

LIMUD 5769

Adult and Family Education 2008-2009



Find Your Way

CONGREGATION BETH EL
OF THE SUDBURY RIVER VALLEY



INTRODUCTION

Seven years ago, *Va'ad Limud*, Congregation Beth El's Steering Committee for Congregational Learning, established these goals for our congregational education program:

- Encourage everyone in our community to engage in lifelong Jewish learning.
- Cultivate Jewish consciousness through increased knowledge and awareness that will lead to actions.
- Create a welcoming and challenging place for learning and doing
- Create a learning community in which each member is both a teacher and a learner.
- Foster a passionate connection and commitment to Beth El and the world *l'dor vador* — from generation to generation.

This booklet reflects the continuing fruits of our efforts. Through the collaboration of many individuals, committees and the generosity of the contributors to the Carob Tree Initiative and the Beth El Fund we are offering a rich program of learning opportunities that includes:

- A Sunday morning *Beit Midrash* — a House of Study which will create a community of learners and make Sunday at Beth El a day of exploration, sharing and growing for all who enter its doors. These sessions are led by our rabbi and cantor, along with occasional guest teachers and scholars-in-residence.
- A wide range of adult learning courses taught by local scholars, members of the professional staff, and fellow congregants
- A Family Education program that offers families with students from early childhood through sixth grade a multitude of opportunities to learn together
- A Hebrew Literacy Program – beginners through advanced
- Three weekly Torah study groups – all levels

We invite you to peruse this book at your leisure and discover courses, speakers, and study groups that stimulate your interest. We look forward to learning together throughout 5768. May we each individually and as community be strengthened through our learning experiences in the upcoming year. *Chazak! Chazak! V'Nitchazek!* – May we go from strength to strength!


Rabbi David Thomas
Nina Price, Director of Congregational Learning
Judy Goldberg, Vice President, Talmud Torah

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Opportunities for Adult Jewish Study at Beth El	7
<i>BaDerech: On Our Way</i>	8
<i>Beit Midrash/House of Study</i>	10
Foundations of the Ethical in Jewish Tradition	11
Fall/Winter Courses	12
<i>Zohar: Lighting our Way</i>	12
Fall Scholar-in-Residence: Melila Hellner-Eshed	13
The <i>Zohar</i> : the Jewel in the Crown of Jewish Mystical Literature	
Eco-Judaism	15
Jewish Encounter Reading Series	17
Maimonides by Sherwin Nuland	17
Betraying Spinoza by Rebecca Goldstein	17
Barney Ross by Douglas Century	18
Spring Courses	19
Difficult Freedom: Selected Essays by Emmanuel Levinas	19
The Geopolitics of Israel	19
Year-long Programs	21
Interfaith Family Living: Finding a Place at the Table for Everyone	21
The Art and Insights of Biblical Cantillation	23
Adult Jewish Literacy – AJL	24

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Family Learning	27
Early Childhood Holiday Programs	27
K-5 Grade-Based Family Learning Programs	28
Kindergarten: <i>Shalsholet Ha-Dorot</i>	28
1st Grade: <i>Bayti - My Jewish Home</i>	28
2nd Grade: Gifts of All Shapes and Sizes	29
3rd Grade: And You Shall Be a Blessing	29
4th Grade: Conversations with God	30
5th Grade: Journey to the Promised Land	30
Project <i>HiBuR: Hugim - Beth El Relationship</i>	31
 Shabbat at Beth El	 32
Shabbat Services Schedule	32
Torah <i>Hevrot</i> (Torah Study Groups)	33
First Encounters with Gems of Torah	33
Torah Study with Commentary	33
Congregant-led Torah Study	33
Shabbat Youth Programs	34
Congregation Shabbaton	34
 Arts at Beth El	 35
Shir El: The Community that Sings Together	35
Purim Shpiel	35



Many of Congregation Beth El's adult and family education programs are generously underwritten by donations to the Beth El Fund and the Carob Tree Fund. Please consider contributing to these funds or to the Adult Education Fund as you participate in these classes to help ensure excellent educational programs at Beth El in the future.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULT JEWISH STUDY AT BETH EL

עַל־שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד עַל הַתּוֹרָה
וְעַל הָעֲבוֹדָה וְעַל גְּמִילוּת הַסְּדִים.

We read in Pirkei Avot “*Al shlosha d’varim ha-alom omed.*” (Pirkei Avot 1: 2) - The world stands upon three things: *Torah*, *Avodah* (service to God) and *Gemillut Hasadim* (loving deeds).

