

Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley
Virtual Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday November 12th, 2020 7:00pm

In attendance: Jim Billings, Jocelyn Bailin, Marla Lewitus, Steve Probst, Rabbi Breindel, Scott Newman, Michelle Fineblum, Beth Schine, Debbie Glass, Mike Joachim, Steve Breit, Lizza Sandoe, Jesse Wertheimer, Debbie Blicher, Judy Goldberg, Barbara Miller, Shoni Aronovich, Andy Goldberg, Jerry Kazin, Sabina Pestka, Neil Frieband

Welcome: Jim Billings

We're back again!

Hebrew With Janet: YShB/V – to sit, to dwell

LaShevet – to sit, dwell (laysheiv ba sukkah – blessing for sitting/dwelling in the Sukkah)

Yeshiva – sitting, meeting

Yashvan – your tuchis!

October meeting minutes: Jocelyn Bailin

Minutes approved unanimously

Rabbi's Report: see attached

Extra notes: This past Sunday RJB taught at Limmud Boston – the History of the Jews in Theater. It was great fun and I was delighted to see so many Beth EL folks both attending and presenting at Limmud. RJB has been recording weekly segments for Chagigah, which airs Sunday mornings on WERS 88.9., for about a year and a half now. Chagigah has offered us extra time; we could use this for extra teachings, we could also use this to promote events at Beth El. Debbie Blicher works in radio and offered to do any recordings that we might want to send in. Debbie and the Rabbi will connect.

I am working to revamp the Torah class. It's been difficult to replicate the closeness and intensity of this experience over Zoom; constantly brainstorming new ways to keep the students and the parents engaged. The visioning team is now complete. The team will be working with the Leadership Innovation Team to coordinate efforts so that our work complements one another. Some questions for us all to consider: How has Covid-19 changed our organization and our mission? Has it strengthened it? Weakened it? Feel free to share your thoughts and ideas with the Rabbi, Fern, and/or Jocelyn.

Education Report: Scott Newman and Shoni Aronovich

Shoni: The JLOFT regional high school collaboration has had 4-5 sessions at this point and it is going well. The teens are for the most part all attending the collaborative sessions; they are enjoying hanging out and studying together. In fact, it has been so successful that there is talk about replicating it with the K-6 students. This is under discussion. In the meantime, the current high-school-based group will have a joint Hannukah celebration on Monday December 7th. Additionally, there is also a Beth El -only component to the high school that is held on Monday evenings about half to 2/3 of the weeks. Half the students meet with Shoni and the other half with Rabbi Breindel.

Last year's HiBur cohort continues to get together – both the US students and the Israelis. They've held at least two group sessions, both before and after the US election. On a less joyful note, due to restructuring, the

person who has been our HiBur contact and coordinator at CJP is leaving. She has been wonderful to work with and we will miss her. No word yet on who or what will take her place. It was suggested that Beth El could send her a notice of thanks and gratitude.

Scott: The YFEC (Young Families Education Committee), along with Shoni and Scott continue to innovate. We are trying to create Covid-friendly live events that engage families and reflect our values. We are currently working on some sort of Hannukah programming, School numbers are down; this is not unique to Beth El. Some families have moved away, some have zoom burnout and/or don't like online learning. It's difficult to recruit during C-19. JLCMW (the Jewish Learning Collaborative of MetroWest) is the middle school version of JLOFT. There are three communities involved and we meet on Wednesday evenings. We are entering our second semester and overall it is going well. It's lovely to be working with staff from all three communities. Our K-5 report is the same as last month; additionally, the Hebrew learning portion with Shalom Learning is set to start this week.

On a personal note: for all of those who know about our family saga, I am pleased to announce that we finally moved into our new house this week!

Administrator's Report: Beth Schine

Membership statistics:

Total membership reduction since July are 13 (12 resignations, one death)

Total new members (including returning members) is 4. We are expecting paperwork form a family with school-aged children.

Dues commitment forms are trickling in – at this point we have heard from all but 26 congregant families. Our total dues intake to-date is \$335,700.

On a sad note, Jane Johnstone gave notice this week. She will be leaving at the end of next week. We will miss her cheerful nature and sense of humor and are grateful for the nearly three years she was with us. We are working on plans to replace her, both short and long-term.

