



Congregation
B'nai Israel
The Orthodox Synagogue for All Jews

the Voice

SPRING EDITION

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A Message From Rabbi Brodkin

Dear Friends,

As we prepare for Pesach, we look forward to gathering with friends and family around our Seder tables. The night of Pesach is a powerful moment, a time when less connected Jews rekindle their connection. It is also a moment when generations come together.

At the Seder table, parents connect with children, and children with grandparents. This bond between generations is a foundational part of our Jewish lives. In the weeks between Pesach and Shavuot, it is customary to study "Pirkei Avot" (Chapters of the Fathers). This section of Talmud transmits the ethical wisdom of earlier generations to our own time.



As a synagogue, B'nai Israel benefits from a living connection with our past. There are members in our midst who have been part of this Shul for decades. In that light, it is vital to consider the invaluable contribution that long-term members make, simply through their presence.

The Hebrew spring month of Nisan is a time of rebirth, rejuvenation and even change. Here at B'nai Israel, we have also experienced change. Yet, the changes we experience connect us with our past.

For example, reinstalling our Mechtiza is both a change and a tradition. Separate seating is a change because Sons offered mixed seating for decades. It is also a tradition—we were founded in 1917 as a Mechtiza Shul and remained so through the 1960s.

As we experience both change and tradition, we are mindful of the connection between generations. In this light, the presence of older members—who connect us with our past—is vital to our success. In today's fragmented world, we need one another more than ever.

Today, the Shul strives to bring a new generation along so future Jewish generations will thrive in this synagogue. Our goal is to build an **Orthodox Synagogue for ALL Jews**, where folks of all backgrounds can find their connection. As we traverse this path, new generations gain from the presence of elders.



In the coming days, we hope that congregants of all ages and backgrounds will come and connect. On April 20—"Shabbat HaGadol"—we'll be offering an enriching morning with a Kids' service, learning for adults and a spectacular Kiddush—see more inside.

Looking ahead, we hope you will mark your calendars for October and join us for the High Holidays. We're planning an enriching, multi-faceted program as our entire community unites for heartfelt Tefilla (prayer).

I am also pleased to announce that we will host Etan Bluman as our Chazan. Etan has led High Holiday services in tri-state area synagogues for the past eleven years, including five years at Young Israel of West Hartford, CT.

Etan was trained as a Chazan by his grandfather, the renowned Cantor Jerome Kopmar. With his rich background in traditional Tefilla, Etan offers a beautiful blend of the old and the new (see more inside).

Today, we are progressing on a path of renewal and tradition. Wherever you are in your personal journey, please know that you are integral to our Shul community in this season of rebirth.

Chag Sameyach,

Rabbi Ken Brodtkin

Financial Update from Our Treasurer

Overview

I am pleased to share with you the financial report of Congregation B'nai Israel as of February 29, 2024. Despite the challenges of the pandemic and the aging of our building, we have managed to maintain a stable and healthy financial position, thanks to the generosity and commitment of our members and donors.

Revenue

Our total gross revenue for the first eight months of the fiscal year 2023-2024 ("FY 23-24") was \$530K, which is an increase of \$205K (63.1%) compared to the same period last fiscal year. This growth was mainly driven by the following factors:

- Donations were up by \$46K (83.1%), reflecting the strong support of our community for our programs and services.
- High holiday revenue was up by \$20K (21.7%) despite lower pricing for premium seats, thanks to the call to our members to increase their Kol Nidre donations.
- Other revenue, which includes grant reimbursements and special fundraising, was up by \$57K (basically \$0 last year).
- The remainder of the increase is due to a reporting change for the three-year commitments to our "Fund the Future" campaign.



Membership revenue year over year is flat. While some families terminated their

membership, the rates paid by new families helped bridge the difference. Our current membership includes 161 families, with applications in process for two new families.

We are so very gracious to all our members who continue to support the Shul through their dues, donations, participation, and response to our financial needs as they arise.

Expenses

Our total expenses for the first eight months of FY23-24 were \$463K, which is an increase of \$69K (17.6%) compared to the same period last fiscal year. This increase was mainly due to the following factors:

- House expenses were up by \$82.4 (61.3%), reflecting the higher costs of maintaining and repairing our building and infrastructure, as well as the increased spending on snow removal and utilities.
- Other expenses, which include office and ritual expenses, were down \$14.9K (5.8%).
- Note that our expenses include amounts spent to date on grant-related expenses and our revenues include reimbursements received to date.



Balance Sheet and Budget Performance

As of February 29, 2024, our balance sheet showed operating cash of \$190K, which excludes reimbursable outlays for grant-related work. This represents a healthy cash reserve that allows us to meet our obligations, fund upcoming programming, address ongoing building repairs and improvements, and invest in our future. We have an additional \$105K in our cemetery account.

Relative to 8/12ths of the FY23-24 budget, we are ahead on gross revenue by \$87.2K (+19.7%) and behind on overall expenses by \$20K (-4.5%). If things remain on track, we should beat our budget and show a small profit for the year.

On behalf of the entire board, I thank you for your continued support of Congregation B'nai Israel and our collective vision for the future.

Chag Sameyach,

Shari Tepper

We wish our Shul President, Jay Fields, a complete recovery. Jay is in Florida recovering from a bike accident. We look forward to seeing him back at Shul soon!



