

The Kibbitzer

Congregation Beth Shalom of Brandon

706 Bryan Road, Brandon, FL 33511

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June 2025 Volume 36 Issue 1



The Blessing of Love

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks



An essay on the Parsha, Naso (Due to space constraints, portions of this article have been condensed.)

At 176 verses, Naso is the longest of the parshiyot. Yet one of its most moving passages, and the one that has had the greatest impact over the course of history, is very short indeed and is known by almost every Jew, namely the priestly blessings:

The Lord said to Moses:

“Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘Thus shall you bless the Israelites. Say to them **“May the Lord bless you and protect you; May the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; May the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.” Let them set My name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”**

[Num. 6:23–27](#)

This is among the oldest of all prayer texts. It was used by the priests in the Temple. It is said today by the Kohanim in the reader’s repetition of the Amidah, in Israel every day, in most of the Diaspora only on festivals. It is used by parents as they bless their children on Friday night. It is often said to the bride and groom under the *chupah*. It is the simplest and most beautiful of all blessings.

What gives the priestly blessings their power is their simplicity and beauty. They have a strong rhythmic structure. The lines contain three, five, and seven words respectively. In each, the second word is “the Lord”. In all three verses the first part refers to an activity on the part of God – “bless”, “make His face shine”, and “turn His face toward”. The second part describes the effect of the blessing on us, giving us protection, grace, and peace.

They also travel inward, as it were. The first verse, “May the Lord bless you and protect you” refers, as the commentators note, to material blessings: sustenance, physical health, and so on. The second, “May the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you” refers to moral blessing. *Chen*, grace, is what we show to other people and they to us. It is interpersonal. Here we are asking God to give some of His grace to us and others so that we can live together without the strife and envy that can so easily poison relationships.

The third is the most inward of all. There is a lovely story about a crowd of people who have gathered on a hill by the sea to watch a great ship pass by. A young child is waving vigorously. One of the men in the crowd asks him why. He says, “I am waving so the captain of the ship can see me and wave back.” “But,” said the man, “the ship is far away, and there is a crowd of us here. What makes you think that the captain can see you?” “Because,” said the boy, “the captain of the ship is my father. He will be looking for me among the crowd.”

That is roughly what we mean when we say, “May the Lord turn His face toward you”. There are over seven billion people now living on this earth. What makes any of us more than a face in the crowd, a wave in the ocean, a grain of sand on the seashore? The fact that we are God’s children. He is our parent. He turns His face toward us. He cares.

The knowledge that God turns His face toward us – that we are not just an indiscernible face in a crowd, but that God relates to us in our uniqueness and singularity – is the most profound and ultimate source of peace. Competition, strife, lawlessness, and violence come from the psychological need to prove that *we matter*. We do things to prove that I am more powerful, richer, or more successful than you. I can make you fear. I can bend you to my will. I can turn you into my victim, my subject, my slave. All of these things testify not to faith, but to a profound failure of faith.

Faith means that I believe that God cares about me. I am here because He wanted me to be. The soul He gave me is pure. Even though I am like the child on the hill watching the ship pass by, I know that God is looking for me, waving to me as I wave to Him. That is the most profound inner source of peace. We do not need to prove ourselves in order to receive a blessing from God. All we need to know is that His face is turned toward us. When we are at peace with ourselves, we can begin to make peace with the world.

So the blessings become longer and deeper: from the external blessing of material goods to the interpersonal blessing of grace between ourselves and others, to the most inward of them all, the peace of mind that comes when we feel that God sees us, hears us, holds us in His everlasting arms.

The President's Corner



Steve Billor

This month, we've been dedicated to making our congregation better and stronger. With the help of our Federal Grant and FEMA funds, we're moving at "Warp Speed" with improvements. Gabe, Sandy, Gerry, and others have been tirelessly navigating the Federal Maze of paperwork and requests. We're making great progress! We've installed a new surveillance system and a desktop computer to monitor our security. We're also working on getting our perimeter security fence installed, adding new lighting, and fixing some of the old ones.