Rabbi Breindel: Our numbers are continuing their slow decline. We have NO PLAN on

On how to address this or deal with it. We can't just keep hearing these statistics and do and say nothing. We are a dynamic and creative place ;WE NEED TO TALK about what we are going to do! We need some kind of vision and some plan to act.

Discussion:

Perhaps we need a VP of Membership? In many congregations this role is considered a great honor. Steve P. reminded us that adding a new VP would require a bylaw change. And adding a VP by itself doesn't do anything.

Suggestion: This is important and has been a problem for a long time. Perhaps at this point it's important enough to spend money to bring in a consultant to help us figure it out.

Mike J: the Finance Committee discussed this at our last meeting.

RJB: the Synagogue Council may have an expert on this that we could reach out to.

This is bigger than just Beth EL, it's a trend in many places. Beth El has the additional challenge of being a destination shul instead of a community shul. Increasingly people may not be willing to spend the time driving.

Congregation Beth El Green Challenge: Ellen Tohn

We want to be the first congregation in the county to have half of our members taking action on climate change! Already we are leading the way on this. Over 35 Beth El member units have signed up on the

MassEnergize website. We would like to see this number increase; in particular we'd like to see every member of the Board signed up for the energy challenge!

There is going to be a kickoff event on November 17th. It's a joint collaboration with Dayenu, a climate change organization spearheaded by Rabbi Jenny Rosen, daughter of longtime Beth El member Sally Castleman, as well as JCAN (Jewish Climate Action Network) which several Beth El members are deeply involved, and the Mass Energize team as well as a number of local faith communities. Ellen gave a demonstration of the MassEnergize website and showed how easy it was to navigate. She will email links to the website to the Board in the next couple of days, and strongly encourages everyone to sign on.

Other ways in which Beth El is moving forward as a climate and energy conscientious community: Barry Sheingold was able to get a no-cost energy assessment for the congregation. In addition, between the efforts of Barry and Dave Waldman and several others we managed to secure grants to add nearly 10K worth of insulation to Beth El at no cost to us. This is projected to save us over \$550/year in energy costs!

Jerry Kazin: we are trying to pull together a House Committee of building-minded folks. Our first task will be to clean out the attic so that the insulation can be added; other tasks will follow over time.

Fundraising: Judy Goldberg

Every year the congregation sets out a fundraising goal in our budget. We vote on it, thus committing ourselves to raising those funds. We don't have good ways of doing this. Beth El is unusual in that we have customs around anonymity in fundraising – we don't have plaques or named spaces or sponsored events. Perhaps it's time to think about changing this custom? Perhaps people might donate more if they were acknowledged? We are seeking input from the Board: would the Board be in favor of or opposed to changing this (informal) policy/custom?

Discussion:

We have taken some baby steps toward this already, naming donors in the weekly announcements and thanking oneg/kiddush hosts from the bimah

Could this be done in a way that is both low-key and classy?

In what ways can we create and nurture a mindset of giving?

Have we asked our past donors – what motivates them to give? DO we know of any situations where folks have left Beth El because they can't give a named/plaque donation? Do we even know how much of a problem this is for our community?

RJB: we are already in a time of flux with Lorel leaving. As important as this is, now might not be the right time to undertake this sort of communal change.

Tikkun Olam: Michelle Fineblum (see attached)

Excited to report that they Yad L'Kashish fundraiser raised \$1000 for Beth El!

Nominating Committee: Jim Billings

The Nominating Committee according to the bylaws is comprised of 7 members: two from the Board of Directors, two from the LDC (Leadership Development Committee) and 3 congregants at large who have been members for a minimum of five years and have served on the Board or another committee. The term of service is supposed to be two years. This is not and has not been the reality of the Nominating Committee for quite a while now. There are currently only three members of the committee, all of whom have served for at least 10 years, and some for even longer (intermittently). We need people to step up to this responsibility. Please consider how you can help and think of others to bring on as well. The current members will mentor!