This year we begin the seventh year of our program of congregational adult learning – *Al Shlosha D’varim* – to provide each of us an opportunity to deepen our understanding of Torah, service to God, and acts of loving deeds.

Opportunities include a regular Sunday morning *Beit Midrash*, courses on Wednesday evenings, Scholars-in-Residence, Adult Hebrew Literacy, Shabbat morning Torah study, and fascinating courses that span a wide range of interests.

We encourage you to take part in these multiple opportunities for learning and personal growth. These programs are designed for all levels of learners and everyone’s voice enriches the conversation. We look forward to learning with you and from you over the course of this year.

BADERECH: ON OUR WAY

FINDING OUR WAY TO COMMUNITY

For the past two years Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley has been fortunate to be the recipient of the Legacy Heritage Innovation Project grant which has funded the development of *BaDerech: On Our Way*. *BaDerech* envisions Beth El as a congregation in which all members are actively engaged in a process of exploring our Jewish journeys and striving to live the words of the *V'ahavta* – to fully live and express a Jewish life when you sit in your home and when you walk on your way – by creating seamless connections between our expressions of Judaism in our personal homes and Beth El, our communal home.

We are now half-way through the four years of our Legacy Heritage Innovation Project grant. To date success in working toward the goals of *BaDerech* has been made on both a programmatic and a systemic level. Highlights of our success include intergenerational Shabbat and holiday programming, support groups for interfaith families, engaging congregants in a process of telling their Jewish narratives, community organizing, working with lay leadership to “link silos,” and celebrating our work through a congregational Shabbaton. As we move forward in the transformational work of *BaDerech*, we hope that you will choose to be involved. *BaDerech* initiatives for the coming year include:

- **Ayekah BaDerech** – We will expand participation in community organizing at Beth El by asking a broader segment of the community the core question, “*Ayekah?*” – Where are you on your Jewish journey? Congregants’ answers to this question will help shape the future of Beth El. We hope you will be part of the conversation.
- **Interfaith Initiatives** – We will continue to support interfaith families within our community through a support and discussion

AL SHLOSHA D'VARIM

group facilitated by Elana Kling Perkins, Coordinator of the Interfaith Family Resource Center at Jewish Family & Children's Services. We will also be working with the Jewish Outreach Institute to explore how to make Beth El a more welcoming and inclusive community to individuals from diverse backgrounds.

- **Shabbat Family Programming** – Shabbat is a weekly opportunity to rejuvenate oneself and focus on spending time with those you love. We have created a few programs to enrich families' celebration of Shabbat at Beth El. On the first Friday of the month we have Shabbat Together, a family Kabbalat Shabbat service led by Elyssa Auster, our Rabbinic Intern. Twice a month we have Shabbat morning activities for children ages 3-11. Please see the monthly calendar for more details. We hope to see your family at Beth El on Shabbat!
- **Havurot** – This year BaDerech will be working with all of the congregation's havurot, both old and new, to find ways to strengthen the connection between the havurot and congregational activities. As part of this process, many havurot will be working with the Ritual Committee to support holiday programs throughout the community. This is a way to share the positive energy of havurot with the broader community and give community members a taste of the excitement of havurot.
- **Congregational Shabbaton** – Last year's Shabbaton was so successful we have decided to make it an annual event! Join us on May 8-9, for twenty-five hours of Shabbat celebration, learning, and community building. This is an opportunity for all congregants to teach and learn from one another while experiencing the joy of Shabbat in our congregational home.

If you would like to learn more about BaDerech or take a leadership role in this exciting initiative, please contact Michelle Fineblum, BaDerech Task Force Coordinator, at mfineblum@rcn.com.

BEIT MIDRASH: HOUSE OF STUDY

The *Beit Midrash* is a place where adults with a wide range of interests and backgrounds come to learn together while forming and deepening friendships. Our study is open-ended and participatory, with a *chevruta*-(partnership) style of learning. We engage our tradition with the help and support of study partners. Each week's session stands on its own. Together we strive to understand the complexities of life in the 21st century through the lens of the Jewish tradition.

- Our *Beit Midrash* is a kitchen full of bagels, coffee, and juice.
- Our *Beit Midrash* is an open-aired study, where learners of any background can explore new ideas, share their opinions, and grow through Jewish study with Rabbi Thomas and with your Beth El community.
- Our *Beit Midrash* is a perpetual open house, encouraging any and all to come when you can and to stay as long as you wish.
- Our *Beit Midrash* is a wonderful opportunity to experience the learning Rabbi Thomas has engaged in at the Hartman Institute's Rabbinic Leadership Initiative.

