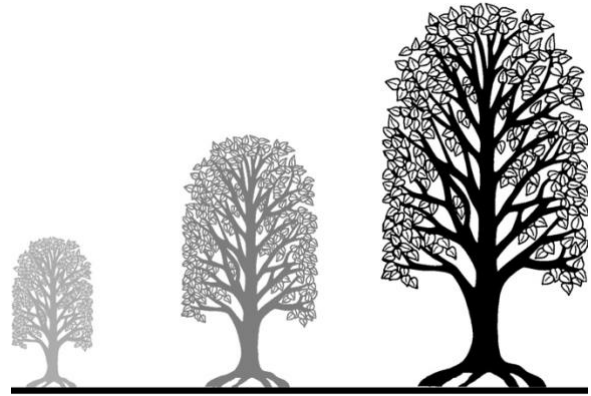


BETH ISRAEL CONGREGATION
862 Washington Street
Bath, Maine 04530



January/February 2023

Tevet / Shevat / Adar 5783

Rabbi's Message

Dear Beth Israel Members and Friends,

As I write to you on the third night of Hanukkah you will not be surprised to learn that the Minnie Brown Center *still* smells of latkes. For anyone who's ever fried up the delicious crispy patties in their home, you know, the smell of oil permeates everything. Nonetheless, the lingering odor fills me with gratitude for the amazing team that dreamed up and carried out a joyous celebration bringing community members and friends together in this space after a *long* time apart.

2022 was certainly a year of transition for our community, as we slowly inched our way back to in-person gatherings and began to establish community norms for celebrating, praying, mourning and rejoicing together. One of the gifts of the past three years, if there is one, has been the opportunity to examine and question our *minhagim* (customs). We were forced to ask: What role does Jewish community play in our lives? What parts of doing Jewish can we do on my own? Which parts of Jewish life are best done in person with others? What parts of Jewish communal life can we participate in virtually? What a gift to be able to raise these questions and more and journey together as we answer them for ourselves and our community as a whole.



Nearly one hundred and one years in, as we continue to grow and change as a congregation, I am blessed to have each of you bring your light and energy to our efforts. You show up, lend a hand, offer support, teach, learn, speak up and welcome others. Let's do more of that in this new year! If we haven't connected recently, please be in touch. I'd love to hear from you and sit down for coffee or take a snowy walk.

Wish hope and gratitude,
Rabbi Vinikoor

President's Message

by Anne Schlitt

In the middle of our life's journey, I found myself in a dark wood.

—Dante

These lines open Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and in the darkness and coldness of this winter season, they struck a chord with me. I've had a challenging couple of years (haven't we all?), and a particularly challenging autumn. Yet words are always there to provide perspective and show us again and again—because we must always be reminded—that we're not alone. Others have felt what we're feeling, have pondered it, written about it, shared it, passed it on, so that centuries later, a woman in Bath, Maine reads the words and feels reconnected to something larger than herself.

But more important than the content of what we read (or watch, or listen to) is the process itself, of studying. There is value in showing up every day, in the repetition of practice, whether you are studying or praying or learning a sport or making art.

And so, to my surprise, I've found the practice of Daf Yomi—reading a page (“daf”) a day of the Talmud—to be a healing, steadying, soothing ritual. Jews around the world participate in each Daf Yomi cycle, which takes 7.5 years to complete. The current cycle began on January 5, 2020, so I'm three years into this Talmudic journey. Some days, it's amazing—there are funny stories, I enjoy the philosophical musings and get an intoxicating peek into ancient Jewish culture. Other days, it's a slog—pages of arcane discussion about the rules of Shabbat, the intricacies of Temple practices, or troubling passages that clash with modern ethics and norms. But through it all, I'm showing up.

Every morning, I make a cup of tea, grab my computer, read the day's daf on Sefaria (the most incredible online resource of Jewish texts), capture my reactions in my journal, then read, watch, and listen to other people's takes on the day's learning, to expand my understanding. The dailiness of this ritual keeps me grounded and also ties me into an ongoing stream of Jewish learning and discussion. In fact, the Talmud itself has been described as one giant conversation across the centuries, with each new generation of scholars and learners adding their own perspectives and questioning previous generations.

