



SHALOM from BETH SHOLOM

MAY 2022

30 Nisan – 1 Sivan 5782

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Rabbi Peggy Berman de Prophetis

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yet to be confirmed

RABBI'S COLUMN:

Rabbi Peggy Berman deProphetis

As most of you know, I returned a few weeks ago from Barcelona, Spain. Spanish Jews were once one of the largest and most prosperous communities in Europe under both Muslim and Christian rule before they were given the “choice” of converting to Catholicism or being expelled or killed.



I was traveling with my granddaughter and wanted to bring to her attention that being a Jew goes far beyond the US and Israel, which we visited together some years ago. We enjoyed a seder in Barcelona and a trip to nearby Girona, which was the center of Jewish life in Catalonia and the birthplace of Rabbi Moses ben Nachman Girondi (1194-1270), better known as Nachmanides. In Girona there is a Jewish museum, Judaica store, and a small library used by about 140 people annually. How many Jews? None!

In the museum there is a list of names taken by Jews if they chose to convert to Catholicism rather than be expelled. As our guide pointed out, looking at these names and their frequency in the Girona population today, you can see that many of its citizens have Jewish ancestry. This is true throughout Spain.

Today, despite their existence in small numbers compared to the world population, Jews take their place on the world stage. I'm thinking, of course, of Volodymyr Zelensky, the President of Ukraine. A recent article in the May issue of *Commentary* by Ruth Wisse is entitled “Zelensky, the Jewish Hero.” Describing his background, Wisse writes: “Zelensky’s parents were not among those who wished to emigrate. Both had worked hard to establish themselves in academic positions that had been reserved for Soviet citizens in good standing. Their Jewishness was inherited rather than practiced, and Volodymyr was much like the American Jewish children of extremely acculturated, non-affiliated Jewish parents, who grow up without any instruction in their religion or national history.” Before becoming president he served in the army, went to law school, and then turned to professional comedy, a field that seems to attract many Jews.

And yet, he is now on the world stage as the heroic Jewish leader in Ukraine’s fight to defend their democracy against a Russian aggressor. I can’t believe that if he were any religion other than Jewish that his religion would have entered into our characterization of him. And how ironic is that? Ukraine was a place where Jews were massacred every time Ukrainians fought for their independence whether against Poles, Czars, Bolsheviks, and Germans. And now, it is a Jew bravely leading their defense.

So, things do change. People change. And although It seems that, sadly, anti-Semitism in some form will always be with us, we can take hope and pride in moments when what has happened in the dark past moves forward into the light.

Rabbi Peggy Berman deProphetis

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Caroline B. Schwartz

How many of you have gardens? Did you already put your houseplants outside, plant annuals, or prep your vegetable garden for planting your annual variety? Spring as a gardener's time of renewal and readiness for the new harvest year can also be thought of in a kind of way as a recommitment to your Jewish beliefs. As President, one rarely gets the time to breathe and reassess oneself, ready for a new year. That is why I have decided to give myself a two week 'mental health' vacation, to get away from everyday life as the President of this congregation and to get my mind and body reapplied and restrengthened to complete my last year of this current two year term. There are so many unknowns on my mind, so to share them with you, I hope will lighten my mental load and inspire you to join in planning the destiny of Congregation Beth Sholom as we adjust and acclimatize ourselves to operating and opening more fully with Covid in mind, but not totally consuming us.

There is still a lot to be done to make a near normal but different life in the Synagogue going forward. The old way will never be reinstated. We are working on a new way that satisfies everyone as best it can and finds new meaning in our Jewish lives and practices. We need to reset and rethink what it is that we want to embrace and renew.

From my participation with the USCJ Presidents blog, I learned that we are not alone in assessing where we are and how to go forward. Zoom in our Conservative circles is here to stay, as is the 'online service'. That lack of close and personal interaction with other congregants has given way to service attendance online, but with more in-home family observance. Instead of meeting up after services over the oneg, people are tending to invite friends and family for Shabbat dinners and participate together at services from home. The traditional building in house service is still alive, but people are liking the connection and freedom of attending the service from home and from one's dinner table or armchair.

Offering online services has not yet attracted new members to Beth Sholom but it has been a terrific tool to invite prospective members and give them a sense of 'us'. Many people have told me they like to attend the New York big synagogue services with named Rabbi's of note. They like the singing, music, and inclusiveness given by these leaders. It is not that we are losing members, but we are not gaining membership. The lack of Jewish membership by middle-aged and younger adults is nation-wide. The population of Jewish people in our central Delaware location is not increasing, and with those who are moving to the area many do not want to affiliate. It is frustrating to not be able to get honest answers to the question of why or why not? The past and present ways are not working for people.

