torah scrolls in London. Many of you know that Bet Ha'am has one of the 1,564 scrolls that came to London from Prague on February 7, 1964. I decided I wanted to learn more about the journey of these remarkable scrolls.



early 1960's. In 1963, officials from Artia, the state corporation that was responsible for works of art, asked if he would be interested in buying some Torah scrolls.

On his return to London, he contacted a fellow American and Reform Rabbi, Rabbi Harold Reinhart, of the Westminster Synagogue. Ralph Yablon, a congregant of the synagogue, became the benefactor for purchase of the scrolls. The 1,564 scrolls arrived at the Westminster Synagogue on February 7, 1964.

In the first decades of the 20th century there were approximately 92,000 Jews in Prague. The Jewish Museum of Prague was established in 1906 to preserve artifacts left from the destruction of the Jewish ghetto several years prior. The Museum was closed to the public in March 1939 after the Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, which comprised most of Czechoslovakia. Leaders of the Jewish community in Prague negotiated with the Nazis to save the objects that were confiscated, and the Nazis approved a project to establish a central museum, albeit for very different motives than those of the Museum's founders. Mass deportations of Jews from Bohemia and Moravia occurred in 1941-1942, and the inventory of the museum expanded by fourteen times as a result. The Germans put a large number of Jews to work to sort, catalogue and store the items from about 150 congregations. Over forty warehouses, many of them deserted synagogues, were used to store the artifacts. When the task was completed, the Jewish workers were deported to the Terezin concentration camp. There were few survivors.

After the defeat of Germany, a free and independent Czechoslovakia emerged, but less than three years later, the Communists staged a coup and took over the government of Czechoslovakia. The Museum came under government control. It included the 18th century Michle Synagogue, with its thick stone walls built into the hillside in the suburbs of Prague. In 1958, this synagogue became the damp warehouse where the hundreds of Torah scrolls and over 200,000 artifacts from all over Central Europe were stored.

Eric Estorick, an American living in London, was an art dealer who paid many visits to Prague in the

Most of the scrolls had a label with a number that referred to the German card index prepared by the Jewish curators at Prague's Central Jewish Museum. This number was used to establish the Czech collection point from which each scroll had been received. Some scrolls also had a Czech number painted on the rollers.

After months of sorting, examining and cataloguing each scroll, the goal of getting the scrolls back into the life of Jewish congregations across the world began. The Memorial Scrolls Trust was established to carry out this task.

Our Czech Torah came to us through the efforts of Frances Miller, of blessed memory, and Rabbi David Sandmel, our first rabbi. We received it from the Memorial Scrolls Trust in August 1985. With it came German museum catalogue tag #66163. Our scroll is #322 of the 1,564, and is on permanent loan to us from the Trust. The scroll came from the town of Kostelec nad Orlici in Bohemia and was written in 1860.

Frances Miller commissioned local artists to create new rollers (*Atzei chaim*) and a cover that continue to adorn the Torah scroll. Because it is frail from age and its arduous journeys, we now use it only during *b'nai mitzvah*, when it is passed from each generation to the next. It also serves to remind us of the communities lost during the Holocaust and our responsibility to remember them.

Much of this article is derived from the website [memorialscrollstrust.org](http://memorialscrollstrust.org). I encourage you to read further about the Czech Torah scrolls at this site and in the special notebook in our library.

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**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.

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**From the Religious School Director****Orly Mendelson Biggie**

I spent last weekend with 25 of our teens, Rabbi Saks and some adult volunteers at Camp Ketcha in Scarborough. This was our first *Shabbaton* retreat for our Sunday evening students.

The primary goal of the *Shabbaton* was for our students to get to know each other better. The retreat was filled with games; some were related to Jewish topics and others were related to team building. Rabbi Saks and Zoe Eiber, our youth advisor, led the group in Bermuda Triangle, a target-solving game. We played this game a couple of years ago with Bet Ha'am committee chairs. It was wonderful to see how much more quickly our teens found the solutions!

On Friday evening, we had *Kabbalat Shabbat*, led by Peter Scott with his guitar, dinner and a traditional *Shabbat* service. Our Saturday morning was created by some of the students during a recent Religious School elective class. The students found different segments on YouTube to replace some of the traditional prayers. As we read the week's portion from the Torah (*B'shalach*), the beautiful writings of *The Song of the Sea* flashed on the screen. Saturday's surprise was a special performance by award-winning magician Phil Smith, who awed us all with his feats of magic. His final surprise was Snow White, the bunny, and we all got to pet her.