AL SHLOSHA D'VARIM

FOUNDATIONS OF THE ETHICAL IN JEWISH TRADITION

RABBI DAVID THOMAS

Sunday Mornings from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

This year our *Beit Midrash* will focus on the overall theme of ethics. What is ethical behavior and how do we determine it? We will explore this theme first by carefully examining the tension between universal human rights against the expectations we have of members of our own tribe. Other classes will focus on:

- The ethics of speech – *Lashon Hara*
- The mitzvah of reproach and the dynamics of insult
- In this election year, we will study taxation and privilege, asking ourselves “What are our obligations to society?”
- The theme of shame and humiliation. We will see how Jewish law attempts to regulate emotion.

The jumping off place for all our discussions will be a variety of Biblical and Rabbinic texts provided in translation. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. No prior experience with Hebrew or Jewish text is necessary. Bring your own mind and your life experience.

FALL/WINTER COURSES

ZOHAR: LIGHTING OUR WAY

RABBI DAVID THOMAS AND CANTOR LOREL ZAR-KESSLER

Wednesday evening, October 22

7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

In advance of our study with this fall's scholar in residence, Melila Hellner-Eshed, Rabbi Thomas and Cantor Zar-Kessler will help guide our path into the world of the *Zohar*, the great medieval Jewish compendium of mysticism, myth and esoteric teaching. We will study text together and share our own commentaries on the possibilities of meaning hidden within. Melila will study with us the weekend of October 31, and this pre-study will help prepare us for her wonderful, wonderful teaching.

**FALL SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE:
MELILA HELLNER-ESHED**

**THE ZOHAR: THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN OF
JEWISH MYSTICAL LITERATURE**

Friday, October 31 – Sunday, November 2

Our fall Scholar-in-Residence has for the past decade and a half been a central figure in the Israeli renaissance of study of Jewish texts. Dr. Melila Hellner-Eshed will lead Beth El in study and discussion during her three-day exclusive visit to the New England region. All four sessions will focus on central ideas of the Zohar, the Jewel in the crown of Jewish mystical literature.

AWAKENING

Friday night, October 31

In this introductory talk, Melila Hellner-Eshed will focus on the different ways the Zohar wishes to awaken human consciousness.

ZOHAR COMMENTARY ON TORAH

Shabbat morning, November 1

9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

During our weekly Torah study, Dr. Hellner-Eshed will discuss the Zohar's spiritual commentary on the week's parasha – the biblical story of the Tower of Babel. Torah study will be followed by Shabbat services.

AL SHLOSHA D'VARIM

AWAKENING CONTINUED

*Saturday evening, November 1
7:30 p.m.*

After a community *Havdallah*, Dr. Hellner-Eshed will continue her teaching within the theme of “Awakening”.

TALMUDIC MYTH

*Sunday morning, November 2
9:00 - 11:00 a.m.*

Our scholar will explore the talmudic myth on the sun and the moon and the way it opens the great questions of sibling rivalry, governance and the relations between man and woman.

*Melila Hellner-Eshed, Ph.D. is a teacher of Jewish mysticism in the department of Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She is a research fellow at the Shalom Hartman institute in Jerusalem. For the past decade and a half, Melila has been a central figure in the Israeli renaissance of study of Jewish texts by Israeli adults of all paths of life in various frameworks. She currently is directing and teaching Beit Midrash programs of ‘Revivim’ - the honors teacher training project at the Hebrew University. Melila has been teaching Jewish mysticism at the Conservative Rabbinical Seminary in Jerusalem and in the Reform rabbinic program at the Hebrew Union College. She has been teaching and working with Jewish communities in North America and is on the faculty of the Institute of Jewish Spirituality and has taught as well in the former Soviet Union. Melila is active in the steering committee of ‘Sulha’ – a reconciliation project that brings together Israelis and Palestinians. Her book, **And a River Flows from Eden - On the Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar** was published in February 2005 in Israel, and will be published in English this year by the Stanford University Press.*

*Scholar-in-Residence programs are generously funded
by the Beth El Fund and Carob Tree Initiative.*

ECO-JUDAISM

PROFESSOR NATAN MARGALIT

Wednesday evenings, November 5, 12, and 19

7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

FROM WASTE TO WONDER: A JEWISH VISION OF ZERO WASTE

November 5

The ecological landscape of Canaan and its neighbors can give us a picture of the origins of our culture of waste in the great river valley civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia – and its opposite, a culture of no-waste in the small farming land of the mountains of Canaan. We can see how this ethos of no-waste is carried through in *kabbalistic* and Chasidic sources which speak of the spark of divinity in all of creation, even if presently hidden under a *klippa* or shell.

