

October, 2007

B'nai Jacob: *Ha Makom Yehudit Shelanu* - Our Place for Jewish Belonging:

The 5768 High Holy Days are behind us from Selichot and Rosh Hashana through Kol Nidre, Yom Kippur, Neilah and Tashlich. The final 'Hallelujah' took place Sunday, September 22 downtown Jersey City right on the water at the corner of the Morris Canal and the Hudson River. With over 40 B'nai Jacobites gathered for honey and apples, music, singing and dancing, we made our mark in Jersey City as 'the place for Jewish belonging'. The musical sounds drew passersby including Jersey City Councilman Steve Fullop and some local downtown Jewish residents, some unaffiliated, some from other congregations, including a twenty-something Sabra, Nita, residing in Jersey City after living in France for many years. Some members brought their children and grandkids, too. (If you missed it, photos of our Tashlich can be seen on B'nai Jacob's lobby bulletin board and shortly on our website!)

I spent a lot of time after the event thinking about what made it so successful. First, of course, was the spectacularly beautiful weather, low 70's and sunny, with boats going by in both directions all afternoon. The weather itself was healing. Second, and more important, however, was the phenomenal participation in the event by B'nai Jacob members. For some, Tashlich brought back many happy memories of times together years ago performing Tashlich in other settings with the B'nai Jacob family. For others, it meant time celebrating the Jewish principle of *L'Dor va Dor*, from Generation to Generation, the principle of Jewish continuity and sharing a Jewish tradition to promote the passing on of that tradition to future generations. And for many of us new to B'nai Jacob in the past five years or so, it meant creating new traditions going forward and enjoying being together as a community that cares for one another. All of this suggested to me what B'nai Jacob is really all about: B'nai Jacob is our Place for Jewish Belonging.

Whether you attend services regularly or whether you participate occasionally, whether you enjoy a bus trip outing to Brooklyn College for an afternoon of Yiddish music, or attending a downtown event and joining in the music and dancing, or enjoying a luncheon Shabbat Kiddush in the beautiful B'nai Jacob Sukkah, whether you represent B'nai Jacob's interests in the larger Hudson Jewish Community Forum by serving on the Working Group or attending gatherings, or whether you simply stay connected to B'nai Jacob by receiving the B'nai Jacob newsletter or catching up on the B'nai Jacob website, all of you are making B'nai Jacob into our Place for Jewish Belonging. And just by the generosity you show with your contributions, you are signaling that you 'belong' at B'nai Jacob.

Over the summer, when I assumed my new role at B'nai Jacob providing spiritual leadership, I gave a lot of thought to what guiding objectives over the year I could offer the congregation to instill a spirit of belonging. I came up with four goals: more participation, more explanation, more teaching, and more learning. We all need community. It enriches us, helps us and heals us. And is within the context of the B'nai Jacob community that these four goals can be expressed. Our spirits soar when we have a good Shabbat or a good Chag. Regarding participation, we have several important Tishrei

dates coming up in October: October 4 and 5 and October 19. **Thursday, October 4** is **Shemini Atzeret**, the final day of the Festival of Sukkot. On this day we recite the prayer for rain, **Geshem**, so important to our ancestors in the dry land of Israel, and still so very important to our Jewish brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisrael. We also recite **Yizkor** on that day. The following day, **Friday, October 5**, is **Simchat Torah**, the festival of rejoicing in the Torah. On this holiday we complete the reading of the entire cycle of the Five Books of Moses and begin the cycle again. Later in the month, on Friday evening, **October 19**, we will have our **Friday Night Live! Musical Shabbat** service. At our last musical Friday Night Live! Service in August we had a lively service followed by an ice cream social for our Oneg Shabbat. Come on October 19th to B'nai Jacob and enjoy a special **Parashat Lech Lecha Shabbat** service with a warm and friendly Oneg following services. It is my hope in the New Year that you will all bring your friends and family and make B'nai Jacob your **Place for Jewish Belonging, Ha'Makom Yehudit Shelanu**.

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