



## Back to Shul: Anticipating a Joy- ous, Healthy and Prosperous 5770

Now that we have recited the *Birkat Ha'Chodesh* (Blessing for the New Month) for *Elul* and have begun the *Elul* rituals of daily shofar blowing and recitation of Psalm 27, we know we are readying ourselves for the High Holy Days and

Fall religious festivals including *Rosh Hashanah 1 and 2*, *Kol Nidre*, *Yom Kippur*, *Sukkot 1 and 2*, *Hoshanah Rabbah*, *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah*. September and October are always very bustling times at B'nai Jacob and already preparations are afoot for many familiar and some new observances, as well as new programs. Be sure to check the Holiday Calendar featured in this newsletter for dates and times of all holiday services and observances.

5769 has been a very challenging year for all of us in the community. With a long economic recession, many layoffs and continuing unemployment, considerably reduced retirement accounts and general pull-backs in spending across the board, we all have felt the pinch on our pocket-books throughout this year. 5769 was surely not without its embarrassments in the Jewish community, as well, with the sad story of Bernard Madoff and his victims followed shortly thereafter with the 'Summer of Scandal' in New Jersey as five rabbis and members of our own Jersey City Council were arrested for corrupt misdeeds.

This past year surely has given us all cause for pause as we reflect on the upcoming High Holy Days and our communal responsibilities. The Talmud says, "*Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Ba'Zeh*", the entire Jewish community is bound up with one another. We all take responsibility for each other's transgressions, as well as mitzvot. That's why we recite a collective '*Al Chet*' during the Yom Kippur service. We beseech Adonai for forgiveness not just our own personal transgressions, mistakes, or 'missing the mark' – the literal meaning of '*Chet*' – but those of our fellow Jews both in our community and beyond it.

Despite the difficulties, the year has given us oftentimes the opportunity to reflect on the blessings in our lives and what we have to be grateful for. 5769 witnessed the kick-off of B'nai Jacob's 50th Anniversary Year with a fabulous Gala with over 200 in attendance! We enjoyed the successful collaboration with the Actors Shakespeare Company on a sanctuary production of "The Jewish King Lear" by Jacob Gordin and another successful collaboration with Temple Beth El of Jersey City and United Synagogue of Hoboken for *Yom Hashoah*, Holocaust Remembrance Day, with a program featuring survivor Ed Mosberg who shortly after his appearance at B'nai Jacob was one of a handful of survivors given the honor of meeting with the Pope in Israel. Our congregation's volunteers worked hard to plan and prepare *Shabbat Onegs* and *Kiddushes* on a weekly basis and special Shabbat and holiday dinners. We are so very thankful to have such a committed core group of Shabbat attendees so that minyan is almost never a problem on a Saturday morning, unlike for other shuls in the area. Friday nights are another story, but we are all committed to making a greater effort in 5770 to have a minyan on Friday evenings so that those observing Yahrzeit are able to do so. Other volunteers organized bus trips to Brooklyn College and Queens College for special performances of Yiddish songs and theatre.

Now, we are being told by our economic leaders the recession is seeing some 'green shoots' and perhaps the

long drought is coming to an end. (At least we didn't have to experience seven years of famine like the Israelites in Egypt!) Here at B'nai Jacob, things are hopping! This coming year, B'nai Jacob will be continuing its celebration of its 50th Anniversary with some new programs including a Friday night speaker series. Once a month beginning in November, we will have an abbreviated Friday night *Kabbalat Shabbat* Service and a special speaker, followed by a delicious Oneg Shabbat and an opportunity to speak with our guest speaker. Be on the lookout elsewhere in this newsletter for more information about this new program. Be sure to save the date for our first speaker on November 6th, David Rak, a new member and French Jew who will speak about French Jewry and its Youth, a subject he is well-versed in.

Our Back to Shul! Shabbat on September 11th and 12th will include a Friday Night Live! *Kabbalat Shabbat* Musical Service and Ice Cream Social for our Oneg. Saturday evening, September 12th will feature the traditional *Selichot* Service, a very beautiful, reflective hour-long service when we get a preview of all the familiar High Holy Day traditional melodies.

This year we will have a very special film program at 7:30 PM before the *Selichot* Service. I have invited Ellen Friedland, an award-winning documentary film producer who is a dear friend, to introduce and screen two of her films that have aired on PBS. One is entitled, "A Torah Returns to Poland" and the other is a surprise. In addition, we will have the very special privilege of seeing a trailer of Ellen's new documentary now nearing completion about an interfaith coffee cooperative in Uganda, Africa, organized by members of the Abudayah Jewish community. See more information about this exciting Saturday evening program on September 12th elsewhere in the newsletter.

With regard to the High Holy Day services, this year, once again Andy Silikowitz of West Orange, New Jersey will assist me on the bimah for *Rosh Hashanah* Days 1 and 2 (September 19 and 20th) and we will be welcoming Terry Horowitz of Albany, New York to assist me on the bimah for *Yom Kippur* (September 27th and 28th). Both Andy and Terry will be warm and gifted presences on our bimah and add to our enjoyment of the *Yamim Nora'im*.

On Day 2 of *Rosh Hashanah* (September 20th) at 4 PM we will all gather at the foot of Washington Street for our 3rd annual festive Tashlich-on-the-Hudson ceremony. Be sure to bring your voices, portable musical instruments, dancing shoes and friends, relatives and neighbors. The Dunkels will once again provide the bread for 'throwing away our sins'.

For *Yom Kippur* on Monday, September 28th, in the late afternoon we will have a discussion and chanting of the Book of Jonah. And we will continue the B'nai Jacob *Minhag* introduced last year of a community Break-the-Fast deliciously catered and free to the entire congregation following the brief *Neilah* service after the Book of Jonah program and the final shofar blowing.

*Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Ba Zeh*. Try to participate as much as possible in all these wonderful High Holy Day season and beyond B'nai Jacob activities that promise to fulfill your hearts and souls with a deep sense of Jewish belonging.

And may I wish each and everyone of you a Joyous, Healthy and Prosperous 5770! *Shanah Tovah U'Metukah!*

I look forward to seeing you at services in September.

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