

President's Message

by Elsa Conrad

OUR Tu B'shevat seder has always been a major highlight of the synagogue year at Betenu. This fascinating observance takes on a whole new dimension when intertwined with a potluck dinner, snacks on the table for young and old, and, of course, the Schwartz family's famous "Dirt Dessert."

With New Hampshire buried in the depths of winter, it is easy to forget that Tu B'shevat marks the awakening of trees in Israel after winter. This is the beginning of a growing season that yields the *sheva minim*—the seven species of sacred fruits and grains grown in Israel. (Pop Quiz: do you remember all seven? Answer at the bottom of the page.)

Yet even a New Hampshire winter can give us cause to think about trees. I was reminded of this just last week, when our furnace decided to take Christmas off. With no chance of repair before the next day, we fell back on the form of heat used for thousands of years—firewood! It didn't heat the whole house, but it kept us going until the next day and the return of modern heat. Beyond warmth, the fire provided entertainment, as it rapidly became the center of our family activities for the evening.



In a less literal way, Tu B'shevat is also about warmth and family—a way of bringing us back to nature and its beauty, even amid gray skies and withering cold. It is a time to remind ourselves that spring will indeed come, with all its promise. To quote **Rabbi Ben David** from his article at reformjudaism.org, the basic idea of Tu B'shevat "hinges on hope and possibility ... a time to plant, taking the idea of hope and making it real by rolling up our sleeves and contributing to the promise of the future."

So I personally have several reasons to raise a glass to trees during the Tu B'shevat seder. On behalf of our executive board, I invite you to come do the same. Be sure to sign up now, as it's one of many holidays that arrive early this year. We hope to see you there!

Tu B'shevat Potluck Seder

Jan. 17, 2014 • 6:30 pm

Please RSVP via the lobby sign-up sheet, or contact our office.

Attendees are asked to bring a potluck dish, plus a Seder item.

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CONGREGATION BETENU

A Member of the Union for Reform Judaism

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On the Web:
www.betenu.org

To submit articles or information, email:
betenu@nii.net

ANSWER: Wheat, barley, grape, fig, pomegranate, olive, date.

FROM THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

by Sheryl Liberman

Parent Meeting Jan. 5 at 9:15 am

Be sure to stop in on Sunday, Jan. 5 for our discussion of the remaining school year and plans for next year. Other topics include Sunday social activities for the students (contact **Sheryl** if you have ideas), plus Oneg signups—please have a date in mind.

Welcome to Our Newest Students

Betenu Religious School is proud to introduce our two new students: **Jalen Creed** and **Jonathan Crotty**. Welcome, Jalen and Jonathan!

Updated Sunday School Calendar

Did you get the updated version of Betenu's Sunday school calendar after our snow day? To receive an electronic copy, just e-mail **Sheryl** at saml54@comcast.net or betenu@nii.net.

Shabbat Requirements

Since we're about halfway through the school year, this is a good time to make sure that your child is on track to fulfill their Shabbat service requirements. Please check the number on your child's most recent last progress report!



Reminder about Snow Cancellations



In case of severe weather, families will get a cancellation call that day, between 7:15 and 7:45 am. If you haven't confirmed your preferred phone number with Betenu, please contact **Sheryl** or **Elsa**.

Serve up a Little Betenu Hospitality!

Faith Episcopal Church in Merrimack handles the annual catering for our Yom Kippur Break-the-Fast, and we're returning the favor by catering their annual meeting on Sunday, Jan. 19 (snow date: Jan. 26). We need volunteers to make or purchase meals and desserts, hot and cold. We also need people for setup, serving and cleanup from 10-12:30 (all or part).

To volunteer or get information, contact our coordinator, **Roberta Pavoll**, at 672-9820.

Food can be dropped off at Betenu at the beginning of Sunday school, or brought (by 10 am) directly to the church at 590 Daniel Webster Highway, Merrimack, NH. For directions, visit <http://www.faithnh.org/contact.html>.



BETENU BITS

Fundraising Meeting, Jan. 6 at 7 pm

You bring the ideas, we bring the pizza! Share your input for Betenu's future programs with us on Monday, Jan. 6, and enjoy a tasty slice or two. Your participation is vital to the success of our future events.



Channel Your Inner Office Worker

Betenu needs a little weekly or monthly office help, so we welcome volunteers! Hours are flexible, requiring only a few small "chores." If you are interested, please contact **Sheryl Liberman**.

