

Vassar TempleWhere You Belong

Congregation Brethren of Israel Founded 1848 - Bulletin Volume 164, No. 9 May 2018



MITZVAH DAY: Sunday, May 6th A Day of Community Service ~ "Be a Part of It"

REGISTER at <u>www.jewishdutchess.</u> org NOW!

- Free kickoff breakfast/Sign-In starts 9:00am at Headquarters (Congregation Schomre Israel, 18 Park Ave., Poughkeepsie).
- Most service projects begin by 10:00am at community sites or HQ, rain or shine.
- Register for the project that's right for you and sign up for meals at www.jewishdutchess.org. Project & registration info is on that website or see the April Voice centerfold.

Projects captained by Vassar Temple members: Adriance Library Planting (Ellie Charwat); Appalachian Trail Cleanup (Ron Rosen); Birthday Bags (Jasmaine Russo); Cereal Counts (the Samsons); Historic Cemetery Cleanup (Rabbi Berkowitz); Lunch Box (Gil Seligman)

Mitzvah Day Collections

<u>For Birthday Bags</u>: Bring boxed cake mix, canned icing, birthday candles & party decor to VT by May 3

<u>For Veterans</u>: Bring tooth brushes, toothpaste, nonperishable foods (especially low sodium/salt or sugar free) to VT now or to Mitzvah Day

<u>For Cereal Counts</u>: Drop off boxed cereal preferably to the HVCC (former JCC) by morning of Mitzvah Day

See you there! Questions? Jewish Federation of Dutchess County 914-471-9811 or socialaction@vassartemple.org

Upcoming Events

May	1,8,15	Rabbis in Conversation p2		
	4	Happy Hour, p1		
	6	Mitzvah Day, p3		
	18	Confirmation, p1		
	19	Tikkun Leil Shavuot, p.5		

Happy Hour Returns to the Patio!

Please join us for Happy Hour on the Patio on May 4th at 6:00pm before services. We'll enjoy food, wine, drink and good company before services.

If you've been attending Happy Hours this year and enjoy these events, please step up and help! It's very easy to host a Happy Hour. We have kitchen support and easy-to-follow directions. Contact Andi Ciminello at andi@ecopkny. com if you can be a host for an upcoming Happy Hour. See you on the Patio!



From the Rabbi's Desk: What is Our Relationship to Torah?



Shavuot commemorates one of the most transformative experiences in the life of the Jewish people.

On Shavuot, we celebrate the moment in which the Israelites received the Torah at the foot of Mount Sinai. In the Torah, it is described this way:

"On the third day, as morning dawned, there was thunder, and lightning, and a dense cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud blast of the horn; and all the people who were in the camp trembled.... Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke, for the Eternal had come down upon it in fire; the smoke rose like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled violently. The blare of the horn grew louder and louder. As Moses spoke, God answered him in thunder..." (Exodus 19:16-19).

The people had every reason to be afraid, given the divine pyrotechnics that were taking place all around the mountain. But they did not hesitate to accept the Ten Commandments and the Torah, pledging to Moses even *before* God utters a word, "All that the Eternal has spoken we will do!" (Exodus 19: 8).

What must it have felt like for the Israelites to make this promise? Our rabbis offer many explanations, each painting a very different picture of the Israelites.

In one *midrash*, the rabbis imagine that God first visits all of the other nations, offering to give them the Torah. Each of them refuses, based on a commandment that goes against their people's ways. The Edomites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, and the Ishmaelites all reject the Torah based on its prohibitions against murder, adultery, and theft. Finally, God appears before the Israelites, who simply say, "We will do and we will listen" (Exodus 24:7) and accept the Torah without question (*Sefer Ha-Aggadah* 78:29).

Other midrashim do not give us quite that much credit. In the Talmud, we learn that, while the Israelites were standing at Mount Sinai, God lifted the mountain and overturned it, holding it above their heads and saying, "If you accept the Torah, great! If not, this will be your grave." It was only in later generations that the Jews accepted the Torah willingly and not out of fear (Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 88a).

