There is a place for you at Beth El. We Belong Together.

Beth El Newsletter
May (Iyar/Sivan) and June (Sivan/Tammuz) 5781

BEING JEWISH WITH THE NEW YORK METS

In celebration of his 50th birthday, Hazzan David Tilman participated in the New York Mets Dream Week, a one week of intensive of baseball activities in Port St. Lucie, Florida. In addition to great training, painful injuries, and a million laughs, Hazzan Tilman’s Jewish identity surfaced many times and added to his Mets baseball experiences. Hazzan Tilman joins us on Zoom to share stories from his experience in this program with 70 other middle-aged and older men who wanted to play baseball with their childhood heroes. His presentation is illustrated with wonderful photographs from this exciting week.

Thursday, May 13. 6:30pm
Presented by KaHaL at no charge
RSVP: bethelsnj.org/tilman

SHAVUOT

Evening of Sunday, May 16
Monday, May 17
Tuesday, May 18 (Yizkor)

bethelsnj.org/togetherinharmony
Clergy Corner

Hazzan Alisa Pomerantz-Boro

Zeh HaYom Asah HaShem, Nagillah V’nism’cha Vo! This is the day that Gd has made, let us exult and rejoice in it! (Psalm 118)

This is one of my favorite passages in our liturgy. At our Shirley Mangel Morning Minyan this morning, on my birthday, I chanted these words during Hallel for Chol HaMoed Pesach. I love to focus on these words as a reminder that every day is a gift. Not only on our birthdays, but every day, we can choose to rejoice in the blessings of that day. Whenever I am having a particularly difficult day, it helps me live each day with a feeling of gratitude. This has been a year of hardships and these are not easy times. Sometimes, it feels that nothing can fully prepare us for everything we are going to face.

We need to have the strength and courage for all of the extraordinary events which come our way. One coping mechanism is for us to fill our days with empathy and caring. Our Beth El rallying cry, “We Belong Together” guides us to build relationships and connect with others. It has been a blessing to watch friendships blossom during this unprecedented time. It is easy to spot gems all around us and notice strength in others that can inspire us. Remember that your strength can and will be noticed as well and serve as a source of inspiration for those around you!

This year, we have been celebrating 100 years of our history as a Beth El community. There is a passage in the Zohar which states: “There is nothing in the world that has no voice.” All of us have something unique about us, something that distinguishes us from everyone else. Every person can contribute their own gifts to enrich the community. As we reflect on the past, celebrate the present and look toward the future, I wanted our shul to have a new prayer that we can share together during services. It has always been my dream that through song, prayer, music, and acts of loving kindness, we can continue to grow even closer to each other, to our shul, to our Jewish heritage, our Torah and to Gd.

The newly commissioned piece is called Refuah Shlaymah, A Healing Song. As we continue to pray for complete healing of our hearts, bodies and spirits, together we will sing “Refuah Shlaymah,” knowing that Refuah means healing and Shlaymah means complete, whole and peaceful. You will hear the world premiere of Refuah Shlaymah as part of our celebratory gala concert on May 26, Together in Harmony, featuring composer Michael Hunter Ochs. It has been a gift to work with Michael to craft a meaningful celebration to mark this milestone where you will be treated to many voices, memories and surprises!

I would like to thank everyone who has worked so hard to help plan the events surrounding our 100 year celebration, headed by our co-chairs; Lynn Goldman Paul, Abby Belafsky, and Joan Feinberg. A huge shout out to our Engagement Director extraordinaire, Melissa Leibowitz, to our Executive Director, Josh Laster, and to all of Team Beth El for pulling all of the pieces together.

Our sages teach us that we are obligated to recite 100 blessings every day.

One of the greatest blessings in my life is being a part of our Beth El family and I look forward to hearing all of your voices join together in good health and harmony for many years to come!

Grateful, as always,
Hazzan Alisa Pomerantz-Boro

Welcome To the World!