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Recent Events at B'nai Israel

"Behind the Scenes on the Military, Media & Political Battlefields of Israel" with Gil Hoffman



Super Bowl Party



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Megillah Readings on Purim



Purim Bash & Costume Contest



Meet Etan Bluman – Our High Holiday Chazan

Etan Bluman has led Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur Davening for the past eleven years, including five years at the Young Israel of West Hartford, CT. Prior to West Hartford, Etan led High Holiday services at synagogues in Passaic and East Brunswick, NJ. More recently, over the past two years, he led the Mechitza Minyan here at B'nai Israel.

Etan aims to create an inspirational and meaningful Davening experience for the congregation with a strong focus on the “Nusach HaTefillah.” “Nusach HaTefillah” refers to the classic, traditional tunes that have been sung in Shuls over the generations.

Etan has a unique window into the importance of tradition. He was trained for his Bar Mitzvah and as a Chazan by his grandfather, Cantor Jerome Kopmar, a renowned Chazan and composer. Cantor Kopmar—a major proponent of tradition in Tefilla—founded the Beth Abraham Youth Chorale, which toured internationally throughout the 1970s.

Etan’s love of Tefilla and melodies has been nurtured and shaped by his grandfather, as well as by Rabbi Yosef Adler, Rabbi Emeritus of Rinat Yisrael in Etan’s hometown of Teaneck, NJ.

Recently, Etan met with the Rabbi and members of the Ritual Committee, including Mayer Brandwein, Art Finkel, Ron Gorsky, Mike Katz and Mike Lebowitz. The group discussed plans and melodies for the upcoming High Holidays.

Etan values the centrality of synagogue in bringing the Jewish community together. “I’m excited to be a part of the movement that’s happening in Manalapan. I look forward to connecting with people in and out of services,” Bluman remarked. Etan lives in Fair Lawn, NJ with his wife, Kayla, and their four children.



Etan Bluman and family visiting Jerusalem

New Podcast with Rabbi Ken Brodkin



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TORAH & TODAY

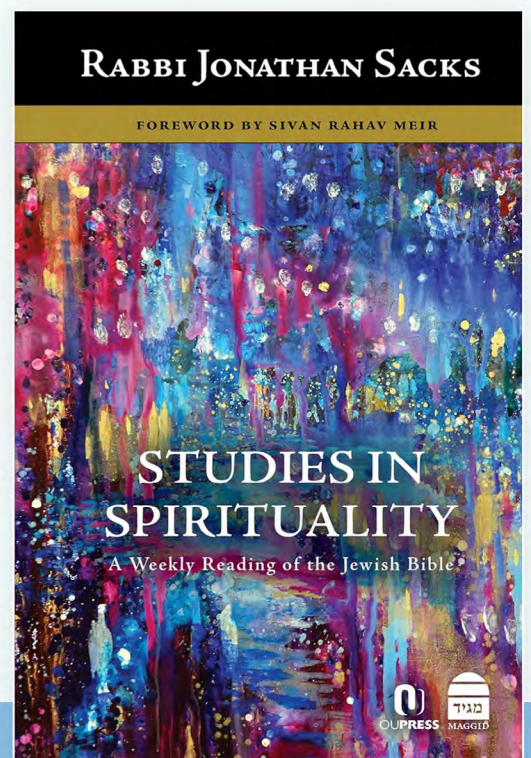
PODCAST
with Rabbi Ken Brodkin

Studies in Spirituality

Join us for a dynamic group study of the Parsha. Rabbi Brodkin will offer an overview of the Parsha.

Plus, we will discuss Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' "Studies in Spirituality" for contemporary insights.

WEDNESDAYS AT 8:00 PM



ZOOM MEETING ID: 965 4721 7973 · PASSWORD: Parsha



**Family Shabbat:
Pre-Pesach
Edition**

JOIN US AT B'NAI ISRAEL ON

Shabbat HaGadol

SATURDAY, APRIL 20

- 9:00 am, Shacharit
- 10:30 am, Kids' Service
- 10:45 am, "The Haggadah: What's it All About?" with Rabbi Ken Brodtkin
- 11:30 am, Deluxe Kiddush
Take a break from your Pesach prep...Shabbat lunch is on us!



33 Gordons Corner Rd. Manalapan, NJ 07726

Sharon & Vic Schioppo – Honoree Snapshot

How did you initially get involved in Sons of Israel?

When we got married, Sharon's mother moved right across the street from the Shul. We started attending then for all the High Holiday services. Then, when our son Brandon was born, he went to Hebrew School at Sons of Israel and we celebrated his Bar Mitzvah at Sons of Israel.

What motivated you to dedicate yourself to the Synagogue?

We liked the sense of family and enjoyed doing positive things for the Synagogue. There was a very nice group of women who were involved with doing volunteer work so I got involved with helping them.

What are your talents you have been using to help the Synagogue?

Sharon - I've done a lot of cooking for many events, put together designs, and done centerpieces to make events more cheerful. I've helped out in the office and am available for whatever has to be done. Vic - I got more involved after retiring and then was asked to become the Executive Director. It has been fun to help the Shul with its management and finances with my work experience.

What do you love most about the Shul?

The Shul has always kept its family oriented environment over the years and members are friends with each other on a social level.

What are your hopes for the future of the Synagogue?

We want to perpetuate the future. We hope to see more kids around B'nai Israel. We have already started seeing some of that and we are happy with what we are seeing!

What else would you like to share with us?

We are glad to be honored and it is very special to us to be appreciated for our work. When we started out at B'nai Israel we would come three times a year, and now we are sometimes in the building three times a day!



Daughters of Israel & Men's Club
Celebrate our Couple of the Year
Sharon & Vic Schioppo
Sunday, May 19, 2024, 11AM in the Mishan Hall

RSVP - May 7 Journal ad and other information
can be found in the office:
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Dairy Brunch



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