At the root of it all: questions, questions, and more questions. With each issue raised, the rabbis poke at it, examine it this way and that way, argue with each other. Often they come to a consensus, but just as often they raise their hands in defeat without finding a solution to a thorny question. And they always preserve all the varied perspectives, whether they are fringe elements or the dominant narrative, because the process is the thing, not the destination.

After three years, I'm only just now starting to perceive the layers of learning, the dizzying array of references (linguistic, historical, textual), the personalities of the rabbis (there's a hunk, a rebel, the rich one, the funny one, the one who shares questionable folk remedies...it's a reality show waiting to happen), the intellectual methods. I'm a true beginner, peering into a fully formed world with its own rules, and it's exhilarating to stand with the thousands of other Jews who are also learning Daf Yomi and begin to see the outlines of that world, however blurry they may be.

In the midst of a challenging time in my life, Jewish study has provided me with a lifeline. It reminds me that asking questions and listening to others are critical skills, and that there are no “right” answers. As Ben Zoma shares in Pirkei Avot 4, “Who is wise? He who learns from every man, as it is said: ‘From all who taught me have I gained understanding’ (Psalms 119:99).”

I look forward to learning from and with all of you in 2023.

Community Read - *Dinners with Ruth*

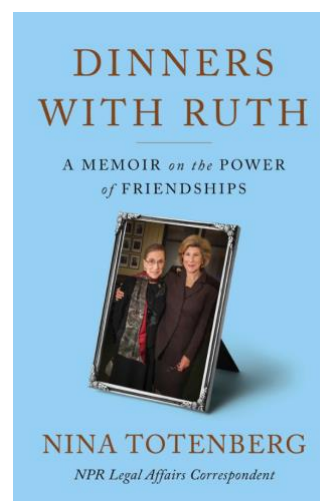
by Janet Marstine

Date February 27

Time 7:00-8:30 pm

What better motivation to bring us together for a community read than a celebration of friendship. In our next session, we will discuss stellar NPR court reporter Nina Totenberg’s memoir: *Dinners with Ruth*, which explores her 50-year friendship with Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg.

Weaving together stories of their personal and professional bonds, this memoir speaks to the power of friendship to help inspire both women to navigate, with strength, their experiences of illness, loss and widowhood, alongside career and legal hurdles. Theirs is also a Jewish friendship; we’ll look at how this is so. Come prepared to share in a few words who is your “Ruth” and why.



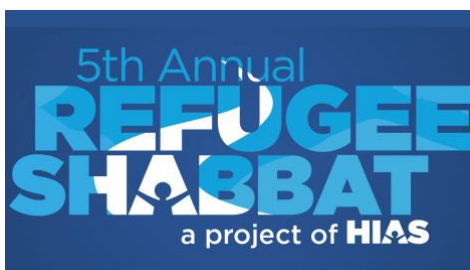
Refugee Shabbat

by Rabbi Vinikoor

February 3rd and 4th

This year Beth Israel will join with congregations from across the United States and around the world to dedicate a Shabbat experience to refugees and asylum seekers. On Friday night and Saturday there will be opportunities to learn about the refugee crisis and its impact locally and beyond.

Our Friday night service will start with our potluck “Souper” Shabbat. And our Saturday morning service will be followed by a luncheon. This HIAS sponsored annual event will spotlight refugees and asylum seekers and will feature new Mainer’s living and working in the midcoast area as we share a meal and learn about ways to support local refugees and asylum seekers. Stay tuned for more details in the weekly email blast. We look forward to seeing you then!



Souper Shabbat

by Marilyn Weinberg

January 6
February 3
5:30 meal followed by 6:45 service

In December we at Beth Israel renewed what we hope to be a winter tradition of gathering in the synagogue for an early Friday evening meal of warm soup, salads and bread followed by a Shabbat evening service.

So, on the first weekend of the month, during the cold and dark days of January and February, we will have a special Souper Shabbat as we gather together to warm ourselves with community, a delicious meal, and a meaningful Shabbat service.

Stay tuned for how to sign up to help with food and logistics for Souper Shabbat.