This retreat ran smoothly and successfully because of the help of the many volunteers who are listed in this month's Religious School News. We are grateful to the Bronstein Foundation for its generous funding of this *Shabbaton*. The feedback from the teens was great. Knowing that they had so much fun learning and socializing with each other made this first-time event one that we hope will become an ongoing part of our Religious School.

## Schedule of Services

### Friday, January 31

Tot Shabbat Service 5:30 PM  
Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

### Saturday, February 1

Torah Study 9:00 AM  
Worship Service 10:00 AM  
Parashat T'rumah

### Friday, February 7

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

### Saturday, February 8

Torah Study 9:00 AM  
Worship Service 10:00 AM  
Parashat T'zaveh

### Friday, February 14

Family Kabbalat Shabbat 6:30 PM

### Saturday, February 15

Torah Study 9:00 AM  
Worship Service 10:00 AM  
Parashat Ki Tisa

### Friday, February 21

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

### Saturday, February 22

Torah Study 9:00 AM  
Worship Service 10:00 AM  
Parashat Vayak'heil

### Friday, February 28

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

### Saturday, March 1

Torah Study 9:00 AM  
Worship Service 10:00 AM  
Parashat P'kudei

## Religious School News

Thank you to all who helped with our first Teen Retreat at Camp Ketcha: Josh Levy, Deb Stone, Andrew Kosak, Peter Scott, Zoe Eiber, Lisa & Lee Tabenken, Jennifer Frank, Kirsten Berman, Jessica Butzel, Warren Moorhead, Deb Rothenberg, Louise Abramson, Jennifer Riggle, Julie Russem, Lisa Pierce, Marie Leavitt and Steve Steinbock.

Thank you to Gretchen Knowlton, our substitute last month.

Third grade students will participate in the *Shabbat* service on February 14. A potluck dinner for the students and their families will begin at 5:30 PM. Please RSVP by Friday, January 31.

## Hope House Donations

Hope House provides temporary housing in the Parkside neighborhood of Portland for new arrivals who are seeking asylum. The twelve residents need toiletries and laundry soap. If you can help provide new items to meet their needs, please drop off the following items in the box labeled "HOPE HOUSE."

bath and hand soaps  
shower gels  
shampoos  
toothbrushes  
toothpaste  
toilet paper  
facial tissues  
laundry soap

Thank you!

## Strategic Plan Implementation Update

Many of the goals and actions of our Strategic Plan have begun to blossom at Bet Ha'am. The lively and inspiring January Religious School retreat, the high-energy Jewish music program with Shira Kline and the neighborhood gatherings with Rabbi Saks are just a few examples.

Board liaison David Butzel recently reported on the initiatives of the Social Action Committee. One of the key priorities in the Strategic Plan is to expand and enliven our participation in *tikkun olam*, partnering with God and the community to repair the world, create positive change and bring social justice to all. The Social Action Committee is exploring the following ways to enhance *tikkun olam* at Bet Ha'am:

1. Develop a system to make social action projects a regular part of the Religious School curriculum for all age groups.
2. Identify community members already involved with social action work and help those members to serve as guides and support others in taking the initial steps that can be barriers to involvement.
3. Develop a variety of opportunities for adults, families and children to meet the different skill sets, time availability and motivations of various groups.
4. Consider holding meetings in members' homes and reaching out individually, person to person, to expand our social action network and our personal connections.

Are you interested in exploring new avenues for *tikkun olam* for you or your family? Do you have ideas or experience to share with others? To share your thoughts, contact Randi Greenwald, [randigreenwald@gmail.com](mailto:randigreenwald@gmail.com), or Eleanor Goldberg, [egoldb1@maine.rr.com](mailto:egoldb1@maine.rr.com), co-chairs of the Social Action Committee, or Board liaison David Butzel, [davidbutzel@yahoo.com](mailto:davidbutzel@yahoo.com).

## Save the Date!



Just announced!

Mark your calendars for **Saturday, April 5**, for an evening at Bet Ha'am with Maine's Traditional Irish Band, **Sligo Road**.

Sligo Road features Bet Ha'am's own Sharon and Perry Newman, along with the talents of Kim Kenway and Peter Walsh. You won't want to miss the band's repertoire of classic sing-alongs, touching ballads, rowdy foot-stompers and boozy laments. Stay tuned for details!