Later texts on Shavuot soften the story of God lifting Mount Sinai above the Israelites' heads from a story about fear to a story about love. Instead of lifting the mountain above our heads as a way of threatening to crush us, some rabbis suggest that God lifts the mountain above our heads as a *chuppah*, a marriage canopy. It is under this canopy that

our people enter, freely and willingly, into a covenant with God. Along these lines, some Sephardic prayer books include the recitation of a *ketubah*—a marriage contract between God and the Jewish people—as a part of their Shavuot liturgy.

Each *midrash* represents a different way we might approach our relationship to God, Torah, and the Jewish people. Sometimes, we accept a teaching without question, simply because it is a part of our heritage. Sometimes, our words and our deeds are motivated by fear, whether that is fear of God, fear of letting down our community, or fear or breaking the chain of traditions passed down to us by our ancestors. Neither of these are bad reasons for learning Torah and living Jewishly.

But when we are really lucky, we engage with these aspects of our faith because we love them, and because they fill our lives with joy. When this is the case, Shavuot becomes more than a Jewish holiday. It becomes a happy celebration of our anniversary with God. Chag Sameach!

Rabbi Leah Berkowitz

Rabbis in Conversation: A Learning Series for the Omer Boardman Road Library, Tuesdays at 7:00pm

Join rabbis from the Dutchess County Jewish community as we explore some of the 'Big Ideas' of Jewish faith and practice. Each week, two rabbis from different Jewish institutions will discuss a topic they find essential to living a Jewish life. This series is in observance of the *omer*, a seven-week period of reflection and learning between Passover and Shavuot.

- May 1: Rabbi Brent Spodek (Beacon Hebrew Alliance) and Rabbi Paul Golomb (Vassar Temple): *Teshuvah-- Repentance and Forgiveness*
- May 8: Rabbi Daniel Polish (Congregation Shir Chadash) and Rabbi Daniel Victor (Temple Beth El): *Imitation of God*
- May 15: Rabbi Miriam Hyman (Temple Beth El) and Rabbi Michael Fessler (Reconstructionist Rabbinical College): *Theodicy: Good and the Problem of Evil*

		May Worship Services
4	6:00 pm 7:30 pm	Kabbalat Shabbat Happy Hour Shabbat evening service with Rabbi Berkowitz and or- ganist Joseph Bertolozzi
5	9:00am 10:00am	Torah Study New Paths Shabbat morning worship
11	7:30 pm	Teacher Recognition Shabbat service with Rabbi Berko- witz, organist Joseph Bertolozzi and cantorial intern Laura Stein
12	9:00am 10:00am	Torah Study Bar Mitzvah if Matthew Sinn
18	7:30 pm	Shabbat Confirmation service with Rabbi Berkowitz and organist Joseph Bertolozzi
19	9:00am 10:00am 7:30 pm	Torah Study New Paths Shabbat morning worship Tikkun Leil Shavout
20	10:00 am	Yizkor for Shavuot
25	7:30pm	Shabbat evening service with Rabbi Berkowitz and organist Joseph Bertolozzi
26	9:00am	Torah Study

Scriptural Readings

May 5

- 5 *Emor* Lev. 22:17-23:22; Ezekiel 44:15-31
- 12 *B'har-Behukotai* Lev. 25:39-26:46; Jeremiah 16:19-17:14
- 19 *Bamidbar* Num. 2:1-3:13; Hosea 2:1-22
- 26 *Naso* Num. 5:11-6:27; Judges 13:2-25



New Paths Services

Join us at the New Paths sabbath morning services Saturdays, May 5 and May 19 in the informal setting of Vassar Temple's East Chapel. The moving liturgy of the New Paths prayer book includes both traditional and contemporary writings, mostly in English, and participants may bring supplemental materials to share. We take the time to let the service get through us, rather than getting through the service. Each New Paths service, whether lay led or rabbi led, provides a unique and thoughtful shabbat morning experience. A brief mini-kiddush follows. For more information, please contact Marian Schwartz at mschwa9882@aol.com, Rabbi Berkowitz at rabbi@vassartemple. org, or the Temple office at 845-454-2570.

CEREAL COUNTS!!! 2018 ANNUAL DUTCHESS COUNTY-WIDE BREAKFAST CEREAL BOX DRIVE

Every summer, there are underprivileged children and teenagers who may lack breakfast food at home. They may not be able to get to sites serving free breakfast or go hungry on the weekends. Every summer, there are adults of all ages who need breakfast food. Together we can reduce breakfast hunger.

