

The Shofar

Monthly Message:

Greetings to all and Shana Tovah

We are in the midst of the holiest days in our Jewish Calendar and life. As we near Yom Kippur, many of us look forward to Kol Nidre.

Kol Nidre, meaning All Vows, is a beautiful solemn melody that is part of the preamble to our Yom Kippur service as it is sung before sundown thus before the start of the holiday. The Talmud forbids asking for the discharge of vows on a Holiday.

Here it is in translation:

"All vows, oaths, binding promises, solemn declarations, and vows of commitment that I have taken, or have been obligated to take, [or that I have vowed] from this Yom Kippur until the next Yom Kippur that is to come in peace, all of them are annulled, released, canceled, and abandoned; they are neither binding nor established."

Kol Nidre is not considered a prayer but rather a Judaic declaratory legal statement said in a Beit Din or Jewish Court as the synagogue becomes during its recital in the presence of our Torahs.

The origins of Kol Nidre are unclear. Babylonia in the 8th century described Kol Nidre as something they knew of from outside their country. The Geonim, religious authorities, did not allow its use. It was believed that nullification of curses or oaths could cause sinister powers. It has also been associated with the Spanish Jews during the Inquisition who were forced to convert to Christianity. They needed a way to free themselves of their oath of conversion.

Kol Nidre has a history of controversy both within and outside of the Jewish community. Rabbis felt it was unjust for us to invalidate all our vows with G-d. As a result, the words to Kol Nidre have been changed many times over the years. Reconstruction Judaism once banned it but now uses a revised version.

During the Middle Ages, Kol Nidre was used as ammunition against Jews; the Christian community made claims that Jews were able to be dishonest in their dealings with Christians and then seek absolution on Yom Kippur by chanting Kol Nidre. This led to an increase in antisemitism and attacks on Jews.

Jews explained that Kol Nidre concerned vows made to G-d by an individual. It had nothing to do with any other individual. "For transgressions between a man and his fellow man, Yom Kippur does not affect atonement until he shall have first appeased his fellow man" (Yoma 9:9).

The origins of its beautiful solemn melody are not known; it is most likely from medieval Ashkenazic German musical tradition called MiSinai (of Sinai).

It is chanted three times, first softly, then somewhat louder and then at full volume. It is a supplication to G-d quietly at first, signifying our vulnerability, then gaining some confidence and finally with full intention. The three repetitions give weight to our plea. It is also a required process in a Beit Din for annulling vows.

On Erev Yom Kippur we will be ready to proceed with solemnity, insight and reverence. Our Days of Awe will be over as we sit down in the synagogue and pray to receive forgiveness.

The TBE Board of Trustees continues to meet and take care of all the tasks necessary to maintain the building, offer a Religious School experience, and build a community for the Jewish people in our region.

The work on the front porch and roof has been completed. Security systems are in place for the Holy Days.

The Membership committee continues to welcome new families each month. The Men's Club and Sisterhood are meeting monthly.

Each month TBE offers a multitude of ways to participate. Please check our calendar.

Dues notices have been sent out. Please pay in a timely manner. Your dues provide income for everything we do.

During the High Holidays, the series of rituals and prayers, and the sound of the Shofar help us open ourselves to G-d and sustain us throughout the year. We hope you are appreciating the High Holiday season.

We look forward to seeing you at Yom Kippur services, the perfect time to connect or reconnect with Temple Beth El.

Phyllis Sherman

Stephanie Bauer

Cantor David Green



Imperfection of Repentance

In the many challenges we all face in our lifetimes, we often think we have failed in a task or challenge if we do not fully solve a problem or issue. We also feel this way during the High Holy Days when we look at who we are and how we might want to change ourselves in how we relate to others.

Of course, we all want to strive to ask for forgiveness, and maybe a bit of change in who we are. When we fall short, we may feel guilty or may totally give up.

Another way to look at this challenge is rather to see how we really are and be realistic as to how or what we may change in the "t'shuva" process.

Parker J. Palmer, world renowned educator, in his book, "On the Brink of Everything", explained this process in a way that has meaning for this time of the High Holy Days:

"I am that to which I gave short shrift and that to which I attended. I am my descents into darkness and my rising again into the light, my betrayals and my fidelities, my failures and my successes. I am my ignorance and my insight, my doubts and my convictions, my fears and my hopes. Wholeness does not mean perfection - it means embracing brokenness as an integral part of life."

Maybe we have to be a little bit more accepting of who we are as individuals, imperfections and all, before we can pursue the process of t'shuva.