Shop at Amazon, Benefit Betenu

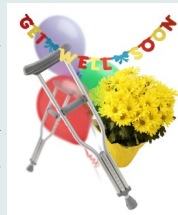
Buying online can benefit Betenu at no cost to you—just click the Amazon link at betenu.org, and we get part of the purchase price.

MC, Visa and Discover

Your credit card can now pay Betenu dues, tuition, gift purchases or donations! Just call the office or stop in today to arrange the charge details.

Help for the Hospitalized

National privacy laws keep hospitals from calling us when our members are admitted. If you need help or a little friendly support, ask for the hospital chaplain and request that Betenu be notified. We're here for you!



February Newsletter Deadlines

Please email newsletter submissions to betenu@nii.net by Tuesday, Jan. 21.



**Please join us
in kicking off
2014 at Betenu
by celebrating
the generosity and
achievements of
these members
and friends!**

NEWS & NOTES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Welcome to Betenu!

- ◆ Ilana Creed and son Jalen
- ◆ Ariel & Michael Crotty and sons Jonathan and Ethan

Thank You!

- ◆ All who joined in our classic Hanukkah celebrations
- ◆ The Burstein Family for providing trash bags
- ◆ Mark Starin for donating bottled water

CONTRIBUTORS

- ◆ Geoffrey Gross, to the Diantha Gross Education Fund

BIRTHDAYS

- ◆ Benjamin Gingras
- ◆ Matthew Spokane

YHRZEITS

In Loving Memory

- ◆ Murray Grant
friend of Joel Silberberg
January
- ◆ Sylvia Florence Finkelstein
January 1
- ◆ Alan Blotcky
father of Steve Blotcky
January 1
- ◆ Sigmund Werner
father of Sara Murphy
January 3
- ◆ Sylvia Linda
sister of Martha Sandhaus
January 7
- ◆ Morris Sigel
father of Martha Sandhaus
January 8
- ◆ Sarah Applebaum
grandmother of Elyse Wasserman
January 10
- ◆ Philip Wasserman
grandfather of Lenny Wasserman
January 12
- ◆ David Franks
brother of Paul Franks
January 13
- ◆ Vilma Kartman
cousin of Elsa Conrad
January 18
- ◆ Lois Goff
mother of Steve Goff
January 19
- ◆ Kevin McGuire
husband of Vivian McGuire,
father of Maureen MacGregor
January 19
- ◆ Mollie Segal
mother of Joshua Segal
January 19
- ◆ Harold Rimalover
father of Robert Rimalover
January 22
- ◆ Steven Bernstein
uncle of Amy Juscak
January 28
- ◆ Sara bat Zvi v'Miriam
relative of Sonia & Emil Campeanu
January 30

CONGREGATION BETENU OFFICERS

President: Elsa Conrad 603-879-9189
VP Finance: Bob Rimalover 603-672-5629
VP Education: Sheryl Liberman 603-424-4609
VP Administration (Acting): Barbara Bailey 603-880-9355
Secretary: Pam Blotcky 603-882-4029
Membership: Mark Starin 603-486-8083
Trustees: Steve Blotcky 603-882-4029, Vivian McGuire 603-882-3139, Roberta Pavoll 603-672-9820
Trustees At-Large: Sara Murphy 603-465-7119, Joel Silberberg 603-472-8143
Oneg/Interfaith Representative: Roberta Pavoll 603-672-9820
Publicity: Barbara Bailey 603-880-9355, Marcella Dube 603-673-9412
Rabbinical Intern: Nate DeGroot rabbi@betenu.org
Rabbi Emeritus: Joshua Segal emeritus@betenu.org

Happy New Year!

by Rav Nate DeGroot



**A tree, like us,
requires a healthy
past to sustain.
But it is the
outermost layer,
the new life,
the growing edge,
where rings form
and life is celebrated.**



AT SUNSET on Jan. 15, we usher in *Tu B'shevat*, one of the four new years on the Jewish calendar. Just like our secular calendar has multiple year cycles—think calendar year, fiscal year, school year—so too our Jewish calendar has multiple year cycles. Jewish new years include: Rosh Hashanah, which falls on the first day of the month of Tishrei, and is used for calculating a variety of things, including the years of a foreign king's rein, the sabbatical year, and the jubilee year; the first of Nisan, the month within which Passover falls, which is said to be the first month of the Jewish calendar and marks the beginning of the Jewish people and their Exodus from Egypt; the first of Elul, when animal taxes would be collected; and the 15th of Shevat, called *Tu B'shevat*, a birthday for the trees.