Now through May 6th (Mitzvah Day!), please drop off a box of cereal to our NEW main collection site: **The Hudson Valley Community Center at 110 Grand Avenue**, Poughkeepsie. Hours: Every day, 9:00am-8:00pm except Sundays, 9:00am-5:00pm!

If possible, please consider hosting a «mini-drive» to collect boxes in your office, business, school, with your teams, groups and more. Just invite people to bring in a box of cereal, and then drop off your collection at the HVCC any time during the drive. It's easy and incredibly rewarding.

On May 6th, volunteers will count the boxes, pack them into cartons donated by the Arnoff Moving Company and load them onto a truck. During the week of May 7th, the boxes will be delivered to Dutchess Outreach, Zion Episcopal Church in Wappingers, Community Action Partnership for pantries in Poughkeepsie, Beacon, Red Hook and Dover, Reach Out Family Worship Center in Hyde Park, Hudson River Housing/Gannett House, Morse Magnet Elementary School, Interfaith Senior Housing and Pleasant Valley Ecumenical Church.

Every box counts! Thank you!

Questions? Nancy and David Samson, 845 235-2860 or cerealcounts123@gmail.com

In appreciation...



Mazel Tov

to:

the Mamis family on the birth of Hannah Taylor, born to Steven & Michelle Mamis and first grandchild of Sandra Mamis and Harry Mamis z'l If you sent a note of condolence,

If you attended the funeral or cemetery service or

If you made a shiva call, we thank you.

If you made a donation in memory of Harry, we thank you.

If you brought some nourishment, a sweet or healthy treat,

If you offered a hug, promised to call or suggested that we get together in the future to pass the time, we thank you.

If you did none of these things, but simply took a few moments to think about Harry or offer prayers on his behalf,

We thank you and will be forever grateful for all the kindness that has been shown.

Sandra Mamis & Family

Men's Club News

We hope that you had a great Passover holiday and that you are enjoying the renewal of sprit that comes with spring. Once the weather permits, we are planning a Men's Club hike somewhere ... it could be an easy walk along the river starting at Long Point in Beacon, leading to Deming Point ... all flat. We are also thinking of a bike ride on the Harlem Valley Rail Trail or the Dutchess Rail Trail. Please let us know if you might be interested in either event or if you would like to propose another activity for Men's Club. We are always looking for new ideas. More information will follow.

On Sunday May 6th we will participate in Mitzvah Day by cleaning up the historic cemetery. Dan Teich will captain this project. Check out this website for registration and more information and other projects at www.jewishdutchess.org.

Thank you for those who send in their dues. If you haven't, it's not too late. We support temple activities with your dues, as well as Men's Club events.

In case you haven't heard, it's time to mark your calendar and SAVE THE DATE for MRJ's International (Men of Reform Judaism) Conference. It will take place July 12-15 in the Twin Cities. The host Congregation is Mount Zion Temple and its Brotherhood. Final details are almost done! Look for a Registration Link soon!

Condolences

to:

Carol Strauss on the passing of her stepfather, Howard Perry

Sandra Mamis on the passing of her husband, Harry Mamis

Lee Cutler and Risssa Cutler on the passing of their bother/brother-in-law, Hil Cutler

We need your Help!

We are, once again, asking that you be the eyes and ears in the lives of our congregational family. Federal patient privacy regulations limit the information that hospitals make available to clergy and volunteers.

We are encouraging you to contact the Temple office when a congregant is admitted to a hospital and wishes to have Rabbi visit during the hospital stay. Our goal is to meet the needs of all our congregants, and we can only do this with your help.

May Bimah Flowers Donations:

May 4: Donated by Vassar Temple Sisterhood Bimah Flower Fund

May 11: Donated by Michele & Craig Sinn in honor of their son Matthew's Bar

Mitzvah

May 18: Donated by Michele & Craig Sinn in honor of their son Alex'

Confirmation

May 25: Donated by Vassar Temple Sisterhood Bimah Flower Fund

Please consider commemorating a special occasion or honoring the memory of a loved one by sponsoring the Sanctuary Flowers. The cost is \$55. Checks should be made payable to 'Vassar Temple Sisterhood' with 'Bimah Flower Fund' in the memo line. For more information call the Temple Office at 454-2570.