Meeting adjourned 8:55pm

Respectfully submitted,
Jocelyn Bailin
Clerk, Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley

SEE ATTACHED REPORTS

Rabbis Report Oct-Nov 2020

Ritual

- **Simchat Torah** – warmly received, especially music, laughter and “Rabbi Cam”
- **Baby-naming** for Joy and Scott’s granddaughter, Hope.
- Lorel and I are **working with ritual committee** on how to keep services fresh.
 - Just concluded post-game analysis of High Holidays
- **Community Chanukah initiative** – each shul “adopting” a different night.

Lifecycle/Pastoral

- **I will continue visits** outside, socially distanced/masked as long as weather holds.
- Continuing to offer **pastoral support** to hospitalized and bereaving congregants (none connected to COVID at this time).

Community outreach/events

- **Will present at Limmud Boston** (Sunday @ 2:00) – history of Jews and the theatre
- Continuing with weekly **Chagigah** program on WERS – 9:30ish AM on Sundays
- Recorded **new video for our webpage** – “ongoing season of Thanksgiving”

Programming and education

- Will participate in a panel for **JCAN/Green Team inter-congregational “Jewish call to climate action”** next Tuesday at 7:30 PM.
- Will MC our **“Zooming to Guatemala”** event sponsored by the Sanctuary committee next Thursday at 7:30 PM.
- Revamping **Torah Class** in the age of COVID. Working to retain the special magic.
- **Kranjec Test** for Torah study and source sheets.

Administrative

- Coordinating with Shoni and Scott on new initiatives for **Middle and High School**.
- **Visioning team** is essentially complete. Working with co-chairs (Jocelyn and Fern) on our first full-group meetings and initial steps.
- Working with Beth and lay leadership on **administrative developments**.
 - How to make operations flow smoothly during COVID – what’s changed/ remains the same for our mission and procedures?

Personal

- Will be taking time off Thanksgiving week (Tuesday-Monday) to be with the family. Friday services are set – **any interest in subbing on Saturday morning (Torah study or services)?** I’d be delighted to work with you ahead of time!

Ritual Report

For meeting November 12, 2020

1. Shabbat/Havdallah

Shabbat services continue to happen on Friday and Saturday at normal times. Our group who gathers regularly for havdallah has been discussing timing. They have decided to keep it somewhat in-line with halachic timing (or somewhat after), shifting the time 3-4 times during the year. For the winter, the havdallah gathering will be at 5:30pm on Saturdays.

2. Chanukah

We are in the planning stages for our Chanukah celebration(s) and will possibly be breaking things out by age groups for timing and zoom ease. Judith Lytel and Cynthia Meyersburg are thinking about how to make this a fun time, while knowing that zoom fatigue is real!

3. Upcoming B'nai Mitzvot

On January 9th, Bea Pestka will be called to the Torah.

Adelaide Wintringham will become a bat mitzvah in May, and James Waldman and Eli Stevens will have their b'nai mitzvot in June 2021 (James' was postponed from June of this year).

Lily Kinas is also working with Lorel to learn how to chant Torah.

TBD on if last spring's adult b'nai mitzvah group will come back together in some fashion this spring to complete their study/celebration/journey to adulthood ☺

Tikkun Olam update – November 2020

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, our Beth El community sees the need now, more than ever, to repair the world and continues to contribute in myriad ways. Please let me know if I've missed anything. (My contact info is at the bottom of the report.) Thank you to all involved!

- **Fundraising Coordination:** Some groups are raising funds this fall and we've worked to coordinate dates to avoid overlap. Congregants have already received letters from the Tzedek Scholarship Fund, the Yom Kippur Food Drive (which was largely funds-oriented this year, due to COVID) and the Sanctuary Committee. An educational and fundraising Zoom event was held for Yad L'Kashish. (See details in their summary below.) I'm aware of the following other fundraising planned for this fall. **Please let me know of others (even outside Tikkun Olam) so we can coordinate:**
- Zoom live to Guatemala with Rabbi Briendel and "Under the Same Moon")11/19/2020
- **Sanctuary Committee:** We continue work in multiple areas:
 1. **Join us on Thursday, November 19 at 7:30PM to Zoom Live to Guatemala with Rabbi Breindel** for an inspiring evening to learn about a very special school and meet its remarkable director. For 7 years Beth El has supported this school through purchases of their handcrafts. Please register at <https://bethelsudbury.org/zooming-live-to-guatemala-with-rabbi-Breindel/>.
 2. The work with the Ayala family is reasonably well summarized in the mailing we have sent out. We hope that our fundraising for this important and holy project will be successful as we continue our work this year with the family, both to get them permanent legal status in our country and to help them become self-sufficient --both of which they intensely desire. Salvador is in "English class" two times a week. For more information on the Ayala family, contact Judy Katz (judy16k@gmail.com) or Judy Sletzinger (jsletzinger@gmail.com).
 3. The legislation to help our immigrant neighbors remains unresolved. While the Safe Communities Act, for instance, has overwhelming support in the state legislature, the leadership is dragging its heels. Also having widespread support is the Driving bill, which would allow undocumented residents to apply for a standard driver's license. We continue to monitor these bills, as they remain in the legislative process. For details on legislative action, contact Kath Bean (kathleenbean@gmail.com).
 4. The Friday afternoon stand-out in Sudbury Center continues through the Election, the counting of all votes and threats to the integrity of our democracy. We encourage all our members to come join us as we stand out for justice, compassion and the rule of law. For info on Friday afternoon standouts or other Sanctuary Committee activities, contact Carl Offner (carl.offner@comcast.net).
- **Yad L'kashish Fundraiser** Wonderful fundraising for Yad LaKashish - and for Beth El! With a wonderful volunteer corps of BethElers, we offered a special evening on Nov 1 in honor of Yad LaKashish/Lifeline for the Aged...a 62 year old organization in Jerusalem, helping elderly citizens find meaning and purpose and community in their later years through creative artistic craft-making work and support. We had about 70 people join us on Zoom - from Beth El and beyond - to learn more about Yad LaKashish; to hear from some of our Beth El artists about the process of creativity in their own lives; and to shop for beautiful items from the Yad LaKashish online store. The staff there was so pleased with our participation and commitment and set up a system by which we could order, pay in one bulk sum and keep 20% of the proceeds for our Beth El general fund. A 'win and win' situation! and we hope to have the orders ready to send forth before Chanukah - all so good... and so heart-opening in these days to reach beyond and help others - in joy. Over 40 households placed orders of over \$5000, with 20% coming to the Beth El General Fund.
- **Green Team:** We have been engaged in a variety of activities and have others coming up: Featuring our second "climate mensches of the month" on the website: <https://bethelsudbury.org/beth-el-green-team/> Beth El will co-host Zoom event with JCAN (Jewish Climate Action Network) and Dayenu at 7:30 PM on 11/17: "Mobilizing to Address Climate Change." Continue to encourage all congregants to sign up for Green Challenge, the MassEnergize/JCAN community climate platform, to take actions to reduce their carbon emissions! If you haven't yet, **please sign up** at <https://community.massenergize.org/JCAN>. Sign up for the

Green Team list-serv: email greenteam-request@members.bethelsudbury.org. For more information, contact John Harper (jpharper47@gmail.com).

- **Yom Kippur Food Drive:** The food drive was very different this year because of COVID. Instead of it being primarily focused on bringing food, diapers, toilet paper, etc., it was focused more on donations of funds. The tally is in: We collectively donated \$4608, which was divided between the following four organizations: Voices Against Violence, A Place to Turn, Family Table, Sudbury Community Food Pantry Beth El has mailed them each a check for \$1,152. This will do a lot of good. Thank you, everyone for your generosity! Thank you, John Harper, for your hard work and persistence orchestrating this, to Shoni and the high schoolers who volunteered to help with food collection, to Beth and Jane for making so many pieces come together, to the COVID task force for your guidance, and to all the volunteers who coordinated with the nonprofits.
- **Anti-Racism Interest Group:** The Antiracism Programming subcommittee met to begin planning antiracism programs. Programming goals are to: raise antiracism awareness; support the needs of Jews of Color; help White-presenting congregants gain self-awareness about where they fit in the story of systemic racism in the United States; offer congregants “on ramps” to take action to repair institutional racism; help White-presenting congregants understand how to be effective allies and accomplices; and create or participate in multiracial alliances to promote racial equity. The Antiracism Book Group convened its first meeting. The group reviewed and voted on works of fiction and non-fiction to read and discuss. “Caste,” by Isabel Wilkerson, will be discussed at the November Book Group meeting.
- **Criminal Justice:** Criminal Justice, in conjunction with the Anti-Racism Interest group, has begun work on a project to publicize and, if possible, aid in the establishment of more Restorative Justice Circles. There is a group in Concord which is already doing this but has not been able to connect to poorer communities. We are reaching out to the former for advice, to identify which communities are already involved, etc. We are considering Framingham, Hudson, Maynard and Marlborough.
- **Tzedek Scholarship Fund:** The Tzedek Scholarship Fund sent out fundraising letters providing updates on their accomplished and appreciative scholars in early September. They appreciate your donations and will put them to very good use!
- **Tzedaka Hevra:** The Tzedaka Hevra has had a very busy and productive year, giving away roughly \$30,000. 60% of our funds went to three organizations and the remaining 40% to 27 other organizations. We also recently made an emergency Covid donation of \$1000 that we split between Yad Chesed and Rabbi Breindel's discretionary fund. We heard from speakers representing organizations that we donate to, or that we may donate to, and had the opportunity for Q&A sessions with them (all on Zoom of course), which was fascinating. The Hevra is open to any Beth El member. To learn more, please contact Ira Silver: isilver@framingham.edu
- **MetroWest Free Medical Clinic:** The MWFMP is “seeing” patients remotely through a combination of video calls, phone conversations, and text messaging. We’re limited right now to patients we’ve seen in the past and hope to extend our services to new patients at some point in the future when we have more infrastructure in place for supporting telemedicine. We’ve received some emergency grants from several of our funders that are helping to make the transition to telemedicine. We anticipate operating this way for the foreseeable future, likely until sometime in 2021. Visit MetroWest Free Medical Program to learn more and get involved.
- **Blood Drive:** The next blood drive is planned for 2/18/21 from 2-7 pm. There was a successful (and much appreciated) drive in August.
- **Kiddush donation opportunities:** In lieu of hosting Kiddush at the temple, one Beth El Kiddush group plans to donate funds to local food pantries, including the Sudbury Community Food Pantry, the Greater Boston Food Bank, and Feeding America.
- **Covid-19 volunteer opportunities:** Our community rises to the current Covid-19 challenge! The world needs a lot of repairing right now. Many Tikkun Olam efforts are already underway in support of Beth El members and the broader community. More opportunities arrive in our inboxes every day. The CJP, JCRC,

Jewish Family & Children's Service, and others offer many opportunities. If you've time and ability to help, please take a look at their websites.

- <https://www.jfcsboston.org/About/COVID-19-Update> <https://www.jcrcboston.org/covid-19/> <https://www.cjp.org/get-involved>
- **Support for housebound Beth El members:** Our Beth El community has stepped up to take care of one another! Some Beth El members have been all but housebound during the Covid-19 shelter-in-place rules and have had needs with even basic tasks such as getting grocery items, pharmaceuticals, and such. Please email Jocelyn Bailin (pi_joy@yahoo.com) if you know of a Beth El member in need of assistance, and she will connect them with a willing volunteer.
- **COVID-19 Support Services From CJP:** If the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis has affected someone you know financially, the CJP Warmline (1-800-CJP-9500) may be able to assist. With one phone call or by filling out a simple online form, trained Warmline counselors can begin to help navigate available services across the Jewish community. JewishBoston.com also has additional information about community resources during the COVID-19 crisis. CJP has launched the CJP Coronavirus Emergency Fund in order to extend greater support to numerous Jewish social service agencies providing critical services during this time. 100% of the money raised will help community members who are facing hardship as a result of this pandemic. Anyone feeling overwhelmed with sadness, anxiety or stress, or who wants to harm themselves or others, can access the mental health, emotional support and suicide prevention program Call2Talk by dialing 2-1-1, calling 508-532-2255 or by texting C2T to 741741.

Thanks to everyone for your holy work! If I've missed anyone's Tikkun Olam efforts at Beth El, please let me know. We'd like to share the news with the community! If something here interests you, and you don't see contact information, let me know and I'm happy to connect you.

L'shalom,

Michelle Fineblum, VP, Tikkun Olam tikkunolam@bethelsudbury.org Beth El's Tikkun Olam web page: <https://bethelsudbury.org/repair-the-world>