

Newsletter

September 2009 / Elul 5769-Tishri 5770

August-September Calendar

Date	Event
Sep 12	9:45-12:00 Shabbat service with Rabbi Audrey (Lutheran Church)
12	8:00-10:00pm Joint Selichot service with Rabbis Audrey, Toba and Barbara at Hillel Bnai Torah, 120 Corey St, W. Roxbury. Featuring Merle Field's <i>The Gates Are Closing</i> , a dramatic reading
18	6:15-7:15 Erev Rosh HaShanah (60 Stein circle, Newton)
19	9:30am-1:00pm Rosh HaShanah (60 Stein circle, Newton)
20	9:30am-12:30 Rosh HaShanah (60 Stein circle, Newton)
20	4:30 pm, Taschlich (Charles River Bridge, Nonantum)
26	9:45-12:00 Shabbat Shuvah service (Lutheran Church)
27	6:00pm Kol Nidre (60 Stein circle, Newton)
28	9:30 am, Yom Kippur services(60 Stein circle, Newton); 2:30-4:00 pm, Study session; 5:15-nightfall, Minha-Neilah

Adult Education in 5770

The Adult Education Committee, under the leadership of Joyce Hollman, has organized a series of speakers, courses and cultural events for the coming year. The first one will be Sunday, October 18 when Dr. Michael Grodin will talk about "Caring for Survivors of the Holocaust" Dr. Grodin is Senior Faculty, Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies; Director of the Program on Medicine and the Holocaust; and Professor of Bioethics, Philosophy and Psychiatry, Boston University.

For information on other events, see page 4.



From the Rabbi

Shalom Haverim,

As we approach the dawn of a new year, we turn our thoughts to renewal, and the opportunity in this most sacred season of the Jewish year, for "teshuvah." "Teshuvah" is most often translated as "repentance," but it literally means "returning" or, simply, "turning." During the month of Elul, which begins on August 21 and ends the day before Rosh Hashanah, we prepare for the High Holidays, the *Yamim Noraim* (literally: Days of Awe), by taking stock of the year that has passed. We do this by *turning inward* (or re-turning to our truest selves) to ask ourselves some serious questions, so that we can be ready to realize the incredible potential for renewal as the Jewish year ends and a new one begins.

Our primary question for ourselves as we look at the past year is not "where have I been" or "what have I been?" but *who* have I been? Have I been living the life that best reflects my *neshama*, my soul, my abilities, my dreams, my hopes? Who have I been in my relationships with my loved ones? In my relationship to acquaintances? To strangers? In my relationship to the earth itself? To ask these questions we must turn inward and look deeply and honestly at ourselves, but in doing so, and in considering who we would like to be in the year ahead, we are also turning *outward* toward other people—toward our loved ones, toward the world itself and all that is in it.

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From the President

Shir Hadash is a Reconstructionist Havurah that is member-led and we have a part-time rabbi. For us this is the best of both worlds. Rabbi Audrey Marcus-Berkman actively participates in ritual and educational events. She leads two Shabbat services a month and plays a leading role in High Holiday services. Based on a member survey sent out in the spring, her single most popular activity last year was her pre-service study sessions. The topics varied. She elaborated on the weekly Torah portion, delved into other books of the Tanakh such as Song of Songs or Psalms, and introduced topics such as miracles in Jewish tradition. Other contributions included discussions of major Jewish thinkers such as Abraham Joshua Heschel, and modern Hebrew poetry. Rabbi Audrey also actively pursued opportunities for Shir Hadash to participate in activities with other Jewish congregations. One result was joint Selichot and Shavuot services with the two other Reconstructionist congregations in the area.

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Torah/Haftarah portions for the month

		Dt		
Aug 29	Ki Tetzey	21:10-25:19	Isaiah	54:1-10
Sep 5	Ki Tavo	Dt 26:1-28:8	Isaiah	60:1-22
Sep 13	Nitzavim-Vayeleh	Dt 29:9-31:30	Isaiah	61:10-63:9
			Micah	7:18-20
Sep 26	Haazinu	Dt 32:1-34:12	Hosea	14:2-10
			Joel	2:15-27

Officers

President: Rosalind Bronsen
Vice-President: Joyce Lazarus
Vice-President: Madelyn Morris
Secretary: Steve Adler-Golden
Treasurers: Ellen Fisher and Ross Feldberg