Havdalah: A Jewish Ritual of Separation

by Rabbi Vinikoor

January 21
February 18
4:45 pm

Each week when Shabbat ends, Jews around the world mark the beginning of the new week with the Havdalah ritual. With a special braided candle, spices, wine/grape juice and song, this ceremony helps us savor the end of Shabbat and look with hope towards the coming week. Whether you've spent your Shabbat on the slopes, watching your child's hockey game, at work, running errands or visiting family, close out the Jewish day of rest with the Beth Israel community. We'll gather at 4:45 pm at the synagogue for a brief teaching, followed by Havdalah and a community meal. This is open to all and is a family friendly event.

We will meet on Saturday, January 21 at 4:45 pm and February 18, at 4:45 pm. For questions contact Rabbi Vinikoor at rabbivinikoor@gmail.com



Winter Walk/Snowshoe and Study

by Rabbi Vinikoor

Sunday, February 12 at 1:00 pm

Meet at the entrance to Wolfe's Neck Woods State Park

Join Rabbi Vinikoor for a winter walk/snowshoe at beautiful Wolfe's Neck Woods State Park in Freeport in honor of Tu Bishvat, our environmental holiday. After exploring the role of trees and the environment in the Jewish tradition, we will head out to enjoy the beautiful plants, shoreline and vistas that lead us through the park. Open to all ages. Hiking shoes/snowshoes recommended.



Social Action at Beth Israel

by Joanne Rosenthal

The congregation was again quick to respond to the signup for the Christmas dinner for the Tedford Shelter. A delicious home cooked holiday meal brings comfort and dignity to those who are unhoused. Thanks for pitching in! Please consider donating to Tedford Housings capital campaign for a new shelter to be built near Cooks Corner.

KULANU 2023: Synagogues in Action against Antisemitism, is underway at Beth Israel. This partnership with the Anti-Defamation League is working to bring antisemitism awareness and education to the community. A working group has been formed to implement programs this winter and spring. One such program is the Facing Antisemitism series set to start in January. These conversation-based interfaith groups are in conjunction with St. Paul's Sacred Ground program and aim to facilitate participants in understanding the history of antisemitism in this country, sharing personal experiences and examining internalized beliefs. The first two sections of this program are fully enrolled with the plan to offer it again later in the year. Please contact Joanne Rosenthal if you are interested in future offerings.



Melton Classes at Beth Israel

by Peggy Brown

Our first Melton Class - Members of the Tribe- enrolled fifteen adult learners and was skillfully led by Rabbi Lisa Vinikoor. The class met once a week for six weeks in-person at the Curtis Memorial Library in Brunswick and via Zoom. Each week we read and discussed a variety of texts from ancient and modern sources representing many perspectives and aspects of Judaism. Topics included:

- Living a Jewish Life: Finding purpose in reflection
- Symbols and Reminders in Judaism
- The Exodus from Egypt as a Jewish Calling
- The concept of “chosenness” through both a traditional and a contemporary lens
- What does it mean to keep Kosher?
- Israel and the Diaspora

The class provided a wonderful opportunity to make new friends, strengthen old friendships and deepen our understanding of the range and depth of Jewish thought and meaning.

The next six-week Melton class, “Press Pause: Rest, Assured” begins on January 9th and will be held in-person on Monday evenings from 6:00 to 8:00 at the synagogue.

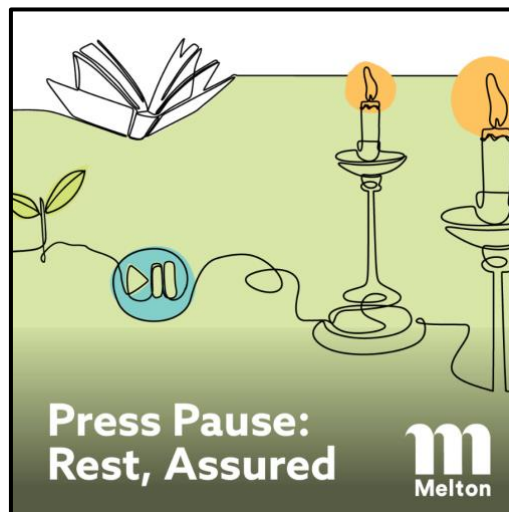
- Topics covered in this class:
- Let There Be Life: The Beginning
- Shabbat: Much more than a Day Off
- R&R: A Day of Rest and Ritual
- A Break in the Bounty: A Year to Deepen Roots
- Tending to the Garden: Preserving Planet Earth
- Recalculating: Finding the Right Way after Taking the Wrong Turn

To register: meltonschool.org/maine

Course fee: \$179 (financial aid available)

For more information contact: Meltondirector@bethisraelbath.org

Come connect with your community in this series on Jewish culture, history and life.



