



# Bethesda Jewish Congregation News

Rabbi Elhanan 'Sunny' Schnitzer

December 2013

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## Kriat HaRav—The Call of the Rabbi

Rabbi Elhanan 'Sunny' Schnitzer

Last month, I shared with you some disheartening news about the decline of the American Jewish community. Since writing that article, I have pondered the how and why of this state of affairs. I have spoken with colleagues and "experts" about the issue. In most of these conversations, there was a lot of talk about how Jewish leaders and communities have failed to be relevant and how we might reshape synagogues and Jewish communal institutions to better connect with our population.

But, here's a different thought; what if the issue is not the nature of the American Jewish community but is about the nature of 21<sup>st</sup> century American Jews?

Judaism is a communal religion; the most important events take place in the presence of other people. Priority is given to the community and its needs and it is incumbent upon the individual to make the needs of the community his/her priority. What is more, individuals are supported by the community, and this happens most effectively when people come together with one another.

America, on the other hand is a society that celebrates the independence of the individual and holds sacred individual autonomy.

Western thought and philosophy from Plato to Heidegger has progressed along an arc towards the primacy of a personal autonomy, finding its ultimate expression in the "me generation," and is underscored by the modern science of psychology with its focus on validation of the individual.

Rabbinic Judaism, on the other hand, legitimates individuation but categorically denies the utter autonomy of persons. Perhaps this is because Judaism at its core is an eastern religion that has taken

root within western civilization. Most eastern religions, Shinto, Hinduism, Islam, are focused more on the duty of the individual to society and ancestors, than upon the individual himself/herself.

This plays out in the lack of interest and commitment to community, be it religious or social, we see around us in our era. Most communal organizations, Masons, Rotary, Odd Fellows, and most American "mainstream" religions, are bemoaning the thinning of their ranks. American Judaism is not alone in the phenomenon of the disassociation of the young. American individualism has triumphed and communal accountability has evaporated.

It is not only the young who display this disregard for communal responsibility. We see it in our community from all age groups. Far too often our volunteer coordinators have been informed by some of our members; "I only come to synagogue for religious school and High Holidays. I don't come on Friday night, so I won't fulfill

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### BJC News

Bethesda Jewish Congregation  
6601 Bradley Boulevard  
Bethesda, MD 20817-3042  
Tel: 301-469-8636  
Fax: 301-469-9529  
[www.bethesdajewish.org](http://www.bethesdajewish.org)  
[admin@bethesdajewish.org](mailto:admin@bethesdajewish.org)



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my responsibility to the community to sponsor an Oneg.”

We witness the same behaviors in secular schools. A majority of parents may volunteer for the PTA, and the myriad auxiliary organizations that support schools and children, but a sizeable plurality will take the position of: “I pay my taxes, my tuition, and my dues, and that is the limit of my responsibility.”

I will spare you more examples because it is not my intention to scold. Rather, I want to raise your awareness and ask you to consider these questions. If our children of all ages, young adult or adolescent, witness such behaviors towards the community from us, is it any wonder that they do not value community? When our children witness their parents dropping synagogue membership after a child becomes B’nai Mitzvah, should we be surprised that they do not value Jewish education? When there is no expression of Judaism in our home, should we be surprised that our children do not express their Judaism?

## The President’s Column

Joan Wolf

### The Volunteer Community and Culture of BJC

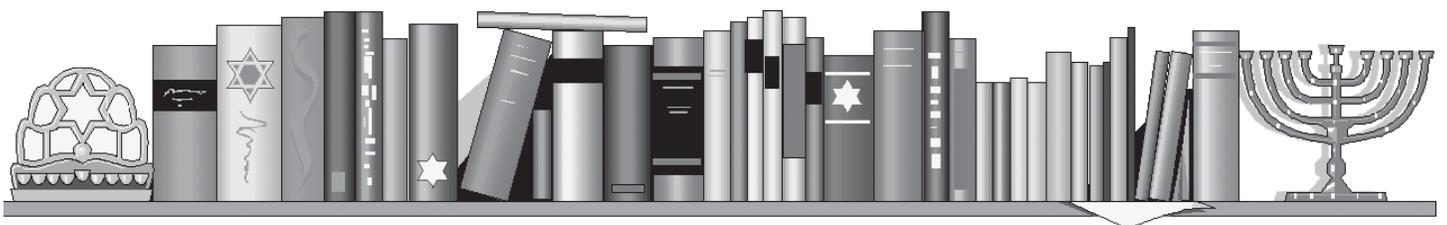
I’d like to thank all of you who played a volunteer role in the (early) high holidays. Each year, we ask you to step up and handle a role (or two, if you’d like...).