Committee Chairs

Adult Education: Joyce Hollman
Gemilut Hasadim: Richard & Joan Yospin
High Holidays: Ruth Badler & Joan Belson
House & Operations: Martha Jaffe
Membership: Judith & Warren Hurwitz
Music (Klezmer & Chorale): Richard Yospin
Newsletter: Dena & Todd Rakoff
Planning & Finance: Chuck Rich
Program: Ruth Seidman
Ritual: David Goodson
Social Action: Peter Barrer
Technology: Reuben Fisher

Shir Hadash

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From the Rabbi (continued)

Most importantly, after spending time during the month of Elul to take stock, to do *heshbon hanefesh* (literally: an accounting of myself/my soul), we come together as a community to express through song, through prayer, through reading and studying our sacred texts, our fervent hope that we will be granted another year to try to live as our best selves, to live and love as authentically and deeply as we possibly can. So, on Rosh Hashanah and then on Yom Kippur we will turn *outward* toward one another and then, as our voices rise as one, we will turn together toward the source of all life, the mystery that is beyond creation, that is beyond our understanding, and yet to which we are accountable; that stands for all that is good and holy.

In our unique, warm, and vibrant havurah we are privileged to know the incredible goodness and holiness of what it means to be part of a true community. It has been a privilege for me to be both a part of and a leader of this community for over two years, and to witness how together, as Shir Hadash (an entity which is truly greater than the sum of its parts), we celebrate and observe holidays and days of remembrance; we study texts both ancient and modern to give us a window into our vast Jewish tradition; we joyfully embrace and sometimes wrestle with our relationship to Judaism; we help one another celebrate the birth of a new child or grandchild, or an anniversary or a birthday, or mourn the loss of a parent or cope with the demands of caretaking an aging parent; we encourage one another to learn a new skill to help with leading services; we appreciate and celebrate the work of the many artists among us; we provide meals for those of us who are mourning and those who are recovering from illness or injury; we learn from one another, and we share pieces of our journeys. In doing all of this, as a community, we are turning outward to one another and taking responsibility for one another, so that every member feels very much a part of something greater than herself or himself, and so that every member feels embraced as a valued and essential part of our shared endeavor.

As a community, Shir Hadash has been increasingly turning outward to the community beyond us, sharing holidays and learning experiences with the two other Reconstructionist congregations in the Boston area, Hillel Bnai Torah and Dorshei Tzedek, and also with the Worship and Study Minyan at Harvard Hillel, and with the young families who are part of the Sunday School for Jewish Studies. I am excited for the many wonderful opportunities we will have in the coming year to join together with these other communities. I believe that just as when we as individuals turn outward toward others we are better able to look inward and realize the potential of our best selves, so too the experience of joining Shir Hadash with other communities allows us to turn inward and to become a better and more energized and engaged community.

There is a place for everyone at Shir Hadash. If you are a guest, I hope you will take the opportunity during the coming year to join us for learning or singing or praying or celebrating or hiking or biking or working on a social action project or all of the above! In this season especially, Shir Hadash is turning outward to greet and welcome all who would like to explore what it means to be part of a warm and wonderful Jewish community. Please feel free to speak with me or with any of our members to learn more about us, and feel free to come to as many services and events as you'd like, so that you can get to know us better.

Wishing all of you a meaningful season of "turning" and renewal, and a *Shana Tova u'Metuka*, a good and sweet year ahead.

B'shalom,

Rabbi Audrey

Some Highlights of the Year Ahead with Rabbi Audrey:

Shabbat morning study sessions on: Prophets, Parashat Hashavua (weekly Torah portion), and Psalms

- A 3-session course on Modern and Contemporary Jewish Thought about Israel
- A "Learner's Service," with in-depth explanation of the structure and content of the Shabbat morning service
- A trip to the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City to commemorate Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Memorial Day)
- Involvement in the new Boston Jewish Music Festival in March 2010
- Musical and ruach (spirit)-filled Kabbalat Shabbat (Friday evening) services

Torah/Haftarah portions for the month

Aug 29	Ki Tetzey	Dt 21:10-25:19	Isaiah	54:1-10
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Sep 13	Nitzavim-Vayeleh	Dt 29:9-31:30	Isaiah	61:10-63:9
Sep 26	Haazinu	Dt 32:1-34:12	Hosea 14:2-10	Micah 7:1820 Joel 2:15-27

From the President (continued)

In addition to Rabbi Audrey's contribution, Shir Hadash is fortunate to have some very talented members in our midst. Members chant Torah, lead two services a month and play a major role in High Holiday services. They have led pre-service study sessions and regularly give commentary on the weekly portion. Our chorus sometimes enhances our services. Our members have contributed to Adult Education by leading discussion groups and making presentations. In addition, members organize fun activities such as Hanukah and Purim celebrations and Israeli dancing, and our wonderful Klezmer band helps us celebrate many joyous occasions.