Raphael Brent Appel
Son of Jodi & Doug Appel
Grandson of June & Steve Eisner
Great-grandson of Lila Eisner

Charles Elijah Thomas
Great-grandson of Selma Ellis

Jordan Harris Goldfarb
grandson of Michele & Jeffrey Kahan

Jaxon Reign Lieberman
grandson of Carole & Jules Lieberman

Lela Zoe Stahl
great-granddaughter of Shirley Wander

Share Your Memories of Beth El
Help us remember the past 100 years! Send your memories to photos@bethelsnj.org

www.bethelsnj.org Congregation Beth El May-June 2021 2
Josh Laster  
Executive Director

In Karen Schlessel's first Beth El News article as President, she shared that her vision was “to make Beth El even warmer and more welcoming.” At the time that article was published, there was no way to know that during the second and final year of her presidency, we were going to get the unique opportunity to (continue to) implement her vision while figuring out how to maintain operations in the face of a global pandemic.

Typically, when a new president starts their term, they already served as an officer of our Executive Committee, and they are familiar with the ins and outs and the ups and downs of all that is Beth El. A president would never expect a global pandemic to halt operations and cause a synagogue that for all intents and purposes is sailing smoothly along with worship, education and programming to all of a sudden implement all new processes and procedures for engaging our members.

Karen, who I will unhesitatingly refer to as our fearless leader, supported our clergy, staff, and lay leaders while keeping a keen focus on her vision. With every opportunity to welcome people online on various platforms or in person when allowed, Karen kept her smile and her optimism as our stalwart president. She weathered this first year of the pandemic, side by side and step by step as part of our team, and I am appreciative of her leadership and proud of what she accomplished and maintained during her 2 year term.

In that same article, she ended by saying, “You are better because of Beth El, and Beth El is better because of you.” I’ll close this article by saying, not only is Beth El better because of you; Beth El is better because we had Karen Schlessel as our president during the most trying times ever experienced by our community.
Rabbi Nogah Marshall
Educational Director

"Todah Rabbah!" Thank You!

Judaism commands us to teach our children the Mitzvot of the Torah, for the Torah is the essence and foundation of Judaism. We here at Beth El realize that just as the Torah is the foundation of Judaism, our teachers in our ECC, Religious School, and Hebrew High School are the foundation of our future. And just as we are not complete without the Torah, our schools would not be complete without our amazing teachers. The first word of the Torah is the word Bereshit that begins with the letter bet and the last letter of the Torah is Yisrael and ends with the letter lamed. If you switch these letters around, they spell the word, lev, which means heart. This is what all of our teachers do when they teach, they act from the heart.

A little over a year ago our teachers in the ECC, Religious School, and Hebrew High School transformed their classrooms overnight into remote classrooms. I could not be more proud of all of our teachers who stood up to the challenge and successfully continued to nurture and engage all of our students. Our teachers continue to amaze me every day throughout this most unpredictable and trying year by learning new techniques and strategies to engage our children in the classroom and on Zoom.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our students and parents for putting your trust in us here at the schools of Beth El and for allowing us to be part of your child’s Jewish journey especially during this past year. Thank you for your patience and support. We could not have done it without you!

Jewish education does not end for summer vacation. There are countless of ways you can engage your children in experiential Jewish education. I encourage you to spend some time together choosing activities from the summer Reading Rainbow activities that will be sent to you at the end of the school year. In the fall have your child bring back the filled out sheet for a special prize! As it says in the Book of Proverbs, “Educate a child in the way he should go and as he grows he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6). May we all continue to share in the teachings of our teachers. Have a safe and wonderful summer! See you in September!

Ayelet Mittelman
ECC Principal

We started this year off with so many unknowns and so much uncertainty, and yet I consider what we accomplished this year to be an unimaginable triumph! The fears surrounding the school opening, the fears of possible exposures, the inordinate amount of protocols we needed to follow, the changes to the classroom all seemed like insurmountable challenges. The fears and anxiety from all of the horrible stories we were hearing on the news about the increasing numbers, the daily toll, the variant strains, etc., were all too much to bear. This year was full of so much loss and so much darkness; but here at our ECC, all we saw was hope and light.

