

The Kibbitzer

Congregation Beth Shalom of Brandon

706 Bryan Road, Brandon, FL 33511

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www.BethShalomBrandon.org

May 2025 Volume 35 Issue 12



Yom HaAtzma'ut

Vintage Poster



Paratroopers at the Western Wall, by David Rubinger

The President's Corner



Steve Billor

I am using this Dvar Torah from my Friday night service before Passover for this month's article. I believe it has much significance to our congregation now.

אֵשׁ תָּמִיד תִּוְקַד עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא תִכָּבֶה

“A perpetual fire shall burn upon the altar; it shall not go out.”

This verse talks about the constant fire on the altar in the Mishkan. The kohanim had to make sure that the flame never went out—it had to be tended every single day, even when there were no offerings being brought.

But the Rabbis point out that this isn't just about fire on a physical altar. It's about the fire inside each of us—our passion, our drive to do good, our spiritual connection.

We all have times when we feel inspired, motivated, and connected showing that the fire is burning bright in us. But then life happens, and we cool off. Parshat Tzav reminds us: We should keep the fire going. Even when we're not feeling it. Even when things feel routine. That steady, quiet consistency—that's where greatness lives.

The altar fire had to be kindled every morning, and ashes removed every day. The Torah is teaching us: to renew your inner fire daily, even if it's just a spark.

The flame I believe being referenced is the personal and internal flame within each of us and G-d. Keeping our Judaism alive in each of us.

Things that I believe are important to keep the flame going are:

- When you don't wait for inspiration to strike. Show up every day.
- Keep doing the small things—kindness, prayer, learning, showing up for others—even when no one's watching. Mitzvahs.
- Your inner fire doesn't have to be a bonfire. Even a glowing ember, nurtured daily, can reignite.

This really relates to my thought process at our Synagogue. When things aren't perfect, we all need to fan the flame. Our strength lies in coming together, embracing our faith, and supporting one another through imperfections.

Beth Shalom has been around for more than 30 years and during this time, we have sporadically been obliged to manage without a Rabbi. Being a practicing Jew isn't solely about being guided by a Rabbi—it's about nurturing your faith and fostering a deep, personal relationship with G-d. It's in the acts of worship, traditions, and the shared belief that we find meaning and connection. Being a part of Congregation Beth Shalom is being a part of something bigger than the individual.

The President's Corner

We are incredibly grateful for the dedication of our long-term members, even those who live out of state. Their financial support and kind words remind us that the strength of our community knows no boundaries. Their commitment is a testament to the enduring spirit of our congregation.

I want to extend a heartfelt invitation to those who have been away from CBS for a while—please come back and reconnect with your CBS family. We may not always agree on everything, but as a family, we embrace and support one another through life's ups and downs. Our bond runs deeper than any differences, tied together by eternal connections that transcend anything trivial. We miss your presence and would love to welcome you back with open arms.

On Sunday, April 13th, we celebrated Passover with an incredible Seder, and it was truly wonderful. Starting with tables beautifully set up with seder plates, ritual foods, and flowers made our sanctuary feel like a second home. Then, our evening commenced with Neil leading us in the Seder with his beautiful new Haggadah. The dinner was delicious, from the matza ball soup and salad to our main course, ending with fabulous kosher for Passover desserts.

I wish to give my heartfelt thanks to Neil Spindel for his tremendous effort in creating our very own Haggadah and leading the Seder. I am also deeply grateful to everyone who contributed, too numerous to name here but please see page 12. These volunteers helped with the Seder prayers, setup, donations, and cleanup. Being part of such a dedicated and remarkable group fills me with pride.

Todah Rabah for your time reading this article.

Steve Billor



Neil, Shlomo, and CBS Celebrate Passover



Neil Spindel

This year, I had the honor of leading our community Passover Seder, and I have to say—it was an extremely meaningful Jewish experience. When the Ritual Committee first mentioned that many congregants didn't love the old Haggadah, I saw that not as a problem, but as an opportunity. An opportunity to do something fresh. Something rooted in tradition, but alive with meaning. Something... Powered by Shlomo.