There are others who have accepted the fact that they will serve in various volunteer positions for life, and to them, I tip my hat, raise a glass and bow in awe. We are so fortunate to rely on Warren Farb to coordinate *all* of the high holiday volunteers. We also are enormously grateful to other ‘lifers’

like Anita Farb for editing our newsletter. Another behind-the-scenes role: Oneg Shabbat organizers Wynne and Bruce Busman. They reach out to you, maybe once every eighteen months or two years, to ask for your participation in setting up the post-service Oneg.

Please make sure that you make their volunteer job run smoothly—put it on your calendar the moment you receive the notice. It is a true pleasure to witness the BJC community of caring: lending a hand, participating and volunteering when asked, reaching out to those in need and remembering your Oneg date so we have enough food after services!

*Next month:* Meet more members and find out where your synagogue support funds go.



## Director of Education

Mindy Silverstein

Roz Young just celebrated her 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary at BJC. It was a wonderful evening with great food and entertainment. People laughed, shared stories,

renewed friendships, and, of course, enjoyed the music. And, as the saying goes, a good time was had by all. But it was also a celebration of BJC and a testimony to the warmth and love and friendship that is the foundation of BJC.

A couple of months ago I co-facilitated with Ruth Magin a wonderful discussion on... "Building a synagogue from scratch... what would it look like?" The participants said it would have to have music, many educational opportunities for both children and adults, a truly welcoming atmosphere to the interfaith family, a Rabbi who was available to the congregants, and occasions to connect with each other. Basically, the new synagogue would be BJC.

Looking deeper into each of the "must haves" I'm struck that together they impact the whole individual. There's the spiritual side (music), the intellectual side (educational), the emotional side (welcoming atmosphere) and the personal side (connect with the rabbi and congregants.) I'm also struck by the fact, that if the individual doesn't show up, none of these facets will occur.

For each of these facets to happen, congregants must participate with BJC. During the course of the year, there will be many opportunities to do just that. You may take a class, attend a workshop or

services, help get a group off the ground, or support the social action projects, etc. There is no shortage of ways to get involved.

### **Upcoming Events**

Dec. 6, 6:30 p.m., Tot Shabbat  
Dec. 7, 10:30 a.m., Dedication of Tallit from the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grade workshop  
Dec. 14, 11:45 a.m., 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Immigrant Luncheon  
Dec. 25, 28, Jan. 1, Winter Break  
Jan. 4, Religious School resumes  
Jan. 7, Tichon class, 6:30-8 p.m.

## A Huge Thank You...From Roz

I want to thank everyone for such a special evening celebrating my 10 years with BJC. Sharing this very important milestone with my BJC family was the perfect anniversary gift. I want to thank the committee, chaired by Marlene Zakai, for all of their hard work in decorating, invitations, programs, and the many tasks that are involved to put on an event. Having Sam Glaser here was the icing on the cake. His ability to not just entertain, but also to move you with his music is beyond description.

I'm often asked how I do this job by myself. The answer is—I don't. I can do my job because of the caring, wonderful community

that is BJC. I know that I have volunteers I can call on when needed and they will answer the call. It is a very special part of BJC—volunteering and getting to know others in the BJC family.

Again, I want to thank all of you for a wonderful night!!

## From the Rabbi

Please be in touch with me in times of joy, sadness or illness in your life or in the lives of a loved one or another member of the congregation. This is particularly necessary now that the HIPAA regulations have made getting any kind of information from the hospitals extremely difficult. I greatly appreciate your help in keeping me in-

formed of the health needs of our congregation. Office Number: 301-469-8636, #3.



# Congregation News

## Open Book Discussion: *TransAtlantic*

Please join us on Dec. 18 (third Wednesday of the month instead of the usual fourth Wednesday) to discuss *TransAtlantic* by National Book Award winner Colum McCann. *TransAtlantic* is a novel that weaves an intricate tapestry that illuminates the anguish of Irish history and the deeper agonies of war across decades and among an unlikely cast of richly drawn characters.