Day after day, the children come in with smiles on their faces, excited to see their friends, and for the adventure that the day would bring. So many of them were so blissfully unaware that the world was changing around them, and were just ready to be “SUPERHEROES” and wear their masks. We sang “Bim Bam” and celebrated Shabbat and Shabbat birthdays, even though it was through Zoom. I loved listening to them sing holiday songs through our hallways and having them excitedly run up to me at drop off to show off their newest mask, their brand new shoes, or their new haircut. These are just a fraction of the joys that I personally experienced this year at our ECC. In addition, watching our AMAZING teachers come into the school day after day, regardless of their fears, and envelop the children in love and care; adapt their lessons and their approach to accommodate new protocols as well as remote students; do everything in their power to create a sense of norm and familiarity for our students; and push their personal concerns aside to ensure an incredible experience for our students. Inspiring is too small a word to describe our teachers this year.

This year has exceeded every single one of my expectations. This year we put our “kehilla”, community, to the test and we came out of it with extraordinarily high marks. Our parents, teachers, students and staff came together and created something beautiful. From driveway dance parties, to tzedakah fueled food pantry and animal orphanage donations; from school-wide Zoom experiences to individual classroom achievements, this year at our ECC was definitely something to celebrate. I look forward to our Summer Camp and to what our next amazing school year brings! Thank you to all of our amazing teachers, students, and parents for making this a year to remember!

BERS & HEBREW HIGH

May 2—Religious School at JCC Camps at Medford
May 6—Last Night of Hebrew High School
May 9—No School (Mother’s Day)
May 11—Teen Summit
May 16—Confirmation
May 19—Bet Concert
May 20—Vav Graduation
May 23—End of the year Socially Distant Carnival
May Their Memories Be A Blessing

WE MOURN THE PASSING OF OUR BELOVED MEMBERS

Linda Chase
Wife of Paul Chase
Mother of Jodi (Tim) Heilizer, Jeff (Cathy) Chase, Mark Chase (Alyssa Reiter) Grandmother of Alec, Jake, Nick, Ellie, Matthew Heilizer; Travis, Maya, Jada Chase; Ilana and Ethan Chase; David, Samantha, Jason Reiter

Arthur “Art” Lemberg
Husband of Harriet Lemberg
Father of Ken (Rachel) Lemberg, Paul Lemberg, MD (Diane) Lemberg, Marc (Jamie) Lemberg Grandfather of Eliana, Joshua, Jasper, Sofia, Tia, Cory, Leah

Arthur Steinfeld
Husband of Nancy Steinfeld
Father of Bill Steinfeld, Glen (Donna) Steinfeld, Shari Steinfeld Grandfather of Scott and Justin Daniels, Leo Steinfeld Brother of Philip Steinfeld

WE SEND CONDOLENCES TO

Alicia Drozen
loss of her grandmother, Rosalind Green
Wife of Louis Green z”l. Mother of Barbara (Mark) Barrish, Phillip Green, and Michael Green z”l (Andrea Hirshman). Grandmother of Robert and Max Green and Amanda Barrish. Great-Grandmother of Landon and Hayden.

Marla (Jeffrey) Glauser
loss of her father, Barry Glauser
Husband of: Elaine Glauser. Father of: Holly Glauser (Kimmel Cameron), Michael Glauser (Ana Alzamora) Grandfather of Zachary Abel, Victoria Abel, Madison Glauser, Alex Glauser

Nadene (David) Harris
loss of her father, Morton L. Sirisky
Husband of: Carole Sirisky. Father of: Nadene (David) Harris and Aimee Sirisky (Roy Newsome). Grandfather of: Jennifer and Jonathan Harris. Brother of: Joan Wechter and Barbara Markley

Sheryl Hirsch (Hon. Charles Rand)
loss of her father, Saul Hirsch

John (Cheryl) Kirby
loss of his mother, Thelma Kirby

Brett (Jennifer) Sholder
loss of his mother, Henda “Bunny” Kerr

The Family of Ray Volusher
Wife of William Volusher, z”l. Mother of Sandy Kellerman (Mark) Levy. Grandmother of: Jonathan (Ellin) Kellerman, Adam (Robyn) Cohen, Aaron (Mira) Aumiller, Rachel (Stephen) Miller, Josh (Carolyn) Kellerman, Sara (Rob) Valli, Marcy (David) Goldman. Great Grandmother of: Logan, Leah and Julia Kellerman; Billy, Danny, Noah and Hannah Cohen; El, Chari, Zev and Max Aumiller; Jared, Tali, Ben and Ari Miller; Jordyn, Zach and Jesse Kellerman; Sophie and Alex Valli; Grey, Joey and Ava Goldman