Vassar Temple Bulletin

Published Monthly

Publisher: Marianne Abrams
Editors: Sue Lesser
Donna Loshin

Technical support

& understudy Bob Abrams

Articles for the **June Bulletin** must be submitted by **May 1**st sent via email to publicity@vassartemple.org. The editors reserve the right to edit articles for style, accuracy and length.

From the Religious School Director



I find it very ironic that what is probably the most relevant Jewish Holiday for Jewish education usually falls on a date that is after the end of the school

year. This year we are fortunate to be able to celebrate Shavuot as a Religious School community on May 20th. This will be our final day of Religious School for the year and we're planning a day full of activity and fun. It will be a Biblical Maccabiah!

Shavuot celebrates receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai. This event takes place seven weeks or forty-nine days after the first day of Passover. In Leviticus 23:15, we learn that we are obligated to count the days from Passover to Shavuot. This is known as the Counting of the Omer. (An omer is a biblical unit of measure.) From the second night of Passover to the night before Shavuot, we recite a blessing and state the count of the omer in both weeks and days. You can find the blessing and

the formula for this tradition in most Haggadahs.

In recent years I have found that many of my friends will use this "countdown" to share blessings or quotes. Some will count their blessings focusing on something good in their lives on each day. Others will post a picture a day for forty-nine days, allowing friends to share their life over the past year. Some years I have posted things but what I prefer to do is to find something specific to learn each day. This year my plan is to write a prayer everyday as this will help me in my work as a chaplain and will focus me on something sacred each day.

I want to encourage the Religious School families and community members to count the Omer in a meaningful way. Create a calendar together with your children that provides space for each family member to write something positive to the others each day. Draw a picture of your family each day that reflects the current day and then put the pictures all together in a binder as remembrance of your family for this year's Omer.

Shavuot is also a festival where we are asked to make a tribute to the Temple in Jerusalem. We no longer follow the tradition of bringing our first fruits to the Temple but we can honor this tradition by collecting an item each day to give to a shelter or the Morse School or to others who are needy on Shavuot.

We sometimes forget that although we may not observe some of the Biblical traditions, the spirit of these traditions can be continued through some of the suggestions I have made and more that you can create in your homes and with your families. I'd love to hear the ideas that your family come up with!

We were given the gift of Torah. What we do with this gift is up to us. I want to encourage you to use this gift; to learn from it; to teach about it to your children; and to live it in your families each and every day.

Julie Makowsky

May Study Groups

'Torah Study' with the Temple's Rabbi Leah Berkowitz, which examines passages from the week's torah portion or haftorah, will be held at 9:00am on Saturdays. *The Talmud: Modern Ideas from an Ancient Text,* taught by Senior Scholar Rabbi Paul Golomb, will be held the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month (May 8 & 22) at noon. All are welcome to come, learn and join in the lively discussions at both classes--no previous training required! No charge to attend. Questions? Contact rabbi@vassartemple.org or 845-454-2570



Community Tikkun Leil Shavuot

A Community Tikkun Leil Shavuot will be held Saturday night May 19th to provide us all the opportunity to spiritually prepare for the receiving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai the following day (Shavuot). The program is presented jointly by Congregation Shir Chadash, Temple Beth El, and Vassar Temple, and will be held at Vassar Temple at 7:30pm. Watch your e-mails for program details. The tikkun will end by 11:00pm, and everyone is warmly invited to come and learn and celebrate together.