We meet at 8 p.m. in the Library. Drop-ins and new members are always welcome. Contact Evelyn Ganzglass, 202-966-7037 or Ruth Rosenberg, 703-560-9525 for more information.

## Christmas Day at BJC: *Take-Out and a Movie*

Our fabulous Social Action Committee has planned a wonderful, charitable and intergenerational day!

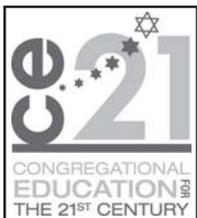
Don't stay home and watch *It's a Wonderful Life*, or go to a movie and a Chinese restaurant on Christmas Day. Bring friends, family, neighbors and strangers to join us at BJC for delicious Chinese carry-out and a family-friendly movie! A portion of the proceeds from the \$18 fee (half price for kids under 12, free for kids under 5) will go toward *Bottoms Up*, which provides the Cuban-Jewish community with basic medical and other urgently needed supplies.

Check the BJC calendar, [www.bethesdajewish.org](http://www.bethesdajewish.org) and e-News for start time.

Simply RSVP to: [takeoutandamovie@gmail.com](mailto:takeoutandamovie@gmail.com) (complimentary childcare also available by reservation). This creative event promises to be fun and unique! See you there!

## CE21—Our Congregational Conversations

Now that it's Dec., we're embarking on the long-awaited Congregational Conversations to talk about BJC and where we're headed. I hope you've responded to the Rabbi's e-mail to you by signing up for one of the many conversations that we're holding. If you haven't, there's still time! Go to: [SignUpGenius.com/go/10C0449AAA62B0-congregation](http://SignUpGenius.com/go/10C0449AAA62B0-congregation).



What are the conversations all about? CE21 is about rediscovering and cultivating our strengths to make BJC your place for Jewish learning and spiritual renewal. We're at that point in the process where the Task Force needs *your* input.

First, the CE21 Task Force wants to get your reaction to the short working document that we call

our "Visionary Description." This cornerstone description provides the foundation for our congregational planning. Second, we're interested in understanding which Jewish learning experiences have had the most impact on you. And, last, we're interested in identifying what enhancements you would like to see at BJC.

While the CE21 Task Force represents a broad cross-section of the congregation and its varied interests, you are the only one who can bring your experiences and vision to the table. In these small "parlor" conversations at BJC and various congregants' homes you'll have a chance to chat with fellow congregants in an informal guided discussion led by another congregant.

Please spend an hour or so with us at a time and place that works best for you. That small investment will have a far greater impact than you might realize.

For more information about CE21 go to [www.bethesdajewish.org/ce21/](http://www.bethesdajewish.org/ce21/) or get in touch with the BJC office.

Harri J. Kramer, Chair, Leadership Team

## In Search of Volunteers

Have a spare hour or two to join in more BJC activities? We are always looking for volunteers/participants for all of our events. We want to hear of your interest and ideas, so please send a note to [BJCVolunteer@gmail.com](mailto:BJCVolunteer@gmail.com). *All are welcome!*

- *Habitat Unity Build* at the Maple Hill Townhome community: Dec. 1, Jan. 5, (and more! If not building, you can help out by providing food/drinks for volunteers, etc.)
- *Stepping Stones Shelter*—Cook dinner for families in transition from 4:30-6 p.m. on (Monday, Dec. 17. Help us cook a Hanukkah meal on Sunday, Dec. 14 at BJC! We make dinner at the shelter monthly on a Monday or Tuesday evening (always the third week of the month)
- *Chinese Dinner and Movie*—Wednesday, Dec. 25 Christmas Day at BJC! Ask for more information, if interested—we'd love to see you then!
- *Meetcha Mocha Café* is back and open every Saturday morning when Religious School is in session. Speakers on various topics will be there on the second Saturday of every month and we are looking for volunteers to donate and set-up breakfast foods between 8-9 a.m., Saturday mornings
- *Fellow Gardeners Unite!*—Fight weeds around

our building! No meetings, just pull weeds during the growing season to avoid a jungle in the fall. Join our weed-fighting corps!

