

*Yes, You Heard It Through*



## THE GRAPEVINE

*A Publication of the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Havurah*

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# Of Rabbis and Rabbits Beit Sefer Ends Its Year with Another Sense of Sanctuary

*Marcy Epstein, Grapevine Editor*

*Eli Cohen, Jesse Rubin (left) and Jacob Schneyer (below) at work on a service project at Great Lakes Rabbit Sanctuary. Photo credit: Stephanie Rowden*



May brought the end of another excellent year for the Havurah's school of learning, its Beit Sefer. Headed by Aura Ahuvia, with lead teacher Shoshana Jackson, the Beit Sefer offers three multi-age children's groups that explore Reconstructionist and Jewish principles and traditions.

Brian's class, the G'dolim, wrapped up their year exploring Jewish values through service by

visiting the Great Lakes Rabbit Sanctuary, a sanctuary for domestic and wild/injured rabbits located in Whittaker, Michigan.

Great Lake Rabbit Sanctuary provides a safe haven to abandoned, abused and neglected domestic rabbits with the goal of adopting them out to loving homes. Those rabbits not eligible for adoption, due to either health or temperament, live out their lives peacefully at the sanctuary. GLRS also strives to educate the public regarding the joys of having a rabbit, rabbit behavior and health, as well as the importance of proper diet and care.

Beit Sefer reconvenes with the school year in September. Change is afoot: Shoshana will be accepting a full-time position with the Jewish Community Center, and so she and her family will remain nearby to the Havurah. A search for a new lead teacher begins soon. The Havurah wishes the entire Jackson family (increasing with this summer, no less!) *kol ha-kavod!*—a job well done!—as Shoshana continues to serve Ann Arbor’s Jewish community. She has brought a generosity of spirit and years of hard work and talent to our congregation.

Another round of *kol ha-kavod* is due to Aura Ahuvia, long time Havurah member, Rosh (head) of the Beit Sefer, and the Hav’s rabbinical intern. Besides running our school and bringing up her teenagers, Aura produced a thesis this term that was accepted toward the completion of a Master’s degree in Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan, graduating this spring. Aura continues to pursue *smicha* through a Renewal rabbinical ordination program.

The end of the school year brings our community a chance for reflection on how we are educating not only our children but also ourselves. Asked how he felt about Beit Sefer this year, Jeff Basch offered: “I am impressed by the breadth of Jewish culture and Hebrew language learning that is accomplished in two short hours each week. It is the Sunday school I wish I got to attend when I was my kid’s age. They actually have fun and learn; a natural combination rarely achieved.”

One of the reasons the Beit Sefer can boast its high quality is the high quality of the people who comprise it. Wonderful teachers, dedicated and thoughtful parents, and creative, dynamic children—given the fodder of Judaic civilization—make for good company.



*Debbie and Karin, parents in the Beit Sefer, take a Sunday morning opportunity to teach each other Hebrew. Photo credit: Stephanie Rowden*

## Heard through the Grapevine

*Nancy Meadow, Havurah Member*

***Has someone said something to you to amuse, inspire, or connect you to our community? Share it through the Grapevine.***

Last night we went to fourth Friday services. Our twin toddlers Mollie and Isaac love to go – what is not to like? They get to eat their favorite foods (challah and juice), play with some of their favorite toys and romp around with some of their favorite people.

After a wonderful evening, we packed Mollie and Isaac into the car WAY past their bedtime. As I

turned on the headlights and put the car into reverse, Mollie wailed, "Come back!"

I asked her, "Mollie, who do you want to come back?" and she responded ---"Shabbat!"



## ***Upside Down Honey Cheesecake is Downright Outstanding***

*Marcy Epstein, with a tip of the spoon to Epicurious.com*

**Try this lovely, creamy Shavuot treat for your friends and family.**

### **Ingredients:**

**1 cup sugar**  
**1/3 cup honey**  
**1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter**  
**1/3 cup water**  
**3 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, room temperature**  
**2/3 cup (packed) golden brown sugar**  
**1 cup sour cream**  
**2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice**  
**2 teaspoons vanilla extract**  
**4 large eggs, room temperature**  
**Assorted fresh berries (for garnish)**

### **Preparation:**

**Preheat oven to 300°F. Butter twelve 3/4-cup ramekins or custard cups. Place 1 cup sugar,**

**honey, and butter in heavy medium saucepan. Stir over medium heat until butter melts and mixture is blended. Increase heat to medium-high and bring to boil. Whisk until mixture darkens slightly and candy thermometer registers 300°F, about 5 minutes.**