Leora Waiche and Family
loss of her grandmother, Levana Waiche

LIFE & LEGACY

Please remember Beth El when you do your Estate Planning. Leaving a legacy is simple: Bequest in a Will, Gift of Life Insurance, Gift of IRA or Pension Funds, Gift of Cash or Assets, Charitable Remainder Trust

*Names in bold have formalized a commitment to Beth El
Contact Jocelyn Borowsky at jdmborowsky@comcast.net or Melissa Leibowitz at melleibowitz@bethelsnj.org for details.

Mira & Aaron Aumiller
Susan & David Backal
Cathy & Marc Backal
Marcia Baruch
Donna & Richard Bell
Pam & Bob Benedon
Jodi Berman
Helene & Alan Blumenfeld
Jocelyn Borowsky
Marcia Baruch Bowen
Ronit & Chris Boyd
Beth & Josh Brodkin
Amy & Eric Clayman
Herbert & Thalia Cohen
Arlene & Harris Colton
Fran & Neal Cupersmith
Leila & Adam Cupersmith
Marsha Dollinger
Alan Dias & Heidi Handler
June & Steven Eisner & Family
Myra & David Gutin
Phyllis Hecsh
Deborah & Edward Hochberg
Beth & Harvey Jacob
Adam Kaminer
Sharia & Mort Kanovsky
Amy & Barnard Kaplan
Jerome Katz
Alison & Andrew Keim
Debra Kelberg
Deborah Shore & Jonathan Korn
Helene & Rabbi Aaron Krupnick
Michael Landsburg
Fran & Leon L. Levy
Suzanne & Victor Levy
Judy & Donald (Z”) Love
Diane & Benjamin Mashoff
Rachel & Stephen Miller
Burt & Diane Nussbaum
Sheri & Jason Pecarsky
Lynn Goldman Paul
Arlene & Ed Plasky
Hilary & Harry Platt
Ilene Rosen & P. Todd Rowan
Sharon & Adam Sackstein
Stuart & Sherry Sauer
Karen & David Schlessel & Family
Harriet Schulman
Faye & Gary Shapiro
Jennifer Sholder
Michael Silver
Julie Mandel Slovos & Glenn Slovos
Lauren & Jonathan Soll
Tami Bogutz Steinberg
Judith & Stuart Wasserlauf
Jennifer & Jim Weiss
Leah & Jason Wolf
Jeffrey Zeiger
Anonymous (2)
MAZEL TOV!

B’NAI MITZVAH FAMILIES

Sheryl & Mark Schuster  
Bar Mitzvah of son, Landon

Mindy & Roey Sorasky  
Bar Mitzvah of son, Guy

Tami Bogutz Steinberg  
Bat Mitzvah of daughter, Ariel

Marcelle Tompakov  
Bar Mitzvah of grandson, Landon Schuster

ENGAGEMENTS & MARRIAGES

Sherri & Alan Breslow  
engagement of son, Brandon, to Rachel Lomita

Randi & Richard Gerstein  
engagement of son, Ben, to Perri Jacobs

Delores Gerstein  
engagement of grandson, Ben Gerstein, to Perri Jacobs

Karen & David Schlessel  
engagement of daughter, Zoe, to Judah Levy

Shirley Yaffa  
marrage of grandson, Reuven Yaffa to Narkis Rechavia

SPECIAL HONORS

Joan Feinberg  
honored at the Kellman Brown Academy Tribute Gala

Samantha Hassman  
dughter of Tracy Ann Bancroft and Michael Hassman was inducted into the National Elementary Honor Society

Melanie Raush  
dughter of Helene & David Raush, granddaughter of Ellen Podell, received the Rutgers University School of Arts and Sciences Senior Leader Award Class of 2021 in Journalism & Media Studies; Creative Writing & Theater Arts

Rebecca Raush  
dughter of Helene & David Raush, granddaughter of Ellen Podell, won the My Spoken Mark poetry slam competition.