Yes, we wrote our very own Haggadah using artificial intelligence—and not just any AI, but “Shlomo,” the same trusty partner I’ve been working with extensively on everything from b’nai mitzvah education to d’vrai Torah to synagogue life. But this wasn’t just a case of pressing a button and watching a Haggadah appear. It was a true collaboration. I guided the process from start to finish—shaping the themes, choosing the tone, drawing on tradition, and infusing it with the spirit of our congregation. Shlomo provided the structure, language, and creativity to bring that vision to life. The result was something no algorithm could generate on its own, and no human could have crafted this quickly—something uniquely suited to us. Every prayer, every reading, every song, every image in our Haggadah was thoughtfully crafted and carefully selected to bring our community together around the Seder table.

And it worked. One of my priorities throughout the process was designing a Seder experience that would feel spiritually fulfilling without overstaying its welcome. I kept our Reform community in mind every step of the way, knowing full well that if the evening went too long, people would start checking their watches. So, it was especially gratifying to hear afterward how well the pacing worked, and how engaged people felt from beginning to end.

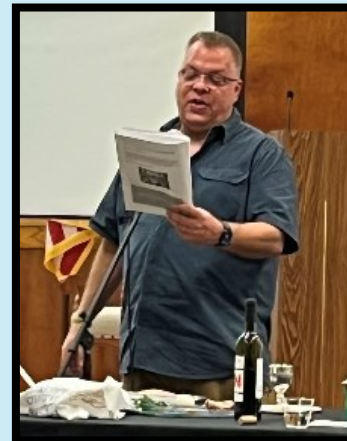
The night itself was full of warmth, laughter, and tradition. I loved watching different people take on different parts of the evening, helping make the telling of our story feel personal and alive. From the cantor singing familiar melodies, to friends enjoying the meal together, to several congregants taking on readings throughout the evening — it felt truly communal and deeply Jewish.

Of course, the experience wouldn't have been complete without the food! We enjoyed a wonderful spread, including a generous dessert table that had something for everyone. Many folks even took leftovers home, which is always a good sign. And throughout the evening, we sipped on a delicious Pesadic Israeli Cabernet Sauvignon that paired beautifully with the night's spirit.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who helped make it all happen—from those who set up the room and prepared the food, to those who stayed after to clean up and pack away the extra matzah. Your efforts helped turn this night into something truly special.

More than anything, it reminded me why we do this. We tell the story because we were slaves in Egypt. We tell it so our children will know. And we tell it in ways that feel real and alive—just like our community.

Wishing everyone a wonderful spring season!





Gabe Lifschitz

In April 1981, Neil Diamond released the song "America". This song primarily addresses the topic of immigration to the United States, featuring patriotic lyrics that highlight the themes of freedom and the challenges faced by our ancestors as they arrived in America with little to their name, seeking to build a new life. In 1984, Bruce Springsteen released "Born in the USA" and it has become an anthem at many sports games and other events to show patriotism and identity. Neil's song, which preceded Bruce Springsteen's similarly themed track by three years, had already become well-established and widely listened to globally by that time. I find it inspiring that a song like this still makes a marked impression as to how things have become better.

In previous topics, I talked about having crucial conversations and how these can make us a better congregation by working through issues. I have discussed the extent of property owned by CBS and outlined a long-term plan for our temple to ensure that those currently at Bar Mitzvah age can assume responsibility in the future. Long before the temple existed, our founding members worshipped in rented space and made it work.

I have mentioned that our synagogue is young compared to historic synagogues in the US that have endured the test of time. It all comes down to keeping the dream of freedom alive and to continuing to celebrate our faith. When you step onto the property, take a few moments to look around and marvel at what we have so that we can share and prepare our congregation for the future.

Shalom,

Gabe



Brunch With the Tribe

Forbici Modern Italian Restaurant

Forbici Modern Italian

1633 W. Snow Ave

Tampa, FL 33606

Sunday Brunch

May 18, 2025

12:00 PM

We will visit Forbicci Modern Italian Restaurant in Hyde Park to enjoy a taste of delicious Italian cuisine. This time, we'll be going for brunch. Their menu looks fantastic! Afterward, there are plenty of shops to explore. Parking is free in the garages. We're looking forward to a relaxing and enjoyable adventure. Please let Anita know if you'll be joining us so she can save a seat for you at niewdnarb@yahoo.com



There are several projects in the works over the next few months for CBS. We are hoping to get security measures in place in preparation for the high holidays. Contracts are in place to maintain the air conditioning units and pest and insect control. Once the small shrub is removed from the south wall, Sandy Schwartz hired a painter who will pressure wash and repaint it. In early April, we had a contractor who removed the trees from the wooded area and now it is clear for future use for services and other activities. What we are hoping is that a FEMA grant for public assistance will come through to reimburse our expenses for the debris left by Hurricane Milton. A major concern was that the fallen trees would drop leaves, and broken branches and this would present a problem to maintain the area. There are items of work that still require attention and help.