**Remove from heat; add 1/3 cup water (mixture will bubble vigorously); whisk to blend. Divide topping among ramekins (about 2 tablespoonfuls for each). Divide ramekins between 2 roasting pans and chill while preparing filling.**

**Using on/off turns, blend cream cheese and brown sugar in processor, scraping bowl occasionally. Add sour cream, lemon juice, and vanilla; process until smooth. Add eggs 1 at a time, processing just to blend between additions.**

**Divide filling among ramekins. Add enough hot water to pans to come halfway up sides of ramekins.**

**Bake cheesecakes until set, about 35 minutes. Remove from roasting pans and chill until firm, about 1 hour.**

**Can be made 2 days ahead. Cover and keep chilled. Run thin knife around sides of ramekins. Invert onto plates, scooping any remaining topping from ramekins over cheesecakes. Garnish with berries.**

## **Reflections on the Month of Sivan**



*Grace Fredkin, Havurah Columnist*

"Now is the time: Sivan, June 3-July 1 this year, means "season or time". It is the third month of the ecclesiastical year and the ninth month of the civil year. While there are several references in the Torah to "the third month," the name Sivan is mentioned only once in Esther 8:9.

On the first (New Moon) of Sivan, the Israelites entered the Sinai wilderness. "In the third month after the Exodus of the Jewish People from

Egypt, on that very day, they came to the Desert of Sinai" (Shemot (Exodus) 19:1).

Not only is this one of the loveliest months of the year in diaspora, it is a time when good things happened to the Israelites in earlier times: the flood waters began to recede on 1 Sivan (June 3), and on 17 Sivan (June 19) the ark came to rest on Mt. Ararat. [But how is "the seventh month...the seventeenth day of the month" (Genesis 8:5) equivalent to 17 Sivan, given by both Wikipedia and the Stone Edition of the Tanakh?]

By far the most important good thing that happened is the Matan Torah (Giving of the Torah), or Shavuot or Feast of Weeks: "You shall count for yourselves -- from the day after the Shabbat, from the day when you bring the Omer of the waving -- seven Shabbats. Until the day after the seventh sabbath you shall count, fifty days... there shall be a holy convocation for yourselves -- you shall do no laborious work; it is an eternal decree in your dwelling places for your generations" (Leviticus 21:15-16, 21)

Shavuot is always on 6 Sivan (6 and 7 outside of Israel; sunset June 7-nightfall June 9 this year). It is not tied to a particular calendar date, but to a counting from Passover; because the length of the months used to be variable, determined by observation, and there are two new moons between Passover and Shavuot, Shavuot could occur on 5 or 6 Sivan. Now we use a mathematically determined calendar, and the months between Passover and Shavuot do not change length.

Originally Shavuot was a harvest festival (Hag ha Bikkurim, Festival of the First Fruits) when the first fruits of the wheat crop were brought as offerings to the Temple in Jerusalem. The Torah reiterates (e.g., Exodus 19:11, Deut.4:9-13, Deut. 4:32-36, Deut. 5:1-4) that the *entire Jewish nation* heard God speak at Sinai, some three million people. [But what is the meaning of Exodus 19:15, where "the people" are told to purify themselves and "not draw near a woman"? Does

"the people" thus refer to men only?]

Remembrance of the good events seems inextricably intermingled with that of tragic ones: On 1 Sivan 1096, the crusaders massacred, during their morning prayers, a group of Jews who had taken refuge in a local castle in Worms, Germany; on 20 Sivan 1171, tens of Jewish men and women were burned alive in Blois, France, on the first occurrence of the "blood libel".

Sivan may be the season, and Shavuot joins Jews in time and place. So this month, I leave last words to Golda Meir: "Let me tell you something that we Israelis have against Moses. He took us 40 years through the desert in order to bring us to the one spot in the Middle East that has no oil!"

## Hav Membership Shabbat a Grand Success!



Thanks to Sarai Brachman-Shoup, Aura Ahuvia, and Jennifer Cohen, as well as all the many individuals and families who made our yearly "Bring-a-Friend" Shabbat on May 27<sup>th</sup> warm and welcoming. As you can see, it was a full house, and people really enjoyed themselves!



Shavuot is coming this June 7-8. Interested in celebrating? Contact Marcy to connect!

## Reflections on “Jewish” Summer, Part I *Praying in the Pine Trees*

*Anita Rubin-Meiller, Havurah Member*

From the time I was six and a half to the time I was 15 I spent the summer months at a camp in the Adirondack Mountains of New York. I loved it there and was blessed to have six other young girls who were my cabin mates for all those years.