From our Tu B'Shevat Seder: Rabbi Saks holds up challah made with wheat grown in Bet Ha'am's own gardens. Thank you to our Garden Committee for making this celebration delightful and delicious!

## Deaf and Hearing Loss Awareness *Shabbat* Program on February 8



Please join us on February 8 as our services are interpreted into American Sign Language and we

highlight the use of our Assistive Listening Devices that support those who are deaf or hard of hearing to participate in all aspects of our *Shabbat* activities.

Starting at 9:00 AM with Torah Study, Rabbi Saks will guide the discussion of issues of inclusion, hearing loss and disability. Services at 10:00 AM will include a *D'var Torah* about the Jewish perspective on deafness, based on research by Gail Wartell. A *Kiddush* luncheon will follow the worship service. As always, these activities are open to all, free of charge.

A workshop about Judaism, designed for sign language interpreters, will be held from 12:30 - 2:30 PM.

Specialized telephones and other equipment that can make life easier for those with hearing loss will be on display in the lobby.

This special *Shabbat* program is presented by Maine Center on Deafness and Congregation Bet Ha'am.

We hope you will join us and invite others who may be interested in attending.

## Bet Café is making a comeback!

By popular demand, Bet Café will be available on select Sunday mornings in the hallway by the sanctuary. A Bet Ha'am committee will host each Sunday morning that Bet Café is open.

Coffee, tea and goodies will be available for parents of our Religious School students and anyone who is at Bet Ha'am.

We invite you to stop by and find out a little bit more about the committee of the week. We hope you will take the time to enjoy a *nosh* and some good conversation. Or you can simply relax by the sun-filled windows.



Thanks to the committees who have volunteered to host Bet Café!

## Peaks Island Puppets Debut at Bet Ha'am!

On Sunday, March 2, from 12:30-2:00 PM, Bet Ha'am will present the Portland-based Peaks Island Puppets in their original production, "The Rudder Family Holiday Planner: A Celebration of the Jewish Holidays."

Holidays bring families closer together, and also ruffle a few feathers! The Rudders of Munjoy Hill are a family like any other, with traditional values challenged by new circumstances. Join them on this hilarious romp through the holiday seasons!

The story is brought to life by the innovative puppetry of David Handwerker and Stephanie Eliot, who play Elijah the Prophet and his sidekick, Queen Vashti. In their time-traveling from their biblical roots they meet the Rudder family as the family celebrates the Jewish holidays. Marriage, both



interracial and gay, foreign adoption and goat farming are just a few of the issues that retired hardware store owner Max Rudder never dreamed he would have to face.

The 50-minute play, directed by Julie Goell, features settings by Rush Brown and sound design by Barb Truex.

Peaks Island Puppets collaborated on this production with Boston puppeteers Faye Dupras and Penny Benson, who both studied in the University of Connecticut's renowned Puppet Arts Program.

A pizza party will start at noon, just prior to the show. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for kids.

Stay tuned for more details!

## Purim Carnival Volunteers Wanted!

We're starting to get excited about creating a fabulous Purim Carnival on Sunday morning, March 16.

Dozens of volunteers are needed to pull together this amazing feat of silliness and fun in true Bet Ha'am style.

We need folks to:

- run game stations (we've got tons already prepped, or you can create a new one)
- bake *hamentashen* (in advance)
- work the café
- sell tickets
- help decorate (in advance)

If you are interested in learning more or already know you can't wait to help out, please email Lisa Pierce ([lisa.lisapie@gmail.com](mailto:lisa.lisapie@gmail.com)). Thank you!



## 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  
 Rabbi Berkowitz Open Door Fund  
 Building Capital Campaign  
 Rabbi Cohen Fund for Worship & Learning  
 Rabbi Goldfinger Fund for Israel Travel  
 Lehman Fund for Gardens & Grounds  
 Religious School Library Fund  
 Rosalyne S. & Sumner T. Bernstein  
     Scholar in Residence Fund  
 Rabbi Sandmel Education Fund  
 Tutor Fund  
 Youth Fund

### New Members of the Board

The Board voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the Nominating Committee to elect Lee Broder and Martin Lodish to Bet Ha'am's Board of Trustees, to fill seats vacated mid-term by Perry Newman and Mark Carignan. Both attended their first meeting as Trustees on January 21. Lee, a psychiatric therapist, has been a member for many years and serves on the Caring Committee, the Social Action Committee and the Capital Campaign Committee. She and her husband, Jamie, live in Cumberland Foreside and are blessed with two married sons and their families. Martin, an educational professional who runs a summer camp, has served on several boards and was in last year's Leadership Development group along with his wife, Kristin Scharadt. They have three children and live in Portland.