So please help me and the Board to define what it is that people want and let us go forward together to provide some pivotal points toward which we can aim our organization and hope we can bring more people together to live in our Jewish community. Money should never be the issue, but perhaps we are missing something bigger that has turned off many a Jew's reason for not being part of a wider Jewish community. Maybe people are not finding new ways to connect to an old religion. I found today a very interesting website with some good self-reflecting we can do during the Omer

period between Pesach and Shavuot! Please read the information about the Counting of the Omer later in this Bulletin for the site and see what that Rabbi has to offer. There are a lot of interesting sources online that tell us a lot about our religion that we probably have missed in our training or lives without training. The Internet is a fabulous learning tool. But only if used as one.

But what of those who say their reason for not joining is because we don't do this or that, or one shouldn't have to pay to pray. Then wouldn't it be better for them to get involved to help make their ideas work not just for them but for others who seek the same thing. On the other hand, the Rabbis of old encouraged everyone to participate in organized religious activity, simply to observe mitzvot. Maybe there is no better reason than that to join.

Well, thank goodness the Board of Beth Sholom has continued to thrive regardless, and to work hard to make Beth Sholom the very best it can be as a community group and as a building housing Jewish activity. The halls echo emptiness a lot. But once we get you back inside, you will feel like you have moved into a new home with the many changes brought about during the lock down. As the Board continues to serve you for the second of the two-year term, please- please- please inquire, enter, participate, involve yourself with ongoing activities we are hosting. There is need for more hands and more hearts to keep us thriving. Each little ripple spreads to a much wider ripple, and broadens the wave action. Set that ripple in motion, won't you?

In April, besides celebrating Passover, we were able, as a new first, to have our Choir join with the Masons to conduct Shabbat services together. Cantor George supplied a very nice piece for us to perform with him. It was a beautiful evening and well attended. We also had a wonderful speaker Sheri Stern, at Friday Shabbat services later in the month. She presented her story of "Reuniting the Neshamas" for our Yom Hashoah remembrance. We continue to conduct twice monthly Saturday morning services with Torah readers. Thank you to Rabbi Peggy and her students. And thank you to Rabbi White for his leyning.

Paint with Karen was a successful afternoon activity with many people enjoying their first experiences with watercolors. See our pictures of the group studiously painting and experimenting with watercolors. Karen will be planning more sessions in the near future. Thank you Karen Konowitz for doing this.

This month we are planning another patio party at a local restaurant, a carpool trip to Delaware Art Museum to see the Tiffany exhibit, and a gardening experience to add more perennials, tidy and mulch the memorial garden in front of the classroom windows. You are needed for all these activities along with a Jewish friend. I am hoping you will invite a Jewish person to join with us. Non-Jewish spouses are always welcome to attend all events. Planning is happening. Want to help?-- call me.

This is a personal invitation for you to meet with me and other Board members to explore your interests and hopes for a better and more inclusive Jewish life as we embark on our second year of our term. We need you.

Caroline

TREASURER'S MESSAGE

Your continued support is necessary to sustain the day-to-day operations of the synagogue. Please send in your dues payments. If there are any concerns or questions, please contact me.

Continue to bring your Redner's receipts into the synagogue. There is a basket at the window in the office. We receive a percentage of the total amount of purchases. Remember we need the entire receipt, don't tear any section off. *Only by using your Redner's membership card* will it register the save-a-tape amount. If not, then your receipt and all your efforts are invalid for this program. This has been a terrific fundraiser for the Congregation. These dollars make a wonderful addition to our income and to support our charity donations.

by Stu Handler

May Simchas: Your birthday not listed? Let Anne know for next time. And if you know of anyone needing a call or a card, please let Anne Parks know at lucky ladyane@gmail.com

Happy Birthday to

Joel Chodos May 2;
Freda Mesibov May 4 and Fred Sheinblum also May 4;
Larry Klepner May 6;
Phyllis Handler May 10;
Barbara White May 17;
Tom Mehl May 20;
Steve Weiner May 25;
Ray Szechtman May 26;
Rabbi Richard White May 28;
Connie Fazzio May 29; and
Myna German May 31.

Happy Anniversary to

Fred and Diana Sheinblum May 2;
Linda & Michael Mensh May 23; and
Leon and Nancy Schenkein May 26.

JEWISH HISTORY CLASSES

Notes From BURT BRENMAN

The dates for this class at 10:00 am are: May 15 (NOTE change from 4th Sunday) and June 26. Please let me know you are interested to join in his classes at burtrehab@gmail.com. As was part of the program last year, I am asking for people to take a leadership role for chapters in this book.

May's class date is the 15th. the topic is Beloved Rabbi page 31.