Sydney Rowan  
dughter of Ilene Rosen & Todd Rowan, received the 2021 JCRC Teen Israel Advocacy Leadership Award at the JCRC Middle East Institute

Allen Wilen  
named the Turnaround Consultant of the Year by the Global M&A Network

Jared Wilen  
son of Barbra & Allen Wilen, was elected Grand Aleph Godol of Aleph Zadik Aleph for BBYO International

MAZEL TOV GRADUATES!

ECC Kindergarten

Micah Adelman  
Jared Alcoff  
Cameron Brady  
Lainee Callahan  
Matthew Cedar  
Jaxson Cygler  
Mila Cygler  
Ryder Ettinger  
Eliza Furman  
Zachary Gelrod  
Joseph Goddard  
Landon Goldstein

Micah Hulnick  
Jack Kaplan  
Danielle Marga  
Talya Nasagi  
Chloe Passkoff  
Hayden Petkun  
Lea Roth  
Ezra Sacks  
Lainey Semanoff  
Mila Silberman  
Blake Zafran

Vav Class Graduates

Jessica Atlas  
Elisha Behrend  
Shane Broad  
Frankie Brown  
Dylan Gerstein  
James Gordon  
Madison Greenwald  
Samantha Hassman  
Samuel Koenig  
Dylan Kratchman  
Isabella Laster  
Talia Miller  
Mason Petkov  
Kaila Rabenou  
Aaron Reichenberg  
Noah Ritigstein  
Spencer Ritigstein  
Sophia Rosof  
Hara Seltzer  
Abigail Shapiro  
Mikayla Shenker  
Jacob Silver  
Rebecca Simpson  
Brenna Spector  
Andrew Steiner  
Lilah Swarbrick

Confirmation Class

Noah Bender  
Ilana Chase  
Sophie Neuwirth  
Benjamin Packman  
Miranda Rosenbaum  
Jenna Serotta  
Raquel Sloves

High School Graduates (*BEJC)

Rachel Bliss  
Mackenzie Bralow*  
Phoebe Cohen  
Dana Cohen  
Macy Desmond  
Melody Dias  
Joshua Dorfner  
Jordan Kantor  
Caleb Eigen  
Colby Eigen  
Aidan Epstein  
Sloane Gerstein*  
Jordan Grossman  
Joseph Hochberg*  
Jeffrey Kaminer  
Matisse Laugraben*  
Morgan Laugraben  
Grayson Leslie  
Lewis Levy  
Tobias Maidenberg  
Joshua Manders*  
Matthew Miron  
Jamie Neff  
Lyle Rosenthal  
Sydney Rowan*  
Braden Schwartz  
Dylan Schwartz  
William Schwartz  
Melissa Shapiro*  
Madelyn Silver*  
Jacob Sinrich*  
Macy Sinrich  
Benjamin Sloves*  
Noah Stofman  
Jordyn Swarbrick  
Daniel Weinstock  
Rebecca Weissman  
David Wertheimer*  
Justin Whitney  
Jared Wilen*  
Alec Zaller  
Noah Zaller

Wishing a wonderful future to our members who graduated college or with an advanced degree!
NOAH SZTEJMAN

Son of Lisa & Eric Sztejman
May 1, 2021

Brother of: Jordan and Alixandra
Grandson of: Ilene & Barry Liner, Paula & Jake Sztejman
Mitzvah Project: Participated in Virtua’s Turkeypalooza and raised money to provide 1500 Thanksgiving dinners to those in need in our community.

CAMRYN OSTROFF

Daughter of Jennifer & Brett Ostroff
May 22, 2021

Sister of: Elliana
Granddaughter of: Len Ostroff, Lenny Rankin, Christin Rankin
Mitzvah Project: Collected gently used soccer equipment to donate to schools/clubs in need along with donations to offset the fee for the children to participate.

ERIN and ZACHARY SMITH

Children of Rachel & Kevin Smith
May 8, 2021

Grandchildren of: Rande Dubrow, Ellen & Ron Dubrow z”l, Louise Smith, James Smith
Mitzvah Project: Raised money to create and deliver 150 care packages for seniors isolated during Covid-19. Donated excess items to animal shelter, pediatric care facility, and food bank.

