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Covenant of Learning

Rabbi Novak

At the end of the month, I will be joining rabbis from across the United States at *Ramah Darom*, a Jewish overnight camp in northern Georgia. The camp itself is part of the Conservative Movement's camping system, but the Oraita retreat I will attend is produced by Hebrew College of Newton, Massachusetts. Teaching will be three scholars: Rabbi Arthur Greene, Rector of the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College, Rabbi Elyse Goldstein, Director, Kolel; author, *eVisions: Seeing Torah through a Feminist Lens*, and Rabbi Yitz Greenberg, Founding President, Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life. We will ask what we can (and cannot) mean by *brit* (covenant) today, as we emerge from the 20th century, with its shattering calamities, but also advances of thought and expansions of freedom. How have the *Shoah*, the return to Zion, feminist consciousness and pluralist

society affected our theology of covenant? Our discussion will be informed by traditional sources, from *Midrash* to *hasidut* as well as by contemporary feminist theologians, modern *Midrash* and commentaries.

As indicated above, the word for covenant in Hebrew is *brit*. Most of us know *brit* as what happens to a baby boy on day eight of his life. Yet the word *brit* is much more multi-faceted than the word for circumcision. All of us who are Jewish encounter a *brit*, a covenantal relationship with God and the people around us.

This will be the latest Oraita retreat that I have attended—and I greatly look forward to being with brilliant colleagues to mull over the issues that we face as rabbis and as humans. Covenant asks us to think and act as if we are obligated. The question that poses is, obligated to whom? Is it to God? To ourselves? To the Jewish people? To all of humanity? The answer: yes,

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Martin Luther King Commemoration

Join Israel Congregation in hosting our friends from the Northshire Interfaith Council for the annual commemoration of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Our service will take place Monday evening, January 18 at 7:00 p.m. with guest speaker Rabbi Joshua Boettiger, the rabbi of Congregation Beth El in Bennington. Participating in the service will be members of our local clergy as well as the Northshire Interfaith Community Choir. Please make a notation on your calendar to join us for this night marking Dr. King's remarkable legacy.

Tu b'Shvat Seder

In the middle of our cold Vermont winter, we will once again join together in the warmth of our synagogue for our annual *Tu b'Shvat seder* on Sunday, January 31 at 4:00 p.m.

This *seder* celebrates the environment and how we are commanded to be responsible stewards of the world around us. Our *seder* will include a special service created by our own **Dina Bronson** and will feature an exceptional meal that celebrates creation's bounty. The service will be lead by Dina with the participation of our religious school students. Please mark the *seder* down and plan on coming. It's the first sign of spring!

Find us on

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Israel Congregation has about 230 member families of diverse Jewish backgrounds, both full-time and part-time residents of southern Vermont. We provide weekly *Shabbat* and holiday services, a religious school, adult education, life cycle events, and cultural and social programming in a warm and welcoming environment.

An integral part of Jewish life in the Northshire for more than 70 years, Israel Congregation has been at its current location on Rte 7A, 1.2 miles north of Rte 11/30, since 1985. Our building is ADA accessible.

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Kabbalat Shabbat Service:

6:30 pm, Friday

(followed by Congregational Dinner)

Shabbat Service:

9:30 am, Saturday

Religious School:

3:50 pm to 6:15 pm, Wednesday

Office Hours:

9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday-Thursday

9:00 am to 1:00 pm Friday

Telephone: 802.362.4578

Email: office@icmvt.org

Website: www.israelcongregationvt.org

P.O. Box 1050 Manchester Ctr. VT 05255

A Note From Rabbi Michael Cohen

We are having a great time back at *Kibbutz Ketura*. Alison and I are both working for the Arava Institute which has its largest number of students in its history. Both Roi and Shirah are taking classes via email and sometimes webcam from BBA. In addition they are studying Hebrew, and Roi is taking a class at the



Rabbi Michael Cohen and an ibex greet the morning

Arava Institute on the Environment and Society, and Shirah is doing an independent study with the Director of the Institute's Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation, Dr. Tareq Abu-Hamed, on solar cookers. Shirah is also playing for the area girl's basketball team and volunteering twice a week with the horses at the horse therapy center at Kibbutz Grofit. We have also traveled to the north of Israel, Jerusalem, and Aqaba, Jordan. The photo above is from the Arava Institute's Bike Ride. It was taken at the edge of Machtesh Ramon during our morning service before we rode that day. We return to Manchester January 25th and look forward to seeing all of you.