Taking care of CBS is a mitzvah and every little bit you can do is greatly appreciated. We need help with handy skills like interior electrical work, replacing light bulbs, fixing floor tiles, and plumbing. While we are taking definite steps to remove, we have doors that need repair or need to be replaced, and replace the blue canvas on the entrance awning. If you know someone who does work for you regularly, please send the name and contact information to: cbs-building@outlook.com

Thank you

Gabe Lifschitz

Congregation Beth Shalom

Shabbat Services

Can't make it to services? Join us online with a live feed from Zoom or Facebook!

Zoom Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83776565288?pwd=V3RlZzRXWkdaTjhscElBpNWJFTjBUT09>

Meeting ID:

837 7656 5288

Passcode:

101324

Facebook Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/BethShalomBrandon/>

CBS Office Hours

The administrative office is currently open by appointment only. We can be reached by calling the office, (813)681-6547, email, cbsbrandon@outlook.com.

Although our hours are limited, we are always here for you. Do not hesitate to reach out with any needs, concerns, or questions.

Congregation Beth Shalom

provides a meaningful spiritual home for people of all ages and levels of knowledge, a place to learn and to question, a place to worship and to celebrate, and a place to find a community that cares.

We offer:

- ✧ Friday worship services at 7:00 PM
- ✧ Complete B'nai Mitzvah preparation
- ✧ Adult Education classes
- ✧ Communitywide events
- ✧ Community Food Bank

Advertise in the Kibbitzer!

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Becoming a partner in our congregation offers an opportunity for enduring friendships and a personal spiritual journey. A place in our Jewish community.

Members also have free access to many of our educational and entertainment events.



Yahrzeits



Shirley Cohen
Bernie Friedman
Paul D. Goldstein
Anna Kobler
George Kornspan
Marilyn G. Rowen
Landon Striner
Katherine Verlin

Grandmother of Sheryl Finke
Father of David Friedman
Father of Judith Pliner
Grandmother of Stephen Feldman
Great Grandfather of Neil Spindel
Sister of Judith Pliner
Cousin of Jason Howard
Mother-in-law of Gail Verlin

Candle Lighting Times

Date	Time	Parsha
May 2	7:35 PM	Tazria-Metzora
May 9	7:38 PM	Acharei-Kedoshim
May 16	7:42 PM	Emor
May 23	7:46 PM	Behar-Bechukotai
May 30	7:49 PM	Bamidbar



Join Us for Shabbat!

Every Friday night at 7:00 PM, our congregation comes together to welcome Shabbat with beautiful tunes and inspiring prayers. After the service, we continue the celebration with an oneg.

Would you like to sponsor an oneg to celebrate a mitzvah?

Please reach out to Toby Koch at (813) 654-0877.



Shabbat
Shalom



The background of the page is a light blue gradient. On the left side, there is a vertical border of colorful, stylized flowers in white, red, blue, green, and purple. Scattered throughout the background are small, multi-colored dots, resembling confetti or stars.

Donations

Ianna Rosenthal and Hamentaschen Bakers

Yahzeit Plaque for Sheila Fishman

Toby Koch and Alan Weiss

Judith and Gerald Pline

Sanda Santucci

Carol Roberts

Sandy Schwartz

Sara and Jeffrey Goodman

Seder Donations

Sharon and Herbert Berman

Neil Spindel



Thank You to Our Incredible Seder Team

Anyone who follows sports knows that when the media interviews a player who scored the winning run, goal, or basket, the player often says, “It wasn’t me—it was my team. All of us together.”

Our 2025 Seder was a winner, and just like in sports, it took a team to make it happen.

A special thank you to Neil Spindel, who wrote an amazing Haggadah and led the Seder with creativity, thoughtfulness, and a wonderful sense of fun.