OLIVIA JACOBS

Daughter of Rebecca & William Jacobs
June 12, 2021

Sister of: Madeline and Dylan
Granddaughter of: Diane & Stuart Traster and Barbara Jacobs
Mitzvah Project: Donating a portion of Bat Mitzvah gifts to Susan G. Komen in honor of her grandmother Diane Traster and her aunt Cathrina Lindsey, both breast cancer survivors.

ETHAN COHEN

Son of Annie Gordon & Stephen Cohen
May 15, 2021

Brother of: Alexa
Grandson of: Carol Cohen, Saul Cohen, Darlene Gordon, Gerald Gordon
Mitzvah Project: Donated legos to Lego Replay which sends them to kids in need.

MAX CUTLER

Son of Caryn & Jason Cutler
June 19, 2021

Brother of: Jacob
Grandson of: Naomi & Fred Butter, Myra Cutler, Joel & Ann Cutler
Mitzvah Project: Collected snacks to deliver to frontline healthcare workers to eat while working at the hospitals.
JOIN OUR GROWING LIST OF SHOMRIM MEMBERS

PILLAR
The Brown Families – Sidney & Sandy and Jeff & Tracy
Donna & Richard Forman – Forman Foundation
Eva & Marvin Schlanger

VISIONARY
Marvin Samson Foundation

SUSTAINER
Jerome M. Katz
Alison & Andrew Keim

BUILDER
Iris & Steven Auerbach
Gloria & Ira Back
Susan & David Backal
Cathy & Marc Backal
Donna & Richard Bell
Jocelyn Borowsky
Marcia & Arnold Cohen
Betsy & Peter Cohen

BENEFACCTOR

M. Zev Rose
Karen & David Schlesel
Lauren & Jon Soll
Linda & David Wander
Elaine L. Waxman

GUARDIAN

Delores Gerstein
Jennifer & Michael Gerstein
Deborah & Ed Hochberg
Sharla & Morton Kanovsky
Rachel & Stephen Miller

Gerry & Howard Abramsohn
Sharon & Elliot Atkins
Barbara & Marvin Backal
The Bell Baeuerle Family
Steven Beilowitz
Jennifer & Andrew Bender
Helene & Alan Blumenfeld
Beth & Josh Brodkin
Jennifer & Ari Brooks
Staci & Jeffrey Cedar
Amy & Eric Clayman
Leslie & Steven Cohen
Arlene & Harris Colton
Fran & Neal Cupersmith
Marsha Dollinger
Brenda & Chuck Driben
Anita Farber
Christine & William Feinberg
Peggy & Louis Gold
Jennifer & Alex Greenwald
Ilene & Harry Grossman

Myra & David Gutow
Barbara & Mark Jacobs
Sandra & Arnold Kaminer
Ziva & Haim Kantor
Gladys & Steve Krulik
Melissa & Lee Leibowitz
Suzanne & Victor Levy
Renee & David Lieberman
Valerie & Robert Linden
Eileen Mangel
Andrea & Marc Millstein
Jamie & Darin Morgan
Linda & Richard Moskowitz
Jane & Ralph Noah
Lynn Goldman Paul & Stephen Paul
Salvatore & Eileen Perice
Hilary & Harry Platt
Ellen Podell
Julia & Adam Roberts
Erica & Jerry Rothkoff
Ilene Rosen & Todd Rowan

Elaine (z”l) & Bart Greenspan
Rabbi Aaron & Helene Krupnick
Judy & Donald (z”l) Love
Ellen & Michael Lowenberger
Miriam & Stan Meltzer
Carol & Donald Meltzer
Sharon & Adam Sackstein
Anonymous (1)

Julie & Jason Whitney
Barb & Allen Wilen
Judith & Leonard Wizmur

Joyce & Mel Ruthen
Sherry & Stuart Sauer
Betsy & Robert Schwartz
Brandi & Gregory Seltzer
Faye & Gary Shapiro
Shari & Jeffrey Shapiro
Carol & Joel Silbert
Judy & Len Simkin
Juli & Glenn Soves
Barbara & Norman Some
Tami Bogutz Steinberg
Alison & Neil Tarnopol
Diane & Stuart Traster
Lynne & Diego Warszawski
Cookie & Allan Weinberg
Ilene & Michael Weinberg
Karin Elkis & Steven Weinstein
Jennifer & James Weiss
Anonymous (1)