Left: The sanctuary with a fresh new coat of paint

Right: The social hall, newly painted, ready for Aaron Kaflowitz' Bar Mitzvah



Contributions

SUSTAINING FUND In Memory of:

Dolores Brundage

Thomas & Laura Brundage Joshua Posner David & Joan Posner Howard Perry, step-father of

step-father of Carol Strauss

James & Mary Ann Robinowitz
Shirley Karnes
Suzanne Hecht
Jaime Hecht
The Hecht family
Ted Hecht
The Hecht family
Ted Hecht
The Hecht family

Muriel & Matt Lampell

Nathan Turk

Steven & Shelley Turk

Evelyn Partridge The Partridge family Erwin Schischa Barbara Schischa & family Chris Brown Howard Smith Ellen Rosenfeld Jesse Barbash George Rugar Andi & Paul Ciminello Judy & Eric Rosenfeld Judy & Eric Rosenfeld Bill & Sue Barbash Ralph & Marian Schwartz

In Memory of: Harry Mamis

Andi & Paul Ciminello
James & Mary Ann Robinowitz
Elaine Lipschutz
Muriel & Matt Lampell
Judy & Eric Rosenfeld
Doi Cohen
Richard & Marsha Lowry
James & Mary Ann Robinowitz
Susan & Carl Evans
Lyn Lewis
Vivian & Ed Garber
Jane & Jonathan Dworkin
Lila Matlin
Bill & Sue Barbash

Martin & Eleanor Charwat Ralph & Marian Schwartz Paula Landau Debra Tierney Justin & Kristin Horowitz Kathy & Kent Mardon

In Honor of:

Amy Horn Oclatis' special birthday
Jeremy, Chelsea & Hudson Oclatis
Sandra Mamis on becoming a
grandmother Polly Lewis

TZEDAKAH FUND

Howard Himelstein

May Yahrzeits

MAY 4

Ida Albinder
Naomi Berkowitz
Samuel Blaine
Toby U. Cederbaum
Sarah Chernack
Victor Collen
Jacob Ettenson
Betty Fein
Edna Gibell
Eugene Jacobs
Walter Kallman
Faye Prisansky Kaufn

Faye Prisansky Kaufman Helen Danilin Klein Shirley Kornhauser Irving D. Kraut Betty Prussin Levitan Louis Lipp

Edward Moffit Ruth Myer Sylvia Pearlman

Eva Revitz Jack Rubinstein

Jack Rubinstein
Jeanne Schwartz

Stanley Shapiro Wilfred Sumner **MAY 11**

Bernard "Paul"
Buchalter
Samuel Cederbaum
Martin Frankel
Mary Kovacs
Kurt Lemberger
Gayle Margolin
Charlotte Miller
Bernice D. Rabin
Paul Reznikoff
Abraham J. Salit

Leo Tauber

Wolfson

David Lawrence

MAY 18 Charlotte Cohen

Louis Diamond David M. Horn Charles Kagan Josephine Lion Kahn Marjorie F. Katz Nathan Landau Joseph Markoe Royden Parke Eugenia Pearlstein Bernard Rheingold Kenneth Scheer

Samuel Sigalow

MAY 25

Ruth Browner Stuart Chertock Martin Cohen Samuel Cohen Joshua Collen Hyman Fink Martin Gally Annie Givner Joseph H. Goodman Harold Jacobs Alvin Kaskowitz Iris Krause Therese Lehman Bernard Lesk Dorothy Lewis Franklin H. Littell Leonard Margolin Miriam Niesen Rose S. Podell Norman Prisansky Ken Richter Ellen Rosenfeld Eloise Ross Selma Friedman Satz Kenneth Scheer Mary B. Sparks Goldie Simon



FUND FACTS: Time for a Makeover

I know that at least a handful of you read this column: Sue Lesser (because she edits the Bulletin) and Roni Stein (because she told me so). Believe it or not, I have been writing this piece for about two and a half years. I know – time flies when you're having fun . . . or fund. . . But as is the case sometimes in the philanthropy business, the well has run dry; in this instance it happens to be the well of ideas for Fund Facts. The world works in mysterious ways, however, and just as I was getting desperate for inspiration, enter Andi Ciminello with the solution.

As you may recall, the theme of this year's Vassar Temple Gala was "The Heroes Among Us." The organizing committee for the event had the task of identifying individuals within our congregation who could be appropriate for this recognition. As we continued with our

planning, this evolved into perhaps the most interesting and inspiring endeavor I have been involved with at our Temple. As we scanned the Temple membership list, we realized that not only did we have a robust list of possible candidates to honor at the Gala, we had enough potential honorees for a lifetime of events honoring "Heroes Among Us!" It merely took a few creative minds within our congregation to realize that we had the seed of a concept that needed to be pursued in some way. Enter the "Fund Facts" author in search of ideas. . .