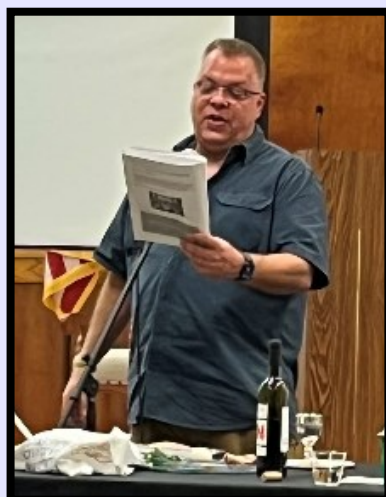
Of course, a Seder doesn’t just happen—it takes a lot of planning, shopping, cooking, setting up, and cleaning up. We’re incredibly grateful to the many volunteers who helped make this Seder so successful. If I’ve inadvertently left anyone out, please forgive me. Thank you all for your time, effort, and spirit. Together, we made this Seder meaningful and memorable.

Many thanks to those who worked to put on a beautiful seder!

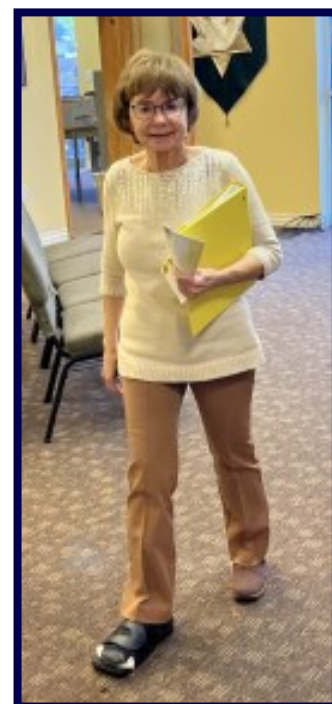
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 Myron Feldman
 Carol Anne & Dave Friedman
 Diana & Gerry Gutenstein
 Lynn & Larry Kaler
 April Katz
 Toby Koch
 Gabe Lifschitz
 Sandy Santucci

Passover Seder April 2025

Click on Sandy for a brief overview of our CBS Seder.



Passover Seder April 2025



Yom HaAtzma'ut

Above and Beyond: Birth of the Israeli Air Force

In 1948, as the British withdrew from Palestine, and five Arab nations prepared to invade Israel, a ragtag group of young men from around the globe volunteered to defend the new country. Called Machal, or volunteers from abroad, many were World War II veterans from the US. Because of an embargo imposed by the Truman administration, Americans risked losing their citizenship by joining the fight.

The bravery of these volunteers was incredible. The only aircraft available to them were American and German jets junked after the war, constantly liable to deadly mechanical failure. Amenities were equally scarce (many had to make do with discarded Nazi flight suits.) Despite their shoddy equipment, they exercised enough skill and trickery to persuade the invaders that their small squadron posed a far bigger threat than it really did, helping turn the tide of the war.

Click on the photo to play the video. It is 7:45 minutes.



Avia S-199 at the Israeli Air Force Museum, Hatzerim, Israel

If you'd like more details about the beginnings of the Israeli Air Force, I found a fascinating article that offers many details and answers questions I had regarding this subject. It's from a publication called, "WORLD MACHAL - Volunteers from overseas in the Israel Defense Forces" To read, click on the blue link below.

<https://www.machal.org.il/air-force/the-israeli-air-force-iaf-in-the-war-of-independence/#:~:text=Commanding%20Officer%20Sydney%20Cohen.,and%20re%2Dassembled%20in%20Israel.>

Lag B'Omer



Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai



The omer is an ancient Israelite unit of measure used in the era of the Temple in Jerusalem.



What It Means

Lag BaOmer is always on the 18th day of the month of Iyar. So what's up with the name? The word "Lag" is made of the Hebrew letters lamed (ל) and gimel (ג) which together have the numerical value of 33. "BaOmer" means "of the Omer." The Omer is the counting period that begins on the second day of Passover and culminates with the holiday of Shavuot, following day 49.

Hence Lag BaOmer is the 33rd day of the Omer count, which coincides with 18 Iyar. What happened on 18 Iyar that's worth celebrating?

When Is Lag BaOmer?

- Lag BaOmer begins at nightfall on Thursday night, May 15, 2025.
- Lag BaOmer ends at nightfall on Friday, May 16, 2025.

What We Are Celebrating

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who lived in the second century of the Common Era, was the first to publicly teach the mystical dimension of the Torah known as the Kabbalah, and is the author of the classic text of Kabbalah, the Zohar. On the day of his passing, Rabbi Shimon instructed his disciples to mark the date as "the day of my joy."

The Chassidic masters explain that the final day of a righteous person's earthly life marks the point at which all their deeds, teachings and work achieve their culminating perfection and the zenith of their impact upon our lives. So each Lag BaOmer, we celebrate Rabbi Shimon's life and the revelation of the esoteric soul of Torah.

Lag BaOmer also commemorates another joyous event. The Talmud relates that in the weeks between the Jewish holidays of Passover and Shavuot, a plague raged among the disciples of the great sage Rabbi Akiva (teacher of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai), "because they did not act respectfully towards each other." These weeks are therefore observed as a period of mourning, with various joyous activities proscribed by law and custom. On Lag BaOmer the deaths ceased. Thus, Lag BaOmer also carries the theme of loving and respecting one's fellow (ahavat Yisrael).

Yom Yerushalayim

Jerusalem Day, also known as Yom Yerushalayim, is an Israeli national holiday celebrated on the 28th day of Iyar, which is the eighth month according to the Hebrew calendar. This year, it falls on May 26. It commemorates the reunification of Jerusalem and the establishment of Israeli control over the Old City after the six-day war against the Jordanian forces in 1967. The day is marked with different events such as recitations of the Hallel prayer in Synagogues, lectures on the history of Jerusalem, street parades, parties, state ceremonies, and memorial services for those that died in the six-day war.

HISTORY OF JERUSALEM DAY

Israel declared its independence in 1948 and shortly after that, it was attacked by Arab countries, resulting in the Arab-Israeli War which lasted from May 15, 1948, to March 10, 1949.

The war ended with an Israeli victory, Jordanian partial victory, and Palestinian and Egyptian defeats. In the aftermath of the war, Jerusalem was divided as Israeli forces controlled most of the city while East Jerusalem and the Old City were controlled by Jordanian forces.

The Old City housed a lot of religious monuments and was a very good location strategically. Places such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Christian), the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque (Muslim), the Temple Mount and the Western Wall or Kotel (Jewish) amongst others were within the Old City and so Israeli forces sought to regain the place.

The six-day war between Israel and Jordan started on June 6, 1967, and the Old City was captured the next day. The end of the War on June 11 due to a cease-fire resulted in the reunification of Jerusalem as part of Israel. On the Hebrew calendar, this day fell on the 28th day of the month of Iyar and is now used to commemorate Jerusalem day.

The next year in May 1968, the 28th of Iyar was set as a holiday to mark the unification of Jerusalem, and then years down the line in 1998, the Israeli government passed the Jerusalem Day Law to officially make the day a national holiday. The day continues to be celebrated by the Jewish community in and outside Israel. The day is not a public holiday, however, as businesses have normal opening hours.

<https://nationaltoday.com/jerusalem-day/>



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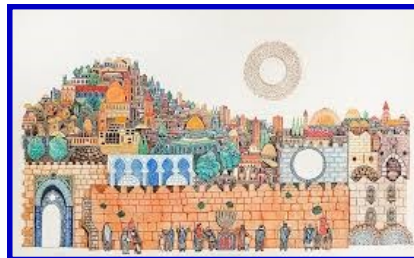
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(813) 685-2939

131 Central Ave
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May Rabbis



2-May Myron Feldman
9-May Steve Billor
16-May Neil Spindel
23-May Sandy Schwartz
30-May Anita Clifford



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Yom HaAtzma'ut	2 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 	3
4	5	6	7 Hebrew Lessons 6:00 PM	8	9 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 	10
11	12	13	14 Hebrew Lessons 6:00 PM	15	16 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 Lag B'Omer 	17
18	19	20	21 Hebrew Lessons 6:00 PM	22	23 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 	24
25	26 Yom Yerushalayim	27	28 Hebrew Lessons 6:00 PM	29	30 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 	31