In the end of the book is a section titled notes. On page 147 are the notes for this topic. I suggest you read them for additional understanding of the story. I will lead this class, and I hope I do not lose the transmission.

There will be a class in June, probably the 26th. It is the last class for this semester. We will close the "school for the summer and be back in the Fall.

Lag Ba'Omer Information compiled from My Jewish Learning and other online resources

Lag Ba'Omer is a minor holiday that occurs on the 33rd day of the Omer, the 49-day period between Passover and Shavuot. A break from the semi-mourning of the Omer, key aspects of Lag Ba'Omer include holding Jewish weddings (it's the one day during the Omer when Jewish law permits them), lighting bonfires and getting haircuts.

One of the periods of the year which we are commanded to pay special attention to is the one in which we currently find ourselves — the period of Sefirat Ha'Omer — the counting of the Omer. The Torah tells us that from the second day of Passover we are to begin counting seven weeks — 49 days. At the start of this period we bring a grain offering, consisting of a measure of barley, called an "omer." Fifty days later, at the end of the period, on the holiday of Shavuot, we bring another grain offering, called the two loaves, made of wheat.

The bringing of the grain offerings and the counting of the 49 days between Passover and Shavuot clearly seem to be some sort of agricultural festival; a way of thanking God, during the period of the spring grain harvest, for the food He has given us.

Different Reasons to Celebrate:

There are a few explanations why we celebrate Lag Ba'Omer, but none is definitive.

The Omer is a time of semi-mourning, when weddings and other celebrations are forbidden, and as a sign of grief, observant Jews do not cut their hair. Anthropologists say that many peoples have similar periods of restraint in the early spring to symbolize their concerns about the growth of their crops. But the most often cited explanation for the Jewish practice comes from the Talmud, which tells us that during this season a plague killed thousands of Rabbi Akiva's students because they did not treat one another respectfully. The mourning behavior is presumably in memory of those students and their severe punishment.

According to a medieval tradition, the plague ceased on Lag Ba'Omer, the 33rd day of the Omer. (The Hebrew letters *lamed* and *gimel* which make up the acronym "Lag" have the combined numerical value of 33.) As a result, Lag Ba'Omer became a happy day, interrupting the sadness of the Omer period for 24 hours.

A completely different reason for the holiday concerns one of Rabbi Akiva's few disciples who survived the Bar Kochba revolt, Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai. He is said to have died on Lag Ba'Omer.

Rabbi Simeon continued to defy the Roman rulers even after Bar Kochba's defeat, and was forced to flee for his life and spend years in solitary hiding. Legend places him and his son Eleazar in a cave for 12 years, where a miraculous well and carob tree sustained them while they spent their days studying and praying. When they finally emerged, Simeon denigrated all practical occupations, insisting that people engage only in the study of Torah. For this God confined the two to their cave for another year, accusing Simeon of destroying the world with his rigid asceticism.

Unrelated to Rabbi Simeon, the kabbalists also give a mystical interpretation to the Omer period as a time of spiritual cleansing and preparation for receiving the Torah on Shavuot. The days and weeks of counting, they say, represent various combinations of the *sefirot*, the divine emanations, whose contemplation ultimately leads to purity of mind and soul. The somberness of this period reflects the seriousness of its spiritual pursuits.

Finally, on yet another track, some authorities attribute the joy of Lag Ba'Omer to the belief that the manna that fed the Israelites in the desert first appeared on the 18th of Iyar.

Though its origins are uncertain, Lag Ba'Omer has become a minor holiday. (For Sephardic Jews, the holiday is the day *after* Lag Ba'Omer.) Schoolchildren picnic and play outdoors with bows and arrows — a possible reminder of the war battles of Akiva's students — and in Israel plant trees. It is customary to light bonfires, to symbolize the light Simeon bar Yohai brought into the world. And every year numerous couples wed at this happy time.

And to bring Lag Ba'Omer to a more personal understanding today might be found in the following from Rabbi Simon Jacobson <https://www.meaningfullife.com/category/torah/months-holidays/nisan/myomer>

The 7 week period between Passover and Shavuot, called Counting the Omer, is a powerful span of time, which empowers us to *refine our lives and elevate our souls*. The spectrum of human emotions divided into 49 different attributes, each one corresponding to one day in this 49-day period.

An interesting source. And watch for a place to meet on May 18 at 2:00 pm for a reflection and discussion group chat.



**Pictures of painters
from Painting with
Karen.**



Making Art—
Not drinking!
Just because there are lots
of red cups out, they
aren't filled with beer!
You need a lot of water
for watercoloring.





So much talent!