Tashlikh, 2025, by Alex Riba

The second of Tishrei, 5786. (For those who can't handle the chopsticks of the Hebrew calendar and need to use a Gregorian fork, September 24, 2025.)

A small group of atonement-bound, soon-to-be-weathered travelers from our community arrive at the park to cast their sins into the stream to prepare themselves for Yom Kippur...when it's repentance *showtime!* These brave members of the congregation—led by the intrepid Hollie Jaffe—managed to resist the attractive pull of kvetching about the weather and ventured off into the rain to recognize and cast away the sins of the previous year.

They did their best with plastic-covered texts, sticks and birdseed and bread for the sins, and used the park's trees as God's umbrellas. But as the service progressed, the rain got a little heavier...then a little heavier...then heavier still—seemingly increasing in increments directly proportional to the quantity of sins we were acknowledging and ultimately casting off into the river of forgiveness.

The determined Ms. Jaffe began to discuss the "Thirteen Attributes"—the thirteen attributes of God's mercy. We talked about the religious and mystical significance of the number 13 in Judaism. Of how, the number twelve represents "constraint" - as in the set months in a year, and the regularity of the Zodiac—while the number thirteen, being above twelve, indicates a sense of the immeasurable. My own personal atonement was instantly rewarded by an opportunity to get some attention (a vice I know I shall never fully cast away) and teach the bold beholders of the Tashlikh deluge a gematria lesson I had learned. (Gematria is the mystical "art" of adding together the numerical values of the letters of individual Hebrew words and then comparing words with equivalent mathematical values in order to see a relationship.) The Hebrew words for "love" and "one" ("ahava" and "echad" respectfully) each have the numerical value of thirteen. When added together, they make 26, which is also the value of God's name (Yud-hey-vuv-hey...the classic one.)

As the courageous casters-away of transgression continued to atone, discuss spiritual ideas, and throw their sins into the Wilber Park creek, the waters descending from the heavens continued to increase and increase, until the skies were open and our commitment to atonement was put to a very, significantly soggy test. We cast the last of our sins into the humble stream and prepared to return to the more secular and considerably drier world.

And then...just like that...the waters receded. All at once. As if our mettle for atoning and managing a minyan in the face of a mounting monsoon had been put to the test—and we had passed. And it *was* a perfect minyan of ten wanderers—willing to face a divine downpour to wash clean their sinful souls. And that was our tashlikh *miracle!*

Schedule for Yom Kippur 5786

Erev Yom Kippur	Wednesday Oct. 1	7:00 pm (Please be prompt!)
	Kol Nidre	
Yom Kippur	Thursday Oct 2	10:00 am
	Morning service	
	Torah service	
	(½ hour break)	
	Yizkor (Memorial) service	
	(½ hour break)	
	Torah Study with Cantor Green	
	Forgiveness Workshop guided by Dr. Jim Bercovitz and Alice Lichtenstein	4:30 pm
	Neilah	6:15 pm
	Tekia Gedolah – (Shofar blast)	
	Break-the-fast*	

*Please contact Gail Feuer at 607-434-2538 or at Gailmindy7@gmail.com to see about last-minute break-the-fast reservations.

Todah Rabah (Thank you very much):

For a donation to Temple Beth El by Carole Blumenkrantz in memory of Shannon Munson, z'l.

For a donation to Temple Beth El by Philip and Carol Moskowitz, in memory of Cantor David Green's father, Harry Green (z'l).

The Temple Beth El Book Discussion Group To Return! By Alice Lichtenstein

Jim Bercovitz and Alice Lichtenstein will again be moderating the TBE Discussion Group.

We will be reading and discussing Abraham Joshua Heschel's, "The Sabbath", a short, but profound classic of Jewish spirituality, often hailed as a meditation for people seeking meaning in modern life.

In these times when many of us are looking for a way to connect to the spiritual strength of Judaism--far from the political world--Heschel's masterpiece is essential read.

Jim and I are still working on finding dates. Most likely, we will meet in November. But we recommend buying a copy of "The Sabbath" and getting a head start!

We hope to see our beloved former discussion members and welcome all newcomers.

If you would like more information, please email me at: arlichtenstein3@gmail.com

Adult Torah and Hebrew Class – Beginning October 4. By Ohad Shem-Tov

We invite all members to join our combined Torah Study and Hebrew Class, starting Saturday, October 4, 2025, at 10:00 AM in the Temple Library.

This year, we'll go *beyond the Torah* and begin exploring the Books of Kings, starting with King David and the Kingdom of Judah. No prior knowledge is required—just a love for learning, a connection to our tradition, and an open, critical mind.