One of the very special traditions of the camp was our Friday night service in Pine Chapel. We sat on carved-out wooden benches, surrounded by the trees and their enticing scent. Each cabin, from the youngest to the oldest, took turns creating and leading a “service”.

Oftentimes these Friday night gatherings were focused on a humanitarian topic and included folk songs of the classic “This Land is Your Land” variety. They always ended with singing “Now the Day is Over”, which I just learned is a Lutheran hymn written in the early 1940’s.

Growing up, I had not realized that the camp had been established in 1946 by two social workers from Rochester, NY, and that it was founded on a Progressive philosophy. The owners had pledged that 10% of the campers would be on full scholarship, and initially these campers were all refugees from the Holocaust.

What I did know was that the camp owners, program directors, and a good portion of the staff and campers, were Jewish, but it was not a Jewish-themed camp. Clearly, our Friday night services were not shaped in any recognizable

Jewish tradition, but they created a sweet Shabbat just the same.

## A Second Question of Israel: Offering Balance at The JCC of Greater Ann Arbor’s Israel Celebration

*Marcy Epstein, Grapevine Editor*

For many years, the Havurah was small enough for the politics and ideologies of its membership to exist as a loose in-gathering of people and ideas. As we’ve matured as a community, concerns over both the modern State of Israel and its Biblical significance as a Jewish homeland have also grown, diversified, and intensified.

So when it came time once again for Havurah members Audrey Newell and Avi Eisbruch to make choices around visibility and presence at the “Celebrate Israel” event at the JCC, they brought the wealth of their experience and thought to the situation.



*Aura, Greg, and Ben at the Celebrate Israel Event. Photo credit: Emily Eisbruch*

Both physicians and parents, Audrey and Avi knew they could offer welcome and (in terms of Israel) the neutrality of these two crafts, so they

continued the Hav's tradition of staffing a first aid station and informal child-care oasis.

Moreover, this year, they offered conversation about Israel in its great span of opinions and perspectives. At their table, Audrey gathered a range of magazines and papers—left, right, center, independent—that look at Israel today.

If there was something to be gleaned from the event, it was that there was indeed something to be celebrated in Israel, seen among the hundreds of children and grown ups exploring the connection between American Jewry and Jewish Israel. As the discussions on our listserv "Reconchat" illuminate, however, this celebration of Israel is felt in certain ways by certain people, and passion for Israel exceeds the events of any given day.



## SEEDLINGS, SIMCHAS AND SORROWS

Mazel tov to Aura Ahuvia for completing an MA in Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan.

Jeff Kupperman and Susan Hapgood (parents of Max Kupperman) have made a generous gift on the occasion of Max's bar Mitzvah, intended toward the purchase Chumashim for future b'nai mitzvah.

Good luck to Dan Peisach as he takes his medical boards this summer!

Congratulations to Max Resnick and family for his recent violin recital!

Condolences to Greg Saltzman and Audrey Newell on the passing of Greg's uncle Norm, and to Daniel, David, and Jonathan Saltzman on the passing of their great uncle.

Refuah schleimah to Marcy Epstein and her mother Ruth Epstein, who had a second stroke over Memorial Day weekend in New Jersey.

## NOTES FROM THE BOARD

*Mark Schneyer, Board Secretary*

Here are notes from the May 11 Board meeting:

1. Jeff Basch, our Treasurer, presented a draft budget for the new fiscal year that starts July 1. JCC rent will be rising and there are several other changes from this year to plan for. The Board will approve a final budget at the June meeting.
2. High Holidays planning is underway and the Board discussed how the next few months of planning will work as well as some ideas for publicizing our services and how they differ from others in town.
3. Jen Cohen will be submitting Havurah events to Washtenaw Jewish News for inclusion in their monthly events calendar going forward.
4. At a meeting with Aura on the final day of Beit Sefer for the year, parents were very positive about the experiences their kids had this year and about the quality of teaching. Aura updated parents that Shoshana Jackson, who has been head teacher for the last several years, will be leaving the school and taking a fulltime job at JCC. Aura will be hiring a replacement teacher and making a new plan for a head teacher over the summer.
5. There are some continuing reports of members not receiving Recon Announce emails, and Joel Goldberg has been working on a new system. Josh Samuel, the Board member responsible for communications, will be following up with Joel.

### **Board Liaisons:**

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Jeff Basch--Treasurer/Finances  
Sarai Brachman Shoup--Membership/Outreach  
Josh Samuel--Communication/Website/Inreach  
Pam Shore--Ritual  
Mike Ehmman --Mitzvah Corps/Social Action  
Shari Fox—TBD

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- Write your check out to the **Jewish Federation** with a note for it to be designated to the Progressive Jewish Giving Fund.
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