May Yahrzeits

Week 30 – May 6

29 Nisan	Jacob H. Schiff	Bd 2 R2
29 Nisan	James Krauss	No Pl
29 Nisan	Morris L. Sheinblum	No Pl
1 Iyar	Jane Rosenfeld	No Pl
1 Iyar	Evelyn Dubin	No Pl
2 Iyar	Lena Rigberg Axel	Bd 2 R4
3 Iyar	Dora Markowitz	Bd 3 R1
4 Iyar	Arthur Schenkein	No Pl

Week May 7 -13

6 Iyar	Sheila Kratenstein	No Pl
8 Iyar	Joseph Vogel	No Pl
8 Iyar	Michael Brown	No Pl
9 Iyar	Selda Mersky	No Pl
10 Iyar	Lenore Newman	No Pl
10 Iyar	Rose bryant	No Pl
12 Iyar	Harriet Herbin	No Pl

May 14 - 20

13 Iyar	Isidore Gelof	Bd 1 R5
13 Iyar	Joseph Dubin	No Pl
14 Iyar	Leslie Schleifer	No Pl
15 Iyar	Emre Krauss	No Pl

15 Iyar	Joseph Tonick	Bd 2 R5
15 Iyar	Meyer Weiner	No Pl
17 Iyar	Emanuel Barros	Bd 3 R1
18 Iyar	Rayzella Spector	No Pl
19 Iyar	Aaron Jacob Rosenberg	No Pl
19 Iyar	Blanche Bialow	Bd 2 R5
19 Iyar	Harry Bialow	Bd 2 R5

May 21 - 27

20 Iyar	W. David Borish	No Pl
20 Iyar	Pauline Marcus	Bd 2 R2
20 Iyar	Gerald Kramer	No Pl
20 Iyar	Mary Lou Gorkin Smith	No Pl
20 Iyar	Barry Bortnick	No Pl
21 Iyar	Lily Levine	No Pl
23 Iyar	Marylyn Gordon	Bd2 R4
23 Iyar	William Bryant	No Pl
24 Iyar	Kevin Dougherty	No Pl
24 Iyar	Pauline Faber	No Pl
24 Iyar	Ida Greenberg	Bd 3 R1
25 Iyar	Claire Levy	No Pl
25 Iyar	Irene Seger	No Pl
26 Iyar	Morris Simon	Bd 1 R1
26 Iyar	Neff Halpern	Bd 2 R3

May 28 – June 3

27 Iyar	Ruth Rosker	Bd 2 Large Pl
28 Iyar	Lois Jean Levin	No Pl
29 Iyar	Raye Francis Mayes	No Pl

SIVAN

1 Sivan	Harold Wilson	Bd 2 R5
1 Sivan	Terry Pikus	Bd 4 R2
2 Sivan	Herman Makruzin	Bd 2 R1
3 Sivan	Harold Halpern	No Pl

In case you are unaware on the Yahrzeit list within the bulletin, if there is a plaque in memory of a relative, the board (Bd) and row (R) number have been listed for your convenience.

Our Memorial Wall is the rear wall of the main sanctuary. If you would like to remember a loved one with a permanent memorial plaque, please contact Religious Vice President Steve Schwartz. These take a few weeks to arrive. The cost is \$450.00. If you wish, Steve will arrange with you to conduct an unveiling and pay homage to your relative at a subsequent Friday evening service. You may also choose to participate from the Bimah and say a little about that loved one in conjunction with the unveiling.

MAY 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Rosh Chodesh Iyar 30 Nisan	2 6:30 pm Board Mtg	3 6:00 pm Choir	4	5	6 Shabbat Svc 7:00 pm Leader: Steve Schwartz	7
8	9	10 6:00 PM Choir	11	12	13 Shabbat Svc 7:00 pm Geo and Carole Mason	14
15 10:00 Jewish History Class w/Burt Brenman	16	17 6:00 PM Choir	18 Lag Ba- Omer Reflection & Discussion 2:00 pm	19 LAG BA-OMER 33 rd Day of the Counting of the Omer	20 RABBI 7:00 pm Shabbat Svc:	21 RABBI 9:45 am Service Followed by Class discussion
22 RABBI 9:30 am Morning Minyan 10:30 am Class Apocrypha studies	23	24 6:00 pm Choir	25	26	27 Shabbat Svc 7:00 pm Leader: Steve Schwartz	28
29	30 Memorial Day	31 Rosh Chodesh Sivan				
28 Iyar	29 Iyar	1 Sivan				

More information coming with time and date during this month:

Patio Party Meet and Greet being planned by Gwen Stubbolo

Car pooling to Delaware Art Museum for Tiffany collection

Lag Ba'Omer reflections and discussion Wednesday May 18, 2:00 pm, location TBD

Shalom from Beth Sholom

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We're on the Web!

Visit us at

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