Feel free to bring snacks (dairy or pareve) or drinks to share with your fellow learners as we study in the spirit of hevruta—learning in partnership and community.

All are welcome!

Notice from Chabad of Oneonta about a special speaker event:

Chabad of Oneonta is organizing a talk for the end of October/Simchas Torah. The speaker will be a survivor of the Nova Festival attack in Israel on October 7th, 2023. The date is not yet confirmed but the information will be sent as soon as the arrangements are complete.

Member News:

Alice Lichtenstein and Jim Bercovitz are delighted to announce the marriage of Iris Bercovitz and Jonathan Haller on June 21st, 2025! Iris was a bat mitzvah at Temple Beth El and attended the Temple Beth El Religious School.



Iris and Jonathan signing their ketubah.

Our Hebrew School -- A New Year of Learning and Community

From Ohad Shem-Tov, Director of the Hebrew School

We had a wonderful start to Hebrew School this September, welcoming Rachel Kornhauser as our new Kita Alef teacher. With Eileen Pollack, Roger Chauveron, and Rachel, plus support from our community, the children are thriving. Families with children under bar/bat mitzvah age are warmly encouraged to join our growing program!

Warmly, **Ohad Shem-Tov, PhD**

Sisterhood by Faye Munson

We welcome all Temple Beth El women to join the Sisterhood. Please contact Faye Munson for information. Fayemala27@gmail.com

Men's Club by Steven Feuer

Men's Club will hold its breakfast on Sunday, October 19th, at 10 a.m.

Onegs:

If you would like to sponsor an Oneg for a Friday evening service to celebrate a simcha or in honor or in memory of someone, please CALL or TEXT Faye Munson at (607) 434-3911. PLEASE DO NOT SEND EMAILS.

When you send mail to Temple Beth El, please address it to Temple Beth El PO Box 383, Oneonta, NY 13820 and not to the physical building. Please direct mail to someone's attention if possible (eg, the President, Treasurer or other Officer, or a particular Committee's Chair.)

Good news Israel –

Please recommend www.verygoodnewsisrael.blogspot.com to anyone you think needs to know about the good work that Israel does.

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In Case of Emergency: In the event of a rabbinic emergency, or in the case of an urgent need, contact Temple Beth El's Interim President, Ron Feldstein, at 607-988-7455 or tbeoneonta@gmail.com. In event of a death, please contact Steven Feuer at 607-434-2538.

YAHRZEITS

September 26-October 2 (4-10 Tishri)

Samuel (Shlomo) Weinberg
Sidney Levine

October 3 – 9 (11-17 Tishrei)

Andrew Bernard Winters Bell

October 10-16 (18- 24 Tishrei)

Regina Betts
Marion Rapp
George G. Betts

October 17-23 (25 Tishrei – 1 Cheshvan)

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October 24 – 30 (2-8 Cheshvan)

Martin Weingold
Leo Lubell
Rabbi Paul S. Reis
Irving Schoenfeld

October 31- November 4 (9-15 Cheshvan)

Irving Hertzendorf

May their names always be remembered for a blessing.

Editor's note: Roslyn Weiss's yahrzeit was inadvertently left out of the September Shofar. It should have been listed for September 1.

Torah Parashot for October

October 4 – Ha'azinu – (Deuteronomy 32:1–52) "Ha'azinu" means « Listen ». Moses recounts their history, to remember that G-d chose them as His people and gave them the land.

October 11 – Sukkot 3rd Intermediate day – (Exodus 33:12-34:26) Communal offerings are listed.

October 18 – Bereshit – (Genesis 1:1-6:8) "Bereshit" means "In the Beginning". The world is created.

October 25 – Noach – (Genesis 6:9-11:32) G-d destroys his creation by flood, except for Noah, his family, and two of each kind of animal on an ark.

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Save the dates:

Oct. 1	7 pm	Erev Yom Kippur service (Please be prompt for Kol Nidre!)
Oct 2	10 am	Yom Kippur services, followed by Break-the-Fast (see page 4)
Oct 4	10 am	Adult Torah study (see page 5) Adult Book group will resume in future (see page 5)
Oct 19	10 am	Men's Club Breakfast

*** See the notice on page 7 about an upcoming program by Chabad of Oneonta. The date is not settled yet.

Shabbat times:

Fri. October 3	Light Shabbat candles at 6:24 pm
Fri. October 10	Light Shabbat candles at 6:12 pm
Fri. October 17	Light Shabbat candles at 6:01 pm
Fri. October 24	Light Shabbat candles at 5:50 pm
Fri. October 31	Light Shabbat candles at 5:41 pm

Temple Beth El Shofar

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