- *Red Cross Blood Driver*, Saturday, Feb. 1, 2014
- *Stop Hunger Now* and other activities, Saturday, Mar. 8, 9 a.m.
- *Rally for Darfur at Sudanese Embassy*, Sunday, Apr. 27, 2014

### Save the Date! "Schmooze and Booze"

BJC is having its first ever Wine and Beer Tasting on Saturday, Jan. 25 at 8:30 p.m. This adults-only event will be led by BJC members Mike Schecter and Kevin Gleeson. There will be several wines and beers to taste, discuss, and taste some more...a fun night in a very informal setting with new and old friends. Light snacks will be provided.

So make plans with friends to go out to dinner first, then join us in Memorial Hall. The group will pick favorites and have the opportunity to name the official BJC house wine and/or beer! To make reservations, e-mail Michael Schecter at mschecter@yahoo.com.

### Yahrzeits

יארצייט

Bernard Berkowitz, Father of Susan Berkowitz  
Irvin Brody, Father of Mark Brody  
Frederick Brucker, Father of Anita Farb  
Irving Cassell, Father of Wynne Busman  
Steven Chiaverini, Husband of Joan Wolf  
Hyman Dubrow, Father of Laurie Dubrow  
Elizabeth Eig, Mother of Jon Eig and Keith Eig  
Jack Fagen, Grandfather of Karen Jerome  
Reba Frankford, Mother of Norma Stern  
Sol Goodman, Grandfather of Sunny Schnitzer  
Nettie Jacobs, Grandmother of Donna Goldberg  
Priscilla Goldman Rose, Mother of Stacey Rose-Blass  
Edna Rosenthal, Mother of Fred Rosenthal  
Joe Schnitzer, Grandfather of Sunny Schnitzer  
William Simon, Father of Martin Simon  
Adele Sukin, Mother of Hope Klauber  
Jacob Taylor, Father of Lyne Taylor-Genser  
Maurice Umans, Father of Dorothy Umans  
Mae Weiss, Mother of David Weiss  
Maurice Yockelson, Father of Naomi Lichtenberg  
William J. Young, Brother of Roz Young  
Mel Zimmers, Father of Marla Hewitt and Gary Zimmers

### Thank You

תודה רבה

Martin and Evelyn Ganzglass for their generous donation to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund, royalties from Martin's book, *The Orange Tree*.

Dr. Fritz and Maran Gluckstein for their generous

donation to the Education Fund in honor of the wedding of Malka Ostchega and Justin Are on Oct. 20.

Carol Ann Rudolph for her generous donation to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund.

William and Martha Schrenk for their generous donation to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund as a thank you for borrowing a Shofar and allowing Martha to join in the Shofar Service.

Edward and Norma Stern for their generous donation to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund at Bethesda Jewish Congregation in honor of Ben and Erica's wedding.

Lisa Strauss for her generous donation to the Education Fund in memory of Peter Feldman.

Lorrie Van Akkeren for her generous donation in honor of Roz Young's decade of service.

Bill Van Berg for his generous donation in honor of Roz Young's decade of service.

Milton Weinstein for his generous donation in honor of the Yahrzeit of his father, Alexander Weinstein.

### For Their Generous Donation to Enhancing the Flame

Lorrie Van Akkeren

## Community News

### New Story Leadership Seeks Volunteers

New Story Leadership (NSL) uses a radically different approach to peace building in the Middle East. Each summer NSL brings Israeli and Palestinian students to Washington DC for an intensive seven-week program that creates the space and conditions for a new story to be told by a new generation of the most promising young leaders. Students develop Projects for Change to make a positive difference in their conflict-ridden world.

The program also includes work experience, cultural immersion, an intensive story-based curriculum, public speaking, intensive team training and an active network of graduates.

For the last three summers, BJC, Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church and the Idara e-Jaferia Mosque have co-hosted highly successful community forums involving the NSL students. The BJC Board has approved continuing support for NSL.

What NSL needs most right now is help in raising funds to keep the program on-going. It is looking for a volunteer with grant writing experience that can help develop new sources of funding. Also needed is help with social media and bookkeeping.

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# December 2013 Calendar



| Day       | Date   | Time  | Event   | Location   |
|-----------|--------|---|---|--|
| Wednesday | Nov 27 |   | 1st Night of Hanukkah<br><i>BJC Office Closed</i><br>No Religious School or Kemach and Tanach                     |  |
| Friday    | Nov 29 | 8:00 p.m.   | Shabbat Service   | Covenant Hall  |
| Saturday  | Nov 30 | 9:00 a.m.<br>9:00 a.m.<br>10:30 a.m.              | No Adult Hebrew<br>No Religious School<br>Shabbat Worship   | Lounge<br>Classrooms<br>Covenant Hall                  |
| Wednesday | Dec 1  | 4:15 p.m.<br>6:30 p.m.                            | Religious School<br>Kemach and Tanach   | Classrooms<br>Library                                  |
| Friday    | Dec 6  | 8:00 p.m.   | N'tivim L'Shabbat Music Service   | Covenant Hall  |
| Saturday  | Dec 7  | 9:00 a.m.<br>9:00 a.m.<br>10:30 a.m.              | Adult Hebrew<br>Religious School<br>Shabbat Worship—Special Family Service<br>and Dedication of Students Tallitot | Lounge<br>Classrooms<br>Covenant Hall                  |
| Tuesday   | Dec 10 | 6:30 p.m.   | Tichon Class  | Youth Lounge   |
| Wednesday | Dec 11 | 4:15 p.m.<br>6:30 p.m.                            | Religious School<br>Kemach and Tanach   | Classrooms<br>Library                                  |
| Thursday  | Dec 12 | 7:30 p.m.   | BJC Board of Directors Meeting  | Lounge   |
| Friday    | Dec 13 | 6:30 p.m.   | Service of Meditation   | Covenant Hall  |
| Saturday  | Dec 14 | 9:00 a.m.<br>9:00 a.m.<br>10:30 a.m.<br>4:30 p.m. | Adult Hebrew<br>Religious School<br>Shabbat Worship<br>Chant Circle   | Lounge<br>Classrooms<br>Covenant Hall<br>Covenant Hall |
| Wednesday | Dec 18 | 4:15 p.m.<br>6:30 p.m.<br>8:00 p.m.               | Religious School<br>Kemach and Tanach<br>Open Book Club- <i>Transatlantic</i>                                     | Classrooms<br>Library<br>Library                       |
| Friday    | Dec 20 | 8:00 p.m.   | Simcha B'Shabbat—All Music Service with Band  | Covenant Hall  |
| Saturday  | Dec 21 | 9:00 a.m.<br>9:00 a.m.<br>10:30 a.m.              | Adult Hebrew<br>Religious School<br>Shabbat Worship   | Lounge<br>Classrooms<br>Covenant Hall                  |
| Tuesday   | Dec 24 |   | <i>BJC Office Closed</i>  |  |
| Wednesday | Dec 25 |   | <i>BJC Office Closed</i><br>No Religious School or Kemach and Tanach  |  |
| Friday    | Dec 27 | 8:00 p.m.   | Shabbat Service   | Covenant Hall  |
| Saturday  | Dec 28 | 9:00 a.m.<br>9:00 a.m.<br>10:30 a.m.              | No Adult Hebrew<br>No Religious School<br>Shabbat Worship   | Lounge<br>Classrooms<br>Covenant Hall                  |
| Wednesday | Jan 1  |   | <i>BJC Office Closed</i><br>No Religious School or Kemach and Tanach  |  |
| Friday    | Jan 3  | 8:00 p.m.   | N'tivim L'Shabbat Music Service   | Covenant Hall  |
| Saturday  | Jan 4  | 9:00 a.m.<br>9:00 a.m.<br>10:30 a.m.              | Adult Hebrew<br>Religious School<br>Shabbat Worship   | Lounge<br>Classrooms<br>Covenant Hall                  |

For the latest updates and weekly E-news, please refer to the BJC website.

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If you have these skills and have even a little time to devote to this worthy program, please contact

Ronnie Haber, [rnhaber@erols.com](mailto:rnhaber@erols.com) or Evelyn Ganzglass, [eganzglass@clasp.org](mailto:eganzglass@clasp.org).

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**Design Layout and Desktop Publishing:  
Yvonne Bryant—[ly\\_bryant@verizon.net](mailto:ly_bryant@verizon.net)**

The deadline for submitting articles for the January newsletter is December 6.  
Please email your article in an MS Word attachment.

#### **Put your ad in the BJC Newsletter**

To place your card or other-sized ad in the January newsletter, mail it to the BJC office with your check made payable to BJC.  
Deadline: December 6. Rate structure for a business card: \$30.00 per month, 3-month minimum. Rates are slightly higher for cards that are not camera-ready art.