As a member-led congregation, we ask all members to contribute of themselves in some way. This can be as simple as bringing a kiddush, setting up for services or hosting an event. For those who are able to or who want to learn, participation in Shabbat services is highly valued. Our committees are always ready to welcome new people and the ideas, energy and help they bring. Of course, participation in the many services, programs and celebrations is an important way to be involved.

So as we look to the beginning of the New Year, we want to invite you to join us and get to know us better. Please look at the calendars for August and September in this packet or check out our website at <http://www.shirhadash-ma.org/>.

Hope to see you soon.

L'Shana Tova,
Rosalind Bronsen

Join the Sukkah Hop October 4

Our Sukkah Hop, a chance to visit members' Sukkot, will be held Sunday afternoon, October 4. If you would like to be one of the hosts, please contact Ruth Seidman, 617-734-7820, rkseidman@comcast.net.

Joint Selichot Service

Shir Hadash joined with Dorshei Tzedek and Hillel B'nai Torah at HBT on Saturday, September 12, for a joint Selichot Service.

The evening began with Havdalah, led by Rabbi Audrey Marcus-Berkman, refreshments and shmoozing. This was followed by a staged reading of *The Gates Are Closing* performed by a cast drawn from all three congregations. The play is set on Yom Kippur and deals with forgiveness and atonement, the themes of the high holy days. Shir Hadash was represented by Joel Reisman, Aaron Seidman and Adam Liberman (a cousin of Bernice Auslander).

The play was followed by a discussion period and then a Selichot exercise, led by Rabbis Barbara Penzner and Toba Spitzer.

Quotes from Mordecai Kaplan:

The foremost problem in Jewish religion is how to get Jews to take the Bible seriously without taking it literally.

People whose religion begins and ends with prayer and ritual practices are like soldiers forever maneuvering but never getting into action.

Reconstructionism, far from claiming to have said the last word concerning Judaism, religion, ethics or salvation, stresses the importance of saying the first correct word in each instance.

According to the teaching of the Torah and the Prophets, the people of Israel was expected to demonstrate its loyalty to God not merely by worshipping Him, but mainly by practicing justice and righteousness.

Part of the mystery of peoplehood is that we feel impelled to live for posterity, and that posterity will look to us for life's meaning.

Adult Education (continued)

Plans for 2009-10 include:

- "Caring for Survivors of the Holocaust", with Dr. Michael Grodin. Sunday, October 18, 2009. Dr. Grodin is Senior Faculty, Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies; Director of the Program on Medicine and the Holocaust; and Professor of Bioethics, Philosophy and Psychiatry, Boston University.
- Jewish Film Series: attending one film, with a speaker on how films are selected. November.
- Modern and contemporary Jewish thoughts on Israel: exploring the writings of thinkers such as Amos Oz, David Hartman and Rav Kook. Rabbi Audrey Marcus-Berkman. 3 sessions, to be scheduled mid-winter.
- Exploring Jewish mysticism or Kabbalah. Date and speaker: tbd
- A joint session with Rabbi Audrey Marcus-Berkman and Pastor John Stendahl of the Lutheran Church. Topic and timeline: to be decided.
- Sharing Haggadot and how they are used. Have you prepared a Haggadah that is different from others? How do you use it? Would you like to plan your own? Bring books, scripts, ideas, and share!
- Music and dance night. Explore, sing and dance to a genre of Jewish music, with a music/dance leader. Spring 2010.
- Andree Brooks, author of "The Woman Who Defied Kings: The Life and Times of Dona Gracia Nasi", discussing this Jewish woman who lived during the 1500's and developed an underground railroad equivalent to save Sephardic Jews during the Inquisition. Sunday, May 2, 2010.
- Resurging Jewish communities in Europe. Date: tbd.
- Trip to the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, with Rabbi Audrey Marcus-Berkman. Date: around Yom Hashoah (April 2010).

For more information contact Joyce Hollman, 617-527-3030



Songfest at the Annual Retreat