ECO SYSTEMS AND JEWISH TEXTS: A CREATIVE NEXUS

November 12

Underlying our ecological crisis is a mode of thought that treats the earth, oceans, animals, plants and even humans as if they were machines: running predictably and logically, like clockwork. This way of thinking has produced dramatic gains in the short run, but forcing life into a straightjacket ultimately is a recipe for disaster. In fact, all living systems: cells, swamps, neighborhoods, and even some texts, are organized in complex, dynamic, non-linear patterns. Understanding eco-systems can help us open up Jewish texts in a new, enlivened perspective.

AL SHLOSHA D'VARIM

ECO-KASHRUT: FROM PRIESTLY CODE TO MICHAEL POLLAN

November 19

What is the basis for *kashrut*? Is it a completely technical system divorced from moral concerns? Or are there hints in our texts that underlying the idea of *kashrut* is a deep respect for life and the web of relationships that bring our food to our tables? In Michael Pollan's influential book, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, he looks at what he eats not as a given, but as something with a history, and that history has moral, ecological and health implications. Does not *kashrut* also ask us to look and think about the story behind our food, ask questions about its origins?

Natan Margalit studied Anthropology at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, made aliyah, and studied for many years in Israeli yeshivot. He received rabbinic ordination at The Jerusalem Seminary in 1990. He returned to the U.S. and in 2001, earned a Ph.D. in Talmud from U.C. Berkeley. He has held teaching positions at Bard College, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and is currently Assistant Professor of Rabbinics at the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College in Boston. He is also Director of Oraita, a program of continuing education for rabbis of Hebrew College. Natan has written and taught for many years on Judaism and the environment, innovative approaches to Jewish texts, Jewish spirituality, gender and Judaism.

AL SHLOSHA D'VARIM

JEWISH ENCOUNTERS READING SERIES

VIC HIMBER, ANDY NIERENBERG AND ARNIE ZAR-KESSLER

Wednesday evenings, December 3, February 11, and Friday evening, March 20

Join members of the Beth El Community for lively discussions of three of the books in the Jewish Encounters series. The books are available from online booksellers at a very modest cost (under \$40 for all three books). Additional information about the Jewish Encounters biographies is available at www.nextbook.org/bookseries/about.html. Each session will be facilitated by a Beth El member:

MAIMONIDES

BY SHERWIN NULAND

Wednesday, December 3, 2008, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

FACILITATED BY VIC HIMBER

Moses Maimonides was a Renaissance man before there was a Renaissance: a great physician who served a sultan, a dazzling Torah scholar, a community leader, a daring philosopher whose greatest work - *The Guide for the Perplexed* - attempted to reconcile scientific knowledge with faith in God. He was a Jew living in a Muslim world, a rationalist living in a time of superstition. Eight hundred years after his death, his notions about God, faith, the afterlife, and the Messiah still stir debate; his life as a physician still inspires; and the enigmas of his character still fascinate.

BETRAYING SPINOZA

BY REBECCA GOLDSTEIN

Wednesday, February 11, 2009, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

FACILITATED BY ANDY NIERENBERG

On July 27, 1656, Amsterdam's Jewish community declared Baruch Spinoza excommunicated, and, at the age of twenty-three, he became the most famous heretic in Judaism. His "abominable heresies"? He denied the immortality of the soul and challenged the accepted belief

AL SHLOSHA D'VARIM

that the Torah was literally given by God. His work remains as resonant and provocative today as it was when it first appeared. In *Betraying Spinoza*, Rebecca Goldstein sets out to rediscover the flesh-and-blood man often buried beneath the veneer of rigorous rationality and to provide a comprehensive cultural and religious context for the formation of his ideas. Here is a Spinoza both hauntingly emblematic and deeply human, both heretic and hero - a surprisingly contemporary figure ripe for our own uncertain age.

BARNEY ROSS

BY DOUGLAS CENTURY

Friday, March 20, 2009, 8:00 p.m. – followed by an Oneg

FACILITATED BY ARNIE ZAR-KESSLER

Barney Ross's story is the stuff of legend. At 13, Dov-Ber Rasofsky witnessed his father's murder, his mother's nervous breakdown, and the dispatching of his three younger siblings to an orphanage. Vowing to reunite the family, Ross became a petty thief, a messenger boy for Al Capone, and, eventually, an amateur boxer. Turning professional at 19, he would capture three titles in his 10-year career. In 1941, at the age of 32, Ross requested combat duty in the U.S. Marine Corps and earned a Silver Star for his heroic actions at Guadalcanal. While recovering from war wounds and malaria he became addicted to morphine, a habit he would finally kick. Ross also ran guns to Palestine and offered to lead a brigade of Jewish American war veterans. This galvanizing account of Ross' emblematic life is a revelation of both an extraordinary athlete and a remarkable man.

SPRING 2008 COURSES

DIFFICULT FREEDOM: SELECTED ESSAYS BY EMMANUEL LEVINAS

JEFF ALEXANDER

Wednesday evenings, February 25, March 4 and 11, 7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

For three weeks at the end of winter we will explore selected essays by the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. In these essays, Levinas addresses what it means to be a Jew in the modern world. Led by Jeff Alexander, a member of Congregation Beth El, we will discuss Judaism as understood by Levinas with a focus on those essays that address Jewish identity.

Emmanuel Levinas has proven to be of extraordinary importance in the history of modern thought. Collecting Levinas' important writings on religion, **Difficult Freedom** contributes to a growing debate about the significance of religion - particularly Judaism and Jewish spiritualism - in European philosophy. Topics include ethics, aesthetics, politics, messianism, Judaism and women, and Jewish Christian relations, as well as the work of Spinoza, Hegel, Heidegger, Franz Rosenzweig, Simone Weil and Jules Isaac.

THE GEOPOLITICS OF ISRAEL

IVAN LUBASH

Wednesday evening, March 18, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.

The commingling of history, geography, religion, and interaction with other civilizations all play roles in defining and understanding Judaism; the religion, the state of Israel, and the Diaspora.

This unique area of the world - from Turkey in the north to Egypt in the south - known then as The Levant, saw the ebb and flow of

AL SHLOSHA D'VARIM

empires from early Egypt to Assyria, to the Greeks, Romans and Muslims. It was the crossroads of history.

Israelites arrived in the area more than three thousand years ago. They conquered the area, absorbed other cultures, and eventually built an empire that lasted for a thousand years until the Romans conquered the land in the first century of the Common Era. Although they no longer had an independent country, Jews maintained a strong presence during the Byzantine era until the invasions by the Muslims in the seventh century.

The Jewish kingdoms, under David, Solomon and other kings included the area bounded by the Mediterranean, north into what is now Lebanon and Syria, east to beyond Damascus, south (including what is now Jordan) to below the Dead Sea and southwest back to the Mediterranean. As with borders everywhere in the world, they changed with the tides of many conquests.

During this session, we will gain an understanding of how the geographic, political, and religious issues and dogmas of the past shaped the Israel of today.

Ivan Lubash is a long time member of Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley. He is an avid student of history and current affairs, and has presented "Monotheistic Religions of Rome," "Arafat," "Liberty Ship – Workhorse of WWII," and other lectures. "Liberty Ship" is available on tape from the Minuteman Library System. He earned a B.S. and M.B.A. from Temple University.

More spring courses will be announced
as they are added to the schedule.

YEAR-LONG PROGRAMS

INTERFAITH FAMILY LIVING: FINDING A PLACE AT THE TABLE FOR EVERYONE

ELANA KLING PERKINS, LICSW

Sunday mornings October 5, February 1, March 22

Wednesday nights December 10 and January 21

We welcome Elana Kling Perkins to our congregation to lead a series of five discussions on Interfaith Family Living. Attendance is open to both members and non-members who may attend any or all of the sessions. Knowledge of prior sessions is not necessary to understand later sessions.

SUNDAY

OCTOBER 5, 2008

9:30 to 11:00 a.m.

This session will explore the individual and how he/she defines his/her religious identity.

WEDNESDAY

DECEMBER 10, 2008

7:30 to 9:00 p.m.

The focus of this session will be on couples and how they address their differences, build a religious life together and define the religious identity of their families.

WEDNESDAY

JANUARY 21, 2009

7:30 to 9:00 p.m.

This session's topic will be children and how as an interfaith family we make Jewish choices for our children regarding religious identity and education.

YEAR-LONG PROGRAMS

SUNDAY

FEBRUARY 1, 2009

12:00 to 1:30 p.m.

In this session we will consider our extended families and secular community and how we address issues that arise in this context.

SUNDAY

MARCH 22, 2009

12:00 - 1:30 p.m.

During this session we will focus on our religious congregation. What are the unique issues facing interfaith families in a synagogue and how can we improve our experience as active participants in the congregation?

Elana Kling Perkins, LICSW is the coordinator of the Interfaith Family Resource Center at Jewish Family and Children's Services of Greater Boston. In this capacity she coordinates programs and provides individual services for those in interfaith relationships. She also consults to synagogues on this topic. Elana is also a psychotherapist and founder of Perspectives Counseling which focuses on helping people navigate life's transitions.

YEAR-LONG PROGRAMS

THE ART AND INSIGHTS OF BIBLICAL CANTILLATION

CANTOR LOREL ZAR-KESSLER

Wednesday evenings, January 7, 14, 21, 28 and February 4

Calling all those who have a basic knowledge of Hebrew and are interested in delving into the practical and meaningful system of Torah chanting! This class is for anyone who:

- Has ever read Torah or Haftarah or the Megillot
- Loved diagramming sentences in seventh grade and would like to try it again
- Wants to learn to chant Torah with meaning
- Is curious about how the signs and symbols of this ancient system can sharpen one's understanding of our classic texts

With *Chanting the Hebrew Bible: The Art of Cantillation*, an essential text by Professor Joshua R. Jacobson, as our guide, we will study together the logic and beauty of this ancient system. (There will be a cost for the purchase of the textbook. Contact Lorel if you would like to review the text before purchasing. Please contact the office by **November 19** to order your copy.)

YEAR-LONG PROGRAMS

ADULT JEWISH LITERACY - AJL

BETH EL SENIOR FACULTY

Sunday mornings from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

*October 26, November 2, 9 16, 23, December 7, January 11, 25,
February 8, March 1*

The Congregation Beth El Adult Jewish Literacy (AJL) Program provides our members with valuable and fundamental tools for learning and living a Jewish life. Through courses and Shabbat seminars, adult learners will begin a process of studying, questioning, growing and practice that will serve them throughout their lives.

The Program

The course of study consists of three important elements: formal classes, Shabbat seminars and recommended Hebrew reading readiness. While all our adult education offerings are open to the entire community, we hope to create a cohesive learning community by recommending that learners commit to the full year of study. This year's study includes ten Sunday morning sessions that include one half-hour of Hebrew and one-and-one-half hours of formal study. Each class will be taught by one of Beth El's senior faculty.

Our study will focus on the cycles of our Jewish lives: meaningful moments in our individual path; the holiday cycle that creates our Jewish communal world; the themes of our classic texts that guide us through each stage of our life's journey.

Shabbat experiences at Beth El offer wonderful opportunities for praying, learning and sharing as a community. During the course of the year, we will plan both a Shabbat evening and a Shabbat morning of studying, dining, singing and praying - strengthening this group of learners and creating a feeling of belonging to the greater Beth El community. Our Shabbat evening together is planned for **Friday night, December 12, 2008**, and our Shabbat morning for **Saturday, March 7, 2009** (as part of our completion/Siyum ceremony).

YEAR-LONG PROGRAMS

Hebrew Reading Readiness

The ability to read Hebrew is indispensable to any study of Judaism. Each of our AJL sessions will begin at 11:30 AM with a special Hebrew independent study. This study will provide students with time and assistance to improve their Hebrew skills, whether they are learning the aleph-bet or decoding and understanding the prayers of our liturgy. We will offer one-on-one instruction within the group setting, to guide each learner toward improved Hebrew literacy.

A Learning Community

During this year of study, participants will become a learning hevra – a community within which they can study and grow. Informal discussion within each class as well as opportunities for small group study and sharing before class will work to create bonds between learners and enhance the commitment to lifelong learning. As students complete this course of study, a Siyyum, or completion celebration, will culminate this stage of individual and group learning and bring the students into the mainstream of adult education at Beth El. Our Siyyum is planned for Shabbat morning, March 7, 2009.

THE TURNINGS IN JEWISH LIFE:
CALENDAR, LIFECYCLES, TORAH
RABBI DAVID THOMAS
October 26

In this opening session, Rabbi Thomas will discuss the framework of this year-long curriculum of adult Jewish learning.

THE HOLIDAY CYCLE
RABBI DAVID THOMAS AND NINA PRICE
November 2, 9 and 16

The power of both the lunar and solar cycles sets the stage to study the flow of holidays throughout the Jewish year.

YEAR-LONG PROGRAMS

- November 2 Shabbat – Rabbi Thomas
- November 9 Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot - Nina Price
- November 16 Other Jewish holidays - Nina Price

THE LIFE-CYCLE

LOREL ZAR-KESSLER, ROANNE MILLER, RABBI DAVID THOMAS

November 23, December 7 and January 11

An overview of major ritual moments in our lives; how they are celebrated, both traditionally, and in our own community.

- November 23 Sanctifying our Relationships -
Lorel Zar-Kessler
- December 7 Parenting - Roanne Miller
- January 11 Dealing with Aging and Loss -
Rabbi Thomas

THE FLOW OF TORAH

LOREL ZAR-KESSLER AND RABBI DAVID THOMAS

January 25, February 8 and March 1

We will study key sections of the Hebrew Bible and how it relates to our lives today. What does it mean to call the Torah “holy”? How do the classic texts of Rabbinic literature inform our Judaism today? What is the meaning of mitzvah in our contemporary world?

- January 25 Torah, Haftarah and Prophets -
Lorel Zar-Kessler
- February 8 Rabbinic Literature - Lorel Zar-Kessler
- March 1 Mitzvah and Modernity - Rabbi Thomas

EARLY CHILDHOOD HOLIDAY PROGRAMS

Come and explore the beauty and joy of Judaism through an exploration of our holidays, customs and culture in a creative and nurturing environment. These programs are held before many major holidays and are appropriate for preschool age children. Please join us to create, sing, hear stories and snack.

September 30 - *Rosh Hashanah* Family Program

October 20 - *Simchat Torah* Program

December 14 - *Chanukah* Program

January 24 - *Havdallah* Program

February 8 - *Tu B'Shevat* Program

March 8 - *Purim* Program

March 27 - Early Childhood *Shabbat Dinner*

Shabbat Gan for children ages 3 through 7 meets Saturdays during regular *Shabbat* services. *Kehillat Noar*, for children ages 7 through 12 meets on Saturday mornings during regular *Shabbat* services. Dates to be announced.

K-5 GRADE-BASED FAMILY LEARNING PROGRAMS

Throughout the year there will be multiple opportunities for families to learn together with the other families in their children's classes. These programs enable parents to study together and then share what they have learned with their children in a family learning activity. Parental participation is critical to the success of these programs. Parents are not expected to have a given degree of prior knowledge when they arrive at the program and parents of all backgrounds are encouraged to participate. Please mark your calendars and attend all of these programs with your children.

KINDERGARTEN: *SHALSHELET HA-DOROT* – LINKING OUR STORIES THROUGH THE GENERATIONS

What is the substance that links one generation to the next? The key ingredient is stories, passed down from grandparents to parents to children. As the Kindergartners begin their formalized Jewish study, they and their families will explore their personal and family stories as well as the foundational stories of Torah.

October 19	My Story
December 14	<i>Hanukkat Banim</i> – Kindergarten Consecration
May 3	Torah Stories

FAMILY LEARNING

1ST GRADE: *BAYTI* – MY JEWISH HOME

The first grade family learning programs will give families the chance to examine their own homes and what makes them distinctively Jewish. Families will gain a deeper understanding of how rituals, objects, observance of traditions, and the performance of *mitzvot* help define the Jewish character of their homes.

September 28	On the Doorposts of My Home
March 15	Judaica in My Home

2ND GRADE: GIFTS OF ALL SHAPES AND SIZES

In the Torah God gives the Jewish people many gifts, including the Land of Israel and multiple blessings. Our second grade family learning programs will explore these gifts both in biblical times and in our lives today.

October 5	The Gift of the Land of Israel
March 29	The Gift of our Parents' Blessing
May 10	<i>Siyyum Ha-Sefer</i> Celebration

3RD GRADE: AND YOU SHALL BE A BLESSING

What does it mean when, in Genesis 12, Abram (soon to be Abraham) is told by God “*v’heye bracha*” (you shall be a blessing)? As third grade students begin their formal study of Hebrew blessings, they and their families will explore what it means to be a blessing and the central role of blessings in Jewish practice.

September 28	<i>Shema</i> and Her Blessings
March 29	Acting as a Blessing

FAMILY LEARNING

4TH GRADE: CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD

Examples of conversations with God can be found in many places, including Torah, the prayer book, poetry, and song. The fourth grade family learning programs will take an in-depth look at two examples of conversations with God: biblical covenants and personal prayer. Through these programs we hope families will find their own ways to start, or continue, conversations with God.

December 7	Personal Conversations with God – The <i>Tefillah</i>
May 10	Biblical Conversations with God – The Covenant

5TH GRADE: JOURNEY TO THE PROMISED LAND

For thousands of years the Jewish people have had a special connection with the Land of Israel. The fifth grade family learning programs will explore Jews' unique relationship with both the Promised Land of the *Tanach* and the promise of the modern State of Israel.

October 19	Layers of Connection to Israel
March 22	Israel – Land of Promise

PROJECT HIBUR: HUGIM – BETH EL RELATIONSHIP

Project HiBuR is an innovative program that fosters connections between High School students at Beth El and their peers at Hugim, a public high school in Haifa. Project HiBuR's multi-year curriculum focuses on issues of Jewish identity, the Jewish calendar in our lives, and tikkun olam. The project includes Web-based interaction, video conferencing and face-to-face encounters in both the United States and Israel. Through these face-to-face encounters connections are made between the families of our high school students and their Israeli peers. This fall Beth El will be hosting a delegation of 18 students from Hugim. In February 2009, Beth El will be sending a delegation of 27 teens to Haifa. You can learn more about Project HiBuR at its website: <http://hibur.bethelsudbury.org>. Project HiBuR is generously supported by the CJP Boston-Haifa Connection.

SHABBAT

SHABBAT AT BETH EL

Each week, the Congregation comes together to welcome and celebrate *Shabbat*. Our regular schedule for *Shabbat* is:

FRIDAY EVENINGS *KABBALAT SHABBAT*

First Friday of the month

6 p.m. Services

7 p.m. Potluck supper

Second and Fifth Friday of the month

6 p.m. Services followed by brief *Oneg Shabbat*

Third Friday of the month

6 p.m. Services

7 p.m. *Shabbat* Feast -- catered dinner and program

Fourth Friday of the month

8 p.m. Services followed by brief *Oneg Shabbat*

SATURDAY MORNING TORAH STUDY

9:00 a.m.

SATURDAY MORNING SERVICES

10:30 a.m.

TORAH HEVROT

Every Shabbat morning from 9:00-10:15, congregants meet to study the weekly Torah *Parasha* together in one of four Torah study *hevrot*:

FIRST ENCOUNTERS WITH GEMS OF TORAH RABBI DAVID THOMAS

This Torah *Hevra* is we will explore the Torah through a close, literary reading of the text in English. Guided by Rabbi Thomas, we will first try to determine the plain sense of the text. Then we will take another look through one of a variety of lenses of the rabbinic tradition: Midrash, Talmud, Chasidic commentaries and the like. Finally, we will discuss the meaning of Torah in the context of our own lives. Participants will have the opportunity to bring the best of themselves to our discussion and to the text.

TORAH STUDY WITH COMMENTARY CANTOR LOREL ZAR-KESSLER

In this *Torah Hevra*, we explore the weekly Torah portion, focusing on Hebrew translation of a few chosen verses and the commentary of classic, Chasidic and modern scholars to aid our learning. Add to that the wisdom of the wonderful teachers sitting around our table each week, and you will discover the power of a single verse of Torah to elucidate the meaning of our personal lives, our relationships, our ethics and our communal connections.

CONGREGANT-LED TORAH STUDY

This group engages in a wide-ranging discussion of the weekly *parasha*, discussing the relevance of the *parasha* to congregants' own lives and their relationships to each other and to the world.

YOUTH SHABBAT PROGRAMS

Shabbat Gan for children ages 3 through 7 meets Saturdays during regular *Shabbat* services. *Kehillat Noar*, for children ages 7 through 12 meets on Saturday mornings during regular *Shabbat* services. Dates to be announced.

CONGREGATION SHABBATON

May 8-9, 2008

Last year's Shabbaton was so successful that we are making it an annual event! Join us on May 8 and 9, for 25 hours of Shabbat celebration, learning, and community building. This is an opportunity for all members to teach and learn from one another while experiencing the joy of Shabbat in our congregational home. As we observe the period of the Omer and move from the Exodus of Passover to receiving Torah on Shavuot, we will come together as a community and explore this period of transition in the Jewish calendar. Throughout Friday evening and Saturday, there will be concurrent programs for young families, pre-B'nai Mitzvah children, teens and adults. Song, dance, crafts, drama and (of course) food! The wide range of participation opportunities will heighten our appreciation of the gift of Shabbat and the gift that is our community itself.

ARTS AT BETH EL

SHIR EL: THE COMMUNITY THAT SINGS TOGETHER ZZZZINGS TOGETHER!

Our Beth El choral group, beginning its 17th year, meets for special occasions and sings its way through the Jewish year. This year, we are committed to sharing our music with nursing homes and community centers throughout the area, performing and spreading some of our joy in Jewish music. We always love new participants, even those who are available on a 'sometimes' basis. Please call Lorel to become convinced to join in!

PURIM SHPIEL

Each year we mount a musical production that celebrates Purim. We'll take a different theme – be it a Broadway musical, a movie, a TV show, or a musical style – and then adapt the Purim story to be told in that way. In addition to retelling the story of Purim, we also take the opportunity to poke gentle fun at ourselves through drama and music. There are two ways to help with this project; the first is to join the Purim Shpiel Writing Committee, which selects the theme of the show and writes an original script and song lyrics. The second is to work on the Purim Shpiel production, either on- or off-stage. We need actors, singers, dancers, set builders, painters, and musicians. Script writing begins in October, cast auditions are held in January, and the performance is held on Purim night. Join the fun!