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When/Why did you join Beth El?
Harvey: My wife, Beth, and I joined Beth El sometime in the Spring of 1969. The first six months of our marriage we had been living in Philadelphia. When we learned we were expecting our first child, we decided to move to New Jersey. As soon as we purchased our house in Cherry Hill, and months before moving in, we began looking for a Synagogue to join. We narrowed the search to Beth Shalom, then in Haddon Heights, and Beth El, then in Cherry Hill. We moved into our house in Barclay Farms in September of 1968 and our first child, Gaye, was born on January 2 of 1969. We had not chosen between the two Synagogues yet, and Gaye was named at Beth Shalom. I guess we ended up joining Beth El because I liked Cantor Herman’s davening more than Cantor Goldhirsh’s at Beth Shalom (though he eventually coached my davening in later years) and it was closer to our house. We also liked that there was a Young Associates level membership that was free to those under thirty and we were only twenty four.

Lauren: Our family originally belonged to Congregation Beth Jacob in Merchantville, but circumstances arose and my parents decided it was time for a change. It was important to my parents to belong to a conservative synagogue where they would feel comfortable and be part of a welcoming community. When they met Rabbi Kahn z”l, they were very impressed by him and how he spoke about his wonderful congregation which resulted in us joining Beth El. My parents, sister and I became official members of Beth El in 1974. When my husband and I got married, we started our own membership in 1991. Therefore, I have been a Beth El member for over 45 years.

Ed: Debbie and I joined Beth El in 1993, shortly after we moved to South Jersey. At the time, we didn’t know a lot of people in the area, and we wanted to belong somewhere. We tried out Beth El, and obviously, it stuck.

What do you think makes Beth El so special?
Lauren: Beth El is special because of the people who make up our congregation starting with our superstar clergy team who guide, inspire and support us. Our congregants are about love and warmth which makes us not just a shul but a family.

Ed: It’s a cliché, but it’s all about the people. I’ve said this before, but the friends we’ve made at Beth El are unlike friendships we’ve made anywhere else in our lives. Our friendships are deeper, as they come from a place of shared values, a love of Judaism, and clearly common interest. I’ve been to many other synagogues through the years, and they are all nice, but Beth El has a certain “warm feeling” that is just that much greater than any other place I’ve been.

Harvey: The answer to that question has changed over the years. I will just share why I thought it was special in the ten years or so before we moved from Cherry Hill in 2012. And it is the simplest answer: Rabbi Krupnick and Hazzan Pomerantz-Boro. The union of these two individuals in the leadership of Beth El was a match made in heaven. Their teaching, their living what they preach, their caring, and Hazzan’s incredibly inspiring davening.

What are some of your proudest moments of your time as President?
Ed: I was fortunate enough to become President just as we moved to Main Street. During my first year, my daughter, Amanda, was bat mitzvahed. To be the President of Beth El and celebrating our simcha in front of our family and friends (with Rabbi Krupnick and Hazzan kvelling over our family) in our new building was an incredible experience that I will never forget.

Harvey: I was just proud of all of the volunteers who worked so hard to make the Synagogue they loved a place that welcomed all, a place that helped those in need, a place where people could worship, a place where people could find community, a place where people could be educated, entertained, and a place where people could find peace and comfort. I could not have done anything without the support of hundreds of volunteers.

Lauren: My proudest moment as president at Beth El was becoming president at Beth El. I was so honored to represent our synagogue in this capacity. My favorite memory as president was speaking at all the various religious school graduation ceremonies and sitting on the bima during multiple B’nai Mitzvah. Seeing the smiles, laughter, and tears of pride and joy on a family’s face from this perspective was heart-warming, inspiring, and often very emotional.