Hanukkah Party

by Marilyn Weinberg

A good time was had by all at the Beth Israel Hanukkah Celebration on December 18. We had our own Hanukkah corn hole game decorated by Stella and Ren Kauffunger, a Hanukkah scavenger hunt, candle making and crafts, and a dreidel spinning competition.

We had so much light in our celebration of lights. In addition to menorah lighting, for the first time we had two fire pits blazing outside with lots of ingredients for s'mores. Special thanks to our amazing latke cooks, Donnie Spiegelman Boyd and Susan Horowitz.



Hebrew School

by Camille Kauffunger

Although we missed our first Hebrew School Shabbat, our students have been busy listening, learning, crafting, cooking and being together as a community. Our latest project is to send Flat Shai/Shira/Shmuel to friends and family around the world to learn about Jewish life in different places. Feel free to come and visit and absorb some of the energy and positive enthusiasm shown by our wonderful students and teachers.



What's Happening with the Minnie Brown Building Renovation?

by Peggy Brown

After a rocky time during the pandemic, the Minnie Brown Building Design Committee is resuming its work on designing a renovated building that improves access to both the upper and lower levels for all (meeting ADA guidelines), has good lighting, energy efficient heating, cooling and air exchange, improves the Rabbi's office and front lobby, enlarges the Hebrew School classrooms, and upgrades the kitchen to make it kid friendly.

In the fall we hired a new architect, Peter Bethanis of Wayne, Maine, who has so far proved to be extremely responsive, knowledgeable, and focused on our project. We are moving forward with design meetings and permitting and will have more to share with the congregation this spring.

New Members

- Emily and Ted Banks

Donations

Memorial Gifts

- Stephen and Marina Singer in loving memory of his father, Isadore Singer
- Shelia Cohen in loving memory of her father, Henry Cohen
- Lenore and Jay Friedland in loving memory of her mother, Esther Itzkowitz
- Jay and Lenore Friedland in loving memory of his mother, Nettie Friedland
- Joe and Merna Guttentag in loving memory of his mother, Sara Guttentag
- Andrew and Chris Schoenberg in loving memory of his father, George Schoenberg
- Sharon Drake in loving memory of her brother, Larry Kravitz
- Gary Torow in loving memory of his father, Morris Torow
- Barbara Baseman in loving memory of her husband, Stephen Baseman
- Stephen Sinclair, Jr and Jenna Golub in loving memory of his father, Stephen Sinclair
- Barbara and Barrett Silver in loving memory of her father, Samuel Becker
- Allan and Jennifer Kaplan in honor of the birthday of his mother, Marilyn Kaplan

For the Benefit of the Synagogue

- Henry Goldberg and Kim Hetherington
- Barrett and Barbara Silver in appreciation of Rabbi Vinikoor and the holiday services
- Howard and Stephanie Pruzansky
- Peter Shiras and Diana Morris
- Ruth Benedikt
- Ann Nemetz for welcoming the students of Seguinland Institute
- Marjorie Shapiro
- Andy and Deborah Hagler
- Liza and Aaron Greenwald
- Fred and Marilyn Weinberg
- Bob Vinikoor in support of outstanding work in the Jewish Community
- Margaret Curley in honor of the Vinikoor-Finn Family

Centennial Campaign

- The Carr Family
- Rachel, Eric, Brooks and Alice Jordan
- Virginia Fish



Jewish Community Alliance
of Southern Maine

We gratefully acknowledge that the Beth Israel Congregation Hebrew School is supported financially by the Jewish Community Alliance (JCA) of Southern Maine. For more information visit them at www.mainejewish.org.