## Bet Ha'am Donor Gallery

### We thank our generous contributors

#### Annual Fund

- Condolences to my dear friend on the tragic loss of her stepson by Elyas Isaac
- Mylan & Maya Cohen
- Andrea Saks
- Daniel & Nancy Ravin
- James & Paula Zeitlin
- Daniel Sobel & Kira Wigoda
- Lee Jacobson & Cory Kuhl
- Lisa Munderback
- Toni Passerman
- Speedy recovery for Ken Lehman by Charlie & Ellie Miller
- In appreciation by Robert Singer
- Mike & Judy Bruenjes
- Alan & Jill Morris
- In memory of my mother, Paula Goldstaff Piller, by Solange Kellerman
- Jim & Karen Harris
- Wendy & Bill Sirois

#### Capital Fund

- In memory of Leonard Chester by Jay Geller & Cathy Breen

#### General Fund

- In memory of grandmothers, Carrie Ballin and Anna Schanzer, on their *yahrzeits* by Bill & Ki Leffler
- Anonymous
- Anne Babineau
- In memory of Charlotte Kopans on her *yahrzeit* by Rona & Robert Rosenthal
- In appreciation by Martin & Patricia Finkelstein
- Jonathan & Karen Zuckerman
- In appreciation by Bill & Ki Leffler
- Tricia & James Wasserman
- In memory of Joanie Caldwell's father by Toby Rosenberg
- In appreciation by John & Beryl Cole
- In memory of Leonard Chester by Jay Geller & Cathy Breen
- In appreciation of the Caring Committee by Joanie & David Caldwell
- In honor of Ben Grant & Caroline Eliot by Leah Grant

#### Lehman Fund for Gardens & Grounds

- In memory of my mother, Clara Schmidt, on her *yahrzeit* by Karen Lukas

#### Religious School Library Fund

- In appreciation of Ken Lehman by Sue Erber

# February 2014

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

					<b>Jan 31</b> Musician-in-Residence Shira Kline  Tot <i>Shabbat</i> Service 5:30 PM  Potluck <i>Shabbat</i> Dinner 6:15 PM  <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Services 7:30 PM	<b>1</b> Musician-in-Residence Shira Kline Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM  Lunch and Family Program 12:00 PM Parent/Teacher Program 2:00 PM
<b>2</b> No Religious School  Shirlala LIVE IN CONCERT! 12:30 PM Bet Café opens at 11:30 AM	<b>3</b> Office Closed	<b>4</b> Finance Committee 4:00 PM  Executive Committee 5:30 PM  <i>Gabbai</i> Committee 6:30 PM	<b>5</b> Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM  School Change Task Force 5:30 PM Introduction to Judaism 7:00 PM	<b>6</b> Israel Trip Meeting 7:00 PM	<b>7</b> <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 7:30 PM	<b>8</b> Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Deaf and Hearing Loss Awareness Shabbat Program 12:30 PM
<b>9</b> No Religious School	<b>10</b> Office Closed	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM  Education Committee 6:30 PM	<b>13</b> Bet Ha'am Israel Trip  Adult Learning Committee 6:30 PM	<b>14</b> Bet Ha'am Israel Trip  Grade 3 <i>Shabbat</i> Dinner 5:30 PM Family <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 6:30 PM	<b>15</b> Bet Ha'am Israel Trip  Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM
<b>16</b> Bet Ha'am Israel Trip  No Religious School	<b>17</b> Bet Ha'am Israel Trip  Office Closed	<b>18</b> Bet Ha'am Israel Trip  Garden Committee 5:30 PM	<b>19</b> Bet Ha'am Israel Trip  Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM	<b>20</b> Bet Ha'am Israel Trip  Library Committee 10:30 AM	<b>21</b> Bet Ha'am Israel Trip  <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 7:30 PM	<b>22</b> Bet Ha'am Israel Trip  Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM
<b>23</b> Bet Ha'am Israel Trip  No Religious School	<b>24</b> Office Closed	<b>25</b> Board Meeting 6:30 PM	<b>26</b> Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM  Introduction to Judaism 7:00 PM	<b>27</b> Neighborhood Meeting 7:00 PM	<b>28</b> Nominating Committee 12:00 PM  <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 7:30 PM	<b>Mar 1</b> Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM