

Beth Israel Congregation

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bethisraelwaterville.org

October 2022

Words of Torah from Rabbi Isaacs

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Rabbi Rachel Isaacs

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Is it worth it? This is the question we are always asking ourselves before we do something we really don't want to do. There is an internal calculus we take upon ourselves before most any task that we know will be laborious, unpleasant, or maybe even counterproductive. When it comes to physical tasks, we can often prove to ourselves that the outcome makes the struggle worthwhile: if we plant beautiful trees and flowers, we get to enjoy the blooms, even if every bulb doesn't mature. If we take out the trash, we get to live in a house that smells halfway decent.

However, when it comes to the spiritual, it is much harder to answer this basic question. Is it worth it to express your sense of hurt to the person who seems incapable of hearing things she doesn't want to hear? Is it worth apologizing to the person who may very well use a moment of vulnerability against you? Is it worth fessing up to God for our Jewish failures if we aren't totally sure that God exists? Is it worth missing work, or class, a shower or a meal?

We never really know if spiritual work is worth the pain or effort before we begin. Our tradition goes out of the way to try and convince us that it is worthwhile – despite all of the voices inside and outside of our minds telling us that the cost of teshuva and Jewish communal observance is just too darn high for unpredictable and unverifiable results.

In the Haftarah for Shabbat Shuva, Ashkenazi communities chant the words of Joel – which serves as a reminder, a plea, and an argument:

My people shall be shamed no more. And you shall know/ That I am in the midst of Israel/That I the LORD am your God/And there is no other/And My people shall be shamed no more.” (2:26-27)

God promises us that if we return to the Divine, we will live a life free of shame. I think a promise of dignity in this context is crucial. God doesn't promise us peace or transcendence, but rather, freedom from shame. If we are willing to make ourselves vulnerable and humble, we will not be made the fool. We will know dignity at the very least and pride at the very most. We have always needed that reassuring voice telling us that this hard work is worthwhile,

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Shabbat and Holiday Services

Please see page 3 for the schedule of remaining High Holiday services, including Sukkot, Sukkot Shabbat, Shemini Atzeret, and Simchat Torah celebrations.

The Tishrei season doesn't end with Yom Kippur! We especially want to invite the Beth Israel community to Sukkot Shabbat at the Colby sukkah. Because this holiday falls on Parents' Weekend, this is an amazing chance to get to know the families of our lovely student congregants. And the food will be DELICIOUS!

Plus! A reminder for families with children that Simchat Torah is a great kids holiday! There will be singing and dancing, fabulous snacks, and much rejoicing. We hope congregants of all ages will join in!

Home Hospitality Shabbat: It's a very special Shabbat! Friday, October 28, 6pm at Beth Israel with dinner to follow. Join in the tradition of Home Hospitality Shabbat! If you are able to host a meal for Colby students, please email Mel ASAP. After our communities come together for services, small, pre-selected groups of students will join those who signed up for meals in their homes. If you're not able to host, come welcome in Shabbat anyway! If you have any questions, please email Mel Weiss.

Learning and Volunteering Opportunities at Beth Israel

Adult B'nei Mitzvah Class Returns! Thursdays, October 6, 13, 20, and 27, 4-4:45pm. This class is hybrid! Join in-person at Colby college (Lovejoy 347), or via Zoom: Meeting ID: 962 8019 3086 and Passcode: 884518
Link: <https://colby.zoom.us/j/96280193086?pwd=dWM5YWtFMlV1T0hWYkh3dkljbkVxZz09>
Email Rabbi Isaacs directly with any questions about this class!

Book Club: Tuesday, October 27, 7:00 - 8:00pm on Zoom. Use link <https://colby.zoom.us/j/91926969481?pwd=dklweENhNHJsbzIzNDIKdWY0dnZWdz09>, or meeting ID: 919 2696 9481 and passcode: 096139
Our book this month: **More Than I Love My Life by David Grossman**

Beth Israel continues to collect items for local families in need, including an Afghani refugee family. If you have items you are considering donating, please email Mel Weiss for more details. We have mostly filled our Wednesday slot at The Lighthouse (the Waterville soup kitchen), but they are always looking for additional volunteers!

Hebrew School

We run 3 - 5pm; doors will be locked so please knock clearly if showing up late.

October 6, 13, 20, and 27

Please make sure your child has something to write with. Snacks will be provided.

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday, October 16

9 - 10:30am

In person at Beth Israel

(Details about options for remote voting will be sent in the weekly email.)

Hear updates about the year that has passed and the year we have coming up!

The High Holidays at Beth Israel

Yom Kippur

Kol Nidre services: Tuesday October 4, 6pm

Yom Kippur morning services: Wednesday, October 5, 9:30am

Mincha/Neila: Wednesday, October 5, 5pm

Break the Fast dairy potluck: Wednesday, October 5, 7pm

Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret, and Simchat Torah

Welcome in Sukkot/Erev Sukkot event: Sunday, October 9, 5:30pm, sukkah at 7 Pleasant Street in Waterville.

Community and Hillel Sukkot Celebration and Shabbat services in the Colby sukkah:

Friday, October 14, 6pm. (Directions to the Colby sukkah will be available in the weekly email, and the sukkah will be located in between the Foss and Dana buildings, as it has been in previous years.)

Shemini Atzeret services, including Yizkor: Monday, October 17, 10am

Erev Simchat Torah celebration: Monday, October 17, 5pm

Our services are free and open to the public.

From the Center for Small Town Jewish Life

Join the Center for Small Town Jewish Life at Colby College for the Annual Fall Shabbaton!

Fall Shabbaton with Batya Levine and Rabbi Sandra Lawson

Join the Center for Small Town Jewish Life for a Shabbat of Jewish Song and Celebration!

Friday, Nov. 4–Saturday, Nov. 5, 2022



Communal prayer leader Batya Levine of Let My People Sing! will be the featured musical guest for the 2022 Fall Shabbaton. A statewide community event, the Shabbaton will take place at Colby College Nov. 4–5. Beginning with a Middle Eastern Shabbat dinner, the Shabbaton features a musical Friday night service led by Batya Levine, an alum of the Rising Song Institute. Other highlights of the weekend include learning with guest scholar Rabbi Sandra Lawson, Director of Racial Justice, Equity and Inclusion at Reconstructing Judaism, a children's program at the Colby Museum of Art, a hike and havdalah with Batya Levine, and learning with the Center for Small Town Jewish Life's rabbinical apprentices. Join us for this incredible Shabbat of Jewish learning and celebration! For a full schedule and to register go to <https://jewishlife.colby.edu/fall-shabbaton/>



Study with scholar in residence

Rabbi Sandra Lawson

Director of Racial Justice, Equity, and Inclusion at Reconstructing Judaism

NOV. 4-5, 2022 at Colby

Middle Eastern Dinner | Musical Shabbat Services | Shabbat Hike and Havdalah
Children's Program at the Colby Museum of Art | and much more

FULL SCHEDULE and REGISTRATION at
jewishlife.colby.edu/fall-shabbaton

JewishLife@colby.edu | 207-859-4271

[f](#) / MaineJewishLife [@](#) / CenterForSmallTownJewishLife

Colby

FMI contact Liz Soloway Snider, liz.snider@colby.edu.

You can now read Rabbi Isaacs's sermons online (including High Holiday sermons)
-- or have them delivered to your inbox!
<https://rabbiisaacs.substack.com/> for more information and to subscribe.

WE REMEMBER

The Yahrzeits for the month of
October 2022
(6 Tishrei – 6 Cheshvan):

Simon Alfond
Dr. Harvey Ansell
Dan Arnon
Rosalind Aronson
Morris Barron
Judith Bosek Engelberg
Zita Bram
Harry Brisk
Dr. Samuel Brisk
Etta Brisk Douglas
Pauline Gladstone
Elaine Gorbach Levine
Elya Hersh
Gertrude Jacobson
Philip Jaffee
Abraham Levine
Howard Rosenbaum
Benson Rosenberg
Hyman Rosenthal
Rose Saperstein
Marcia Shiro Beckerman
Fanny Stein

May Their Memories
Be For a Blessing

Thank you to our August Donors!

To the Foundation and the Future Campaign: Joanne and Michael Bernstein; Rob Johnston and Janika Eckert; Jay Labov; Martha Lieberman; Roberta and Dennis Ratner; William and Patricia Rosenberg; Tobi Schneider, in memory of John and Maybelle Schneider; Barbara Stern in honor of Sid and Liz Geller

Annalee Bloom, as a Kol Nidre pledge and in memory of Andrew Mauk; Don Kerr, in honor of Robert Kaye; Robyn Lavendar, in honor of Nilda Wolman; Barbara and Roy Leopold, in honor of the yahrzeit of Rubin Lipshultz

Donor listing does not include payment of dues, fundraiser tickets or booklet ads, or holiday meals, though we appreciate those very much!
You can donate at BethIsraelWaterville.org

Making a stock donation

Interested in making a donation of stock to the Foundation and the Future Campaign, or to Beth Israel more generally?

Please email us first at office.bethisraelwaterville@gmail.com, so we can share all appropriate information and notify our investment broker.

Thank you for your support!

Simchas and Updates

Have a simcha you'd like to see printed in the Beth Israel monthly newsletter? Email melanieaweiss@gmail.com by October 23.

Want to sponsor a kiddish?

We're excited to offer the opportunity to sponsor the oneg after our monthly Shabbat morning services. It costs \$54, and we'll announce your sponsorship in the monthly newsletter, weekly emails, and on Shabbat. It's a sweet (and delicious!) way to celebrate an anniversary, birthday, or other occasion. Bagels provided by Sunrise Bagel, with sides chosen by you! Email Mel Weiss for more information.

MEMORIAL PLAQUES

To purchase a Yahrzeit plaque contact Rabbi Isaacs or Judy Hansen-Childers
\$200 members/\$400 non-members

CALL FOR YAHRZEITS

If you wish to have your loved ones' Yahrzeit observed during services, please e-mail Rabbi Isaacs.

Notes from the Board of Directors Meeting

Board of Directors Meeting, September 12, 2022, 4:15 p.m. on Zoom

Present: Judy Hansen-Childers, Liz Geller, Sandy Maisel, Melissa Breger, Marvin Eisengart, John Margolis, Jen Yoder, Julie Miller, and Leo Livshits; also Rabbi Isaacs

Minutes of August 15: Sandy moved to approve, Liz seconded, approved.

Rabbi: Words of Torah – Final speeches of Moses before he dies, noting that the Jewish people should have a heart to know, eyes to see, and ears to hear. A heart that knows joy in this world is one that knows that blessings come from G-d.

High Holidays – all events will be in person in the sanctuary. There will be some new Torah readers from Colby students. As usual, there will be a police presence; however, it was noted that the Waterville force is understaffed. Jen will check with them again and other local forces to see if an officer (on duty or off) will be available for security.

Annual congregational meeting – Sunday, October 16, from 9:30 to 11, including a bagel breakfast. The focus will be future plans, election of officers, and teachings from the rabbi.

Capital Campaign: Sandy reported that the acknowledgment of donations and pledges needs to be done in a timely manner. Sandy reported that we are very close to our campaign goal. The Lunder Foundation has made a commitment for an endowment for the rabbi's salary and as a naming gift for refurbishing of the Community Room.

Treasurer: Leo reported that we are fine even though we are over budget on several items. Sandy moved to approve; Julie seconded; approved.

Buildings and Grounds: No report.

The meeting ended at 4:59.

Submitted by Elizabeth Geller, Secretary

Words of Torah, continued from page 1

and that God's love will protect us from being hurt during our moments of vulnerability.

While we can never know how other human beings will respond to our pleas for forgiveness, we can sing the refrains of our ancient and new teachers of Torah – words that give us the strength and confidence to return to God and our better selves. The amazing Israeli singer, Yishai Ribo, offers his simple assurance in the chorus to his hit song, "Lashuv HaBayita," "To Return Home":

Even though we have done something bad/God forgives and pardons, forgives and pardons/God extends His hand to help and give mercifully – the strength to repair and return to Him.

On this Shabbat Shuva, I offer the blessing of the fragile confidence that comes from faith: You are strong enough to have the hard conversations. You can make up whatever is lost in your quest to be One with your God and your people. On the other side of this long journey home to God and the person you were born to be, you will know greater dignity, wholeness, and divinity than when you began.

Gmar Hatimah Tovah – May you all be sealed in the Book of Life.
Rabbi Isaacs