Remembrances for January–February 2023

May their memories be for a blessing.

WE REMEMBER	HEBREW DATE	2023 CALENDAR DATE
Solomon Wernick	13 Tevet	January 6
Ethel Cohn Schatz	13 Tevet	January 6
Fanny Panish Mutterperl	13 Tevet	January 6
Morris Petlock	13 Tevet	January 6
Jacob Rosen	16 Tevet	January 9
Ruth Shapiro	17 Tevet	January 10
Goldie Waxman	18 Tevet	January 11
Mildred Perlstein	19 Tevet	January 12
Abraham E. Greenblatt	22 Tevet	January 15
Fred Lenox	24 Tevet	January 17
Frank Welt	24 Tevet	January 17
Sterling Shapiro	25 Tevet	January 18
Daniel Ensel	25 Tevet	January 18
Howard Kaplan	27 Tevet	January 20
Sheila Vinikoor	27 Tevet	January 20
Janet Lane	29 Tevet	January 22
David Lichter	29 Tevet	January 22
Milton Millstein	1 Shevat	January 23
Alan Meyer	1 Shevat	January 23
Alex Mutterperl	1 Shevat	January 23
Anne Alvare	2 Shevat	January 24
Deborah Cohen	5 Shevat	January 27
Sonia Wernick	6 Shevat	January 28
Paul Marks	7 Shevat	January 29

Henry Zietlow	8 Shevat	January 30
Freda Selig	10 Shevat	February 1
Susan Spiegelman	11 Shevat	February 2
Robert Weinberg	11 Shevat	February 2
Maureen Oppenheim-Golub	13 Shevat	February 4
Theodore Cohn	14 Shevat	February 5
Max Fox	16 Shevat	February 7
Dean Milkes	16 Shevat	February 7
Else Chaim	16 Shevat	February 7
Ann Isacoff	16 Shevat	February 7
Francis Rosner	17 Shevat	February 8
Ed Benedikt	19 Shevat	February 10
Benjamin Gersh	19 Shevat	February 10
Jerry Spiegelman	21 Shevat	February 12
Shirly Welt	21 Shevat	February 12
Nathaniel Goldberg	22 Shevat	February 13
David Fields	22 Shevat	February 13
Leon Berman	23 Shevat	February 14
Bernice Samiljan	24 Shevat	February 15
Chenka Rosenmann	25 Shevat	February 16
Harry Raker	27 Shevat	February 18
Frances Feldman	29 Shevat	February 20
Marvin Weinberg	29 Shevat	February 20
Michael Hagler	1 Adar I	February 22
Michael Lane	2 Adar I	February 23
Selma E Gilman	5 Adar I	February 26
Rose Hurwitz Silver	5 Adar I	February 26
Al Balaban	7 Adar II	February 28



Birthdays and Anniversaries

Listing the birthdays and anniversaries of those in our immediate family creates a wonderful opportunity for our community/shul family to have an excuse to celebrate with each other.

January Birthdays

2 Liza Greenwald
6 Jonah Kaplan
7 Julia Pols
7 Shira Dorit Vinikoor Finn
8 Susan Baseman
9 Sylvie Rose Bouttenot
9 Mark Ireland
14 Phyllis Lisi
14 Harry Reissman
15 Isaac Daniel Ensle
17 Stacey Giuliani
17 Ben Crystal
20 Eric Arthur Ensle
23 Matthew Kanwit
24 Ellen Hagler
24 Elliot Lerner
24 Kristin Propp
25 Robert Gersh
31 Ralph Jacobs

January Anniversaries

13 Howard Waxman & Lisa Schinhofen
21 Diane Gilman & Arthur Davis
21 Gary Torow & Denise Linet

February Birthdays

2 Carolyn Friedel
3 Willow Halpin
4 William Dunham
8 Joe Guttentag
9 Lisa Schinhofen
12 Rachel Bouttenot
13 Glen Eisman
15 Louis Propp
20 David Kertzer
21 Bud Samiljan
21 Sharon Bouchard
27 Samantha Gersh
28 Christina Schoenberg
28 Richard Jablow
29 Samuel Dunham

February Anniversaries

6 Alina Shumsky & David Chatalbash