According to the Torah, a tree that was planted in the land of Israel could not be picked or harvested from for its first three years. Only after a tree had celebrated its third birthday, could its produce be consumed. *Tu B'shevat* is considered the birthday for the trees, so no matter when during the year the tree was planted, its first *Tu B'shevat* was its first birthday and it was only after three *Tu B'shevats* that its fruit could be eaten. In a certain sense then, *Tu B'shevat* could be considered the day when a tree forms its next ring.



A tree, like us, requires a healthy past to sustain. But it is the outermost layer, the new life, the growing edge, where rings form and life is celebrated. It is the outermost layer, where the present and the future meet, where ideas are sparked, where imagination and creativity and courage live. It is the outermost layer—what *is* right now and what *can be* next—that we celebrate on *Tu B'shevat*.

TORAH is known as the Tree of Life and we as Jews and as human beings are the embodiment of that Torah. It is at our outermost edges that a new ring of Judaism is formed. Our new growth signals the possibility of a new reality. We stretch and push out the bark to allow for new perspectives, new leadership, new initiatives, and new ideas to form. In this way, we remain alive.

Like us, trees slow down in the winter, and hibernate in a sense. Growth within a tree slows to a screeching halt in the coldest months of the year

and then picks up again as the temperature rises. In fact, it is this ebb and flow that actually creates the ring; the ring in a tree growing in a temperate zone can be almost indistinguishable. *Tu B'shevat*, though early this year, marks a moment when we rise and stretch and begin to come out of winter's hibernation.

YES, there is still snow on the ground. Yes, it will still be the middle of January. Yes, we're months away from spring flowers blooming. But this is the time to form a new ring, to spark new growth, and begin a new cycle. It will take a concerted effort on all our part, but new growth is what we're after. It will take each of us to make it happen. It will take all of us to be successful.

Please join us at our *Tu B'shevat seder* on Friday night, Jan. 17, as we honor the rings of our past and look forward to the rings that will form our future.

To new growth and a happy new year!

Questions or comments on this article? Email Rav Nate at rabbi@betenu.org.

THE NINTH (OR TENTH) NIGHT OF HANUKKAH



New members Ilana Creed and her son Jalen take part in their first Betenu event.



Friday, Dec. 6 saw our first “9th Night of Hanukkah” event—two days after the 8th night! OK, call us whimsical. But it was fun to light candles, sing, share potluck and do a Yankee swap.



Above: Betenu members show off toys, *tchotchkes* and white elephants given out at our Yankee Swap.

At right: OOOOHH! Sheryl Liberman openly covets this scarf held by Pam Blotcky.



Nothing says “Yankee Swap” like Farkle... as Ilana Creed discovers to her chagrin.

January at Betenu

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 New Year's Day	2 <i>Rosh Chodesh</i>	3 Rabbi-Led Service, 7:30 pm	4 <i>Bo</i>
5 Relig. School (Rav Nate), 9 am; Parent Mtg., 9:15 am	6 Programming Meeting with Pizza, 7 pm	7	8	9	10 Lay-led Service, 7:30 pm	11 <i>Beshalach</i>
12 Religious School, 9 am	13	14	15	16	17 Tu B'Shevat Potluck Seder (Rabbi-led), 6:30 pm	18 <i>Yitro</i>
19 Religious School (Rav Nate), 9 am	20	21	22	23	24 Lay-led Service, 7:30 pm	25 <i>Mishpatim</i>
26 Religious School, 9 am	27	28	29	30	31 <i>Rosh Chodesh</i> Lay-Led Service, 7:30 pm	

February at Betenu

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 <i>Terumah</i> <i>Rosh Chodesh</i>
2 Religious School, 9 am	3	4	5	6	7 Lay-led Service, 7:30 pm	8 <i>Tetzaveh</i>
9 Religious School, 9 am	10	11	12	13	14 Rabbi-led Service, 7:30 pm	15 <i>Ki Tisa</i>
16 Religious School (Rav Nate), 9 am	17	18	19	20	21 Lay-led Service, 7:30 pm	22 <i>Vayakhel</i>
23 NO SCHOOL	24	25	26	27	28 Rabbi-Led Service, 7:30 pm	