What are some of your favorite memories?
Harvey: There are so many memories, but I would be lying if I didn’t say my favorite memories are of the times I led services on the High Holidays or Shabbat and could hear the congregation behind me joining in or responding to my singing and knowing that I inspired them. Having said that, other favorite memories include: The many friends we made as members of the Young Associates; Building the booths for The Young Associate Chanukah Bazaar and operating the one that gave goldfish as prizes; The Young Associate Lecture Series; Elie Wiesel’s appearance when I was President of the congregation; Having dinner with Sam Levinson, the comedian, before his performance; Dinners in the Sukkah; Cooking meals with other volunteers in order to help feed those in need; Arguing to the Board as Young Associate President, that we needed a
third, equal service on the High Holidays in place of the overcrowded two we had just experienced, and getting nowhere until Myer Adleman rose from his seat and said “The young man is right!” I was so proud of that service that I oversaw across the street at the public school’s gym for many years, and then in our gym when Beth El expanded; and how could I forget how proud I was at the community rally/fund raiser that Beth El hosted at the time of the Yom Kippur war that raised an incredible amount of money in support of Israel; being installed as the youngest (at the time) President in the Synagogue's history; and, I would be remiss if I didn’t say some of my fondest memories are of those who served with me when I was first the President of the Young Associates and later the President of the Synagogue.

Ed: It’s hard to know where to start to answer that question. The retreats we had as Young Associates were amazing; they cemented our relationship to Beth El, and they were so much fun. Our scotch tasting evening with Rabbi Arnowitz was also unforgettable (next morning’s headache was also pretty unforgettable). Lastly, while I don’t remember the specific day, the point at which Eric Boory and I realized that the stars were finally going to align, and we could feasibly move the shul to Main Street was just a very special memory.

Lauren: I have so many memories of the Cherry Hill building since that was where I attended Hebrew School. However, my favorite and most meaningful memory is getting married to my husband Jon. My marriage at Beth El was my first step to starting my amazing family and beginning my dedication and commitment to my synagogue.

What is your wish for the next 100 years?
Ed: The best wish that I could have for Beth El is that it enriches people’s lives the same way for the next 100 years as it has for the last 100 years.
Harvey: I wish that Beth El will always be strong and will always inspire generations to come to keep Judaism and what it stands for alive.
Lauren: My wish for the next 100 years is that Beth El remains a wonderful and inclusive spiritual home for all. Our leadership and our congregants need to embrace change when necessary so that Beth El continues to thrive, be prosperous and enrich our lives for generations to come.

Ed Hochberg

Memories from Harris Colton

In 1969, Arlene and I began thinking about moving to Cherry Hill from Woodbury where I had established my dental practice. Woodbury had a very small Jewish community with very few young children so we knew that it was time for our family to move on. In Cherry Hill, Beth El was a conservative congregation with a young rabbi and a beautiful new synagogue. We already had friends there as well as my uncle who was on the Board. There were 42 students in our daughter’s confirmation class including a current Beth El officer. Our oldest son’s 5th grade class in the BERS was over 70 students. All of our children were confirmed and graduated Midrasha. When I became chairman of the Religious School, there were over 900 students. Rabbi Furman z”l hired the teachers, developed the curriculum, and created a system to provide bus transportation to and from Beth El. He even took into account that siblings should be on the same schedule. He knew all of the students. He was a wonderful and amazing man. The Friday night Oneg Shabbat service brings back wonderful memories. There was always ample time to socialize and we would hear the beautiful harmony singing of (Rabbi Eli Kahn and his brother Sammy as teenagers. Beth El has been our spiritual home for over 50 years. During those years, both Arlene and I were privileged to chair committees as I moved up through the chairs in leadership. I have watched as our spiritual home was remodeled and enlarged to include B’not Mitzvah, female Torah readers, and women in leadership. Beth El’s growth knows no boundaries.
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Congregation Beth El
May-June 2021
TUESDAY, JUNE 29, 2021
WOODCREST COUNTRY CLUB

11:00AM - GOLF REGISTRATION & BRUNCH
12:30PM - SHOTGUN START
4 PERSON SCRAMBLE
$250 PER PERSON

11:00AM - GAME DAY REGISTRATION & BRUNCH
12:30 - 4:00PM - GAME DAY
MAH JONGG, CANASTA, BRIDGE
$54 PER PERSON

Brunch provided by Classical Caterers
Dietary laws observed

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Contact Melissa Leibowitz: mleibowitz@bethelsnj.org