Rabbi Michael Cohen

Community Food Cupboard

Ruth Rosenfeld sends thanks all those who participated in the Knitting Project for the Food Cupboard. It was a tremendous success . . . And the recipients were delighted with the scarves, mittens, hats and even some sweaters that showed up! Keep the Food Cupboard in mind for next year when you are looking for a good use for all that old (and new) yarn that you accumulate. Bravo and thanks again to all.

We would like to thank Ruth for her idea, which inspired knitters from the local churches and knitting groups. Scarves, mittens, hats and sweaters were given to many adults and children. We are sure this will become an annual project.

This January, The Community Food Cupboard is hoping to help people keep warm. The CFC wish list for this month includes: oatmeal, canned chili or stew, coffee, tea or hot chocolate, dried soup mixes or bullion cubes, Hamburger Helper and dinner mixes. All donations to CFC are appreciated, and may be left in the collection box at Shaw's Supermarket, the hallway of the Manchester Town Office Building, and the synagogue lobby.

President's Perspective

Many years ago, as a student in the third grade at PS 92 in Brooklyn, I was subjected to one of the more ignoble tests that can be heaped upon a young student. I was asked to sing, *a capella*, a phrase in a song that the class had been rehearsing for an upcoming assembly program. I rendered my performance and was promptly advised by the music teacher that I was neither tenor nor alto and that thereafter I was to have both the title and the roll reserved for those utterly lacking in musical talent. I was henceforth to be known as a "listener," with my musical antics being limited to silently mouthing the lyrics.

Over the years, I have been fairly comfortable with this musical proscription. I do not play a musical instrument, I limit my singing to an occasional *Haftarah* or *Torah* portion and have taken to heart the music teacher's assessment of my talent...I do a lot of listening. It was in this context some years ago that Anita and I were invited to attend a performance of an unusual music group that had been organized by her cousin David Julian Gray, a member of the staff at the Department of Ethnomusicology at UCLA. The group, formed in an effort to revive and popularize a unique style of Jewish music, was known as *The Klezmerim* and their music as *klezmer*. Recognizing that January is known as Jewish Music Month, I felt that it would be of interest to us all to know a little more about the origins and techniques of this unique musical style and form.

The Yiddish word *klezmer* is derived from the Hebrew words *kley* (instrument) and *zemer* (music or song), so that the literal meaning of *klezmer* is "an instrument of music." Its roots, centuries old, derive from the *shtetlach*, the Jewish villages of Eastern Europe where the music was originally meant to imitate the voice and music of the *chazzan* in the synagogue. The first *klezmer* tunes were in fact based on the chanted Hebrew melodies of the Jewish service. It was felt that the principal instruments, the violin and the clarinet, took on human characteristics such as laughing and crying..

Klezmer musicians (also called *klezmerim*) were generally an informal group. Many were itinerants who went from village to village playing traditional music, folk songs, folk dances, and solemn hymns

and prayers. They earned very little money and had to keep moving, seeking out events such as country fairs, weddings, *bar mitzvahs*, synagogue dedications, and Purim festivities. Although untrained in any formal sense, many were extremely gifted musicians. So superior was their playing that Polish nobles often engaged them. As characters, the shabby *klezmerim* were familiar to all Ashkenazi Jews who regarded them as drifters, odd types, and itinerant minstrels. A typical group contained three to six musicians who played their music on trumpets, flutes, clarinets, fiddles, accordions and drums.

The Hasidic movement which emerged in Eastern Europe in the latter half of the 1700's, exerted a significant influence on the *klezmer* tradition by making religion more accessible to the masses by emphasizing dancing and the chanting of wordless melodies known as *nigunim*. Hasidim sang these melodies with an intense urgency, hoping to "ascend" to higher realms and frequently employed *klezmerim* to enliven their gatherings with their instrumental music. In some ways, *klezmer* music was like the music of jazz combos in that it grew out of improvisations, ingenious harmonization, and solo instrumental innovations.

When the Jews of Eastern Europe began immigrating to North America in the 1880's, they brought *klezmer* music with them. However, with immigration came the desire of many Jews to abandon their Jewish culture and "ghetto mentality," and to become "real Americans." As a result, *klezmer* music came to be seen as an embarrassment, and for a time was not very popular among the general Jewish community. Thankfully, over the past 30 years, *klezmer* music is enjoying a remarkable comeback. There are now traditional and non-traditional *klezmer* bands in all corners of the world and once again *klezmer* has become an integral part of celebrations for Jews of all stripes and persuasions.

In the final analysis, my designation as a non-singer so many years ago has been the license that has enabled me to thrive on the enjoyment that comes only from listening.

Morty Bunis

Religious School

Our month in Religious School has been busy with both the study of the Hebrew language and also the use of Hebrew in the prayers of Shabbat services as well as the Hanukah blessings. We ended December with our annual Hanukah Celebration! The children lit the outdoor menorah along with the Rabbi and rushed in from the cold to enjoy delicious latkes made by our own **CJ Sloane**, *sufaganiot* straight from Mrs. Murphy's Donuts, and chocolate in the form of both gelt and M&Ms for the many dreidel games that ensued. **Joanne Beck** brought her guitar and regaled us with Hanukah tunes making for a festive end to our celebration.

Loree Zeif

Winter Film Festival

Let's all get together to enjoy entertaining, award winning films and chase away the winter blues! Five Sundays at 4:00 pm we will feature internationally acclaimed films of Jewish interest. Our first free movie is *Annie Hall*, Sunday, January 10. Refreshments will be served. See you all there!

The Program Committee

Mazel Tov

Franci & Tom Carieri on the engagement of their daughter, Samantha, to Jeff Feldschneider

Fran & Mark Aronowitz on the birth of their grandson, Graham Aronowitz, December 5

David Neuwirth, father of Jackie Borella, on his Bar Mitzvah, December 12

Belle Rita Novak, mother of Rabbi David Novak, on her Bat Mitzvah, December 19

Jacquelyn Schwartz on participating in the 83rd Macy's Day Parade with the Varsity Spirit and serving as the only Vermont representative dancing in the opening parade ceremonies at Herald Square

Condolences

Irene and Ed Glazer on the loss of Irene's mother, Sophie Deutsch

Bryna Seigal Finer and David Finer on the loss of Bryna's grandfather

Jewish Vocational Services

Reserve your Wednesdays in January (plus one in February) for JVS Winter Webinars. Career Moves at JVS/Boston presents four free workshops to help you start the New Year and the new decade on a positive note. These workshops were first delivered in the greater Boston area to over 1200 attendees in a series of community seminars called Weathering the Storm: Tools, Tips and Strategies to Navigate the Recession. Now, with support from Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, JVS has adapted these workshops for the web, and can't wait to share them with you! If you are a professional-level job seeker or career changer, these webinars will help give you tools, tips and strategies to navigate the still choppy waters of this recession. For information, dates, and topics, please visit <https://jvsevents.webex.com/jvsevents/onstage/g.php?>

Breaking News From the Library

The trip to the National Yiddish Book Center is scheduled for Monday, April 12. Please reserve the date if you are interested in attending. More details to follow shortly.

*Stan Reisman
for the Library Committee*

Covenant of Learning

cont. from pg. 1

to all. What makes the encounter so profound is that all of those present are dedicated in different ways to serving the Jewish people and humanity in the capacity of rabbi (however we see it). What I have found in each of the previous Oraita retreats is that the learning seeps into you. You mull it over. One day it comes out again, repurposed to enhance our Jewish encounter.

Learning is an integral part of our Jewish experience. I hope that however you engage in your learning it brings you to a greater encounter with your Judaism.

Thank You High Holy Day Donors

Anita & Morty Bunis
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Special Thanks

Lory Gitter for her donation
toward sanctuary flowers

The Shalom Rav Singers, Gary
Marmer & Barry Schoenwetter
for adding music to our special
Shabbat celebrations Dec. 4, 11, 18

C.J. Sloane for making latkes
for our Religious School Hanuk-
kah party and Joanne Beck for the
wonderful music

Cathy Kimmel for creating a
warm and welcoming New Mem-
ber Shabbat

Janet Kleinberg & Harvey
Flaxman for sponsoring Shabbat
dinner on December 18

Our Board of Directors for
sponsoring Shabbat dinner on
December 11

All of the families who came
out in the cold to light our
menorah each night of Hanukkah

Sponsor a Shabbat Dinner

We encourage members to support our communal *Shabbat* Dinner by sponsoring a dinner in honor of a life-cycle event, achievement, anniversary, birthday, or for any other *simcha*. The cost to sponsor a dinner is \$180, which covers the food, serving, and clean-up expenses regularly provided by the synagogue. Attendees are still expected to augment the meal by bringing a potluck dish.

January Calendar Of Events

Jan. 1	6:30 pm	Friday Evening <i>Shabbat</i> Worship; followed by our Community Pot Luck Dinner sponsored by Cheryl Ullman in memory of Peter Jannke
Jan. 2	9:30 am	<i>Shabbat</i> Worship, <i>Parashat Vayechi</i>
Jan. 3	11:00 am	Modern Conversational Hebrew with Yuval Sela
Jan. 6	3:50 pm	Religious School
Jan. 6	5:00 pm	<i>B'nai Mitzvah</i> Class
Jan. 8	6:30 pm	Family Shabbat; Followed by our Community Pot Luck Dinner
Jan. 9	9:30 am	<i>Shabbat</i> Worship, <i>Parashat Shemot</i>
Jan. 10	11:00 am	Modern Conversational Hebrew with Yuval Sela
Jan. 10	4:00 pm	Winter Film Festival: Annie Hall
Jan. 13	3:50 pm	Religious School
Jan. 15	6:30 pm	Friday Evening <i>Shabbat</i> Worship; Followed by our Community Pot Luck Dinner
Jan. 16	9:30 am	<i>Shabbat</i> Worship, <i>Parashat Va'era</i>
Jan. 17	11:00 am	Modern Conversational Hebrew with Yuval Sela
Jan. 20	3:50 pm	Religious School
Jan. 20	5:00 pm	<i>B'nai Mitzvah</i> Class
Jan. 22	6:30 pm	Friday Evening <i>Shabbat</i> Worship; Followed by our Community Pot Luck Dinner
Jan. 23	9:30 am	<i>Shabbat</i> Worship, <i>Parashat Bo</i>
Jan. 24	11:00 am	Modern Conversational Hebrew with Yuval Sela
Jan. 24	4:00 pm	Winter Film Festival: Movie TBA
Jan. 25 - Jan. 28		Rabbi Novak Away at Rabbinical Conference
Jan. 27	3:50 pm	Religious School
Jan. 29	6:30 pm	Friday Evening <i>Shabbat</i> Worship; Followed by our Community Pot Luck Dinner
Jan. 30	9:30 am	<i>Shabbat</i> Worship, <i>Parashat Beshalach</i>
Jan. 31	4:00 pm	<i>Tu b'Shvat Seder</i> with Dina Bronson
Feb. 3	3:50 pm	Religious School
	5:00 pm	<i>B'nai Mitzvah</i> Class
Feb. 5	6:30 pm	Family Shabbat; Followed by our Community Pot Luck Dinner

Ma'aser Sheni



The Torah required three tithes of the Israelites. The first, Ma'asher Rishon, was given to the Temple priests. The second, Ma'aser Sheni, supported the general community, benefiting both giver and receiver. The third, Ma'aser Shlishi, provided funds for the poor. Our congregants participate in the mitzvah of Ma'aser Sheni by contributing to funds that benefit the synagogue and its members.

GENERAL FUND

Norma & Paul Waters • Robert Davidson • Susan & Herb Donner in memory of Mildred Finkelstein
Susan Jacoby in memory of Ruth Jacoby • **Nancy & Alan Weill** in honor of Mindy & Alan Bloom's new great-grandchildren • **Claire & Richard Katz** in memory of Murray Roseman, Dr. Harry Katz, Richard & Elaine Donn • **Marion & Justin Mueller** in memory of Roman Rado and Walter Frank
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Carol & Paul Miller in memory of Bob Taylor

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The Tree of Life on the wall in our Social Hall is adorned with leaves that commemorate events in the lives of our congregants. To inscribe your family event or Simcha call Karen in the synagogue office at 802.362.4578.

Hanukkah at Israel Congregation



Above and to the right, Rabbi Novak and our Religious School students light the outdoor menorah.



Below, Religious School students play dreidel during our Hanukkah party.