The result of this fortuitous set of circumstances is a new initiative called – appropriately – "The Heroes Among Us." Starting in the next Bulletin and every month thereafter, we will be featuring a member of our congregation who, either through

their work within our congregation or the wider community, is a hero among us. Periodically, we will be inviting these individuals to address the Congregation during a Shabbat Service, to share their stories and enlighten those assembled about their work.

If you have someone whom you would like to recommend as a "Hero Among Us," I would love to hear from you. Please send me an email at jensachs-dahnert@gmail.com. As a result of my research thus far, I am already humbled and awed by some of the people I have learned about in our midst at Vassar Temple. I think you will be too. . .

Jennifer Sachs Dahnert

What a Difference a Few Coats of Paint Make!

The painters were quite busy at the Temple recently, both upstairs and downstairs. Thanks to the generosity of Jonah and Mary Ritter, the front wall in the sanctuary has been painted, and the new color really brings out the beautiful features of the sanctuary including our ark and stained glass windows.

Also, thanks to Steve and Shelley Turk and our Sisterhood, the social hall was painted and looks much brighter and more inviting. In addition to Temple functions, the social hall can be rented for private parties. Just contact Michelle in the office for more information



Jewish War Veterans Meeting: May 6

The Private Herman Siegel Post 625. Poughkeepsie, of the Jewish War Veterans of The United States of America, will be holding its monthly post meeting on Sunday, May 6 at Congregation Schomre Israel in Poughkeepsie at 9:30am. There will be an informal coffee and cake 'schmooze' at 9:00am. Because Congregation Schomre Israel is strictly kosher, no edibles may be brought in. All persons of the Jewish faith who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States of America are cordially invited to attend and fully participate. We look forward to seeing you at these meetings.

Vassar Temple Bulletin 140 Hooker Avenue Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 845-454-2570 www.vassartemple.org



PRSTD STD U.S. Postage Paid Permit # 11 Newburgh, N.Y.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Rabbi: Leah Berkowitz
Rabbi Emeritus: Stephen Arnold
Senior Scholar: Paul Golomb
Religious School Director: Julie Makowsky
Cantorial Intern: Laura Stein
Organist: Joseph Bertolozzi
President: Mark Metzger

1st Vice President: Alan Kaflowitz
2nd Vice President: Roni Stein

Secretary:Susan Karnes HechtTreasurer:Kenneth LevinsonSisterhood President:Judy Rosenfeld

Men's Club Co-Presidents: Glenn Tanzman & Dan Teich

Immediate Past President: Bob Ritter Youth Group President: OPEN

DATED MAIL
PLEASE
RUSH

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
		10am Senior Exercise Program (SEP)	4:30pm Hebrew School	10am SEP	6pm Kabbalat Shabbat Happy Hour	9am Torah Study 10am New Paths
		7pm Rabbis in Conversation			7:30pm Shabbat Service	Worship
		7pm Ritual Committee				
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Mitzvah Day		VTS Donor Dinner	4:30pm Hebrew School	10am SEP	7:30pm Teacher Recognition Shabbat	9am Torah Study
		10am SEP			with Cantorial Intern Laura Stein	10am Matthew Sinn Bar Mitzvah
		12pm Talmud Study with Rabbi Golomb				
		7pm Rabbis in Conversation				
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
No Religious School		10am SEP	4:30pm Hebrew School	10am SEP	12pm Sisterhood Chai Noon	9am Torah Study
		7pm Rabbis in Conversation	7pm Finance Committee		7:30pm Shabbat	10am New Paths Worship
					Confirmation Service	7:30pm Tikkun Leil Shavuot with TBE and Shir Chadash
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
R/S Shavuot Closing Day Event		10am SEP	4:30pm Hebrew School	10am SEP	7:30pm Shabbat Service	9am Torah Study
9:30am R/S		12pm Talmud Study with Rabbi Golomb		6pm Exec Cmte	Service	
Committee		1 COOLING		7pm Board		
10am Yizkor Service				meeting		
27	28	29	30	31		
		10am SEP	6pm Annual Calendar Meeting	10am SEP		