We're continually impressed by our two B'nai Mitzvah students, Jack and Abby, who recently led our Friday night service. The turnout for their first service was wonderful, and it was spiritually uplifting for all of us who attended. Special thanks to Neil for his hard work with Jack, Abby, and our Brandon Youth Academy.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our Board Members and CBS members who continue to support our Jewish home. As President for the past four years, I've come to realize the immense effort required to keep a Temple's doors open. It's exhausting to manage work, family, and CBS, but there's no greater Mitzvah than what we're doing. I continue to pray that we will grow back to our pre-pandemic strength, and I trust Hashem to guide us if we are worthy.

Your President,
Steve Billor



Abby and Jack Rosenthal lead the Friday night service. Be sure to read Neil Spindel's article, "A Shabbat to Remember: Voices of the Future, Joy of the Present" on page 3.



A Shabbat to Remember: Voices of the Future, Joy of the Present



Neil Spindel

This past Friday night, our sanctuary was full — not just with people, but with promise. Jack and Abby led us in song throughout the Kabbalat Shabbat service, and our congregation came out in force to support them. It was one of the best-attended Friday night services I've seen in years — outside the High Holidays, possibly *the* best. And when the last chorus of “Adon Olam” echoed through the room, you could feel it in the air: something special had just happened.

The service was joyful, sincere, and unforgettable. These two young leaders — who, just a year ago, were still new to Hebrew — stood before us not as students, but as *sh'lichei tzibur*, emissaries of the community. With poise and warmth, they led our prayers. They didn't just perform; they *belonged* up there.

As I said in my *D'var Torah* that night, the world feels like it's spinning faster every day. Being Jewish feels harder. Raising Jewish kids feels lonelier. But that's exactly why we built this school. Our kids need a seatbelt — something to hold onto when the world swings too fast. They need a rhythm, a language, a story that is theirs. And Friday night proved we're giving it to them.

And it wasn't just the kids who were uplifted. Our entire congregation delighted in the experience — not only in the music but in the *mood*. We used the Youth edition of *Mishkan T'filah* for the first time in *years*, and it was a hit. The colorful, accessible layout brought a fresh energy to the service. It's a beautifully done, joyful presentation of our liturgy, and it helped everyone — young and old — connect with the prayers in a new way.

No, we didn't pack the seats with new families. But our existing congregation — our steadfast core — showed up in a big way. They came to sing, pray, and most of all, *celebrate* Jack and Abby. And what a celebration it was. After the service, the compliments poured in. People were glowing. More than a few asked: “When are we doing this again?”

We know the future we're aiming for — a synagogue filled with children, families, laughter, and learning. And we know we're not there yet. But we're building it. And if Jewish tradition teaches us anything, it's this: “*L'fum tza'ara agra*” — according to the effort is the reward (*Pirkei Avot 5:23*). If we keep showing up like this, if we keep elevating our youth and investing in our community, then yes — they will come. New families will find out. And when they do, they'll want to be a part of it.

Because this wasn't a one-off. This was a glimpse of who we're becoming — a synagogue that *builds* from within. That believes in Jewish education not just as a class, but as a calling. That understands that *l'dor vador* — generation to generation — isn't automatic. It takes effort. Commitment. Teaching. Love.

And that's what this was: a night of love. Love of tradition, of community, of our children. A night when we reminded ourselves that we're not just holding services — we're shaping souls.

By Neil Spindel



Building and Grounds

L'Dor Vador in today's complex world



Gabe Lifschitz

I feel blessed to celebrate Passover, Rosh Hashanah, and attend Shabbat services with freedom and comfort. I hope those who read this feel the same way.

Years ago, members of our county worked hard together to build our synagogue. There was a common goal and the means to make it happen. The building drawings from back then show an outline of a separate building for the sanctuary, with the current building intended for common use. There was a belief that our synagogue could expand to bring in more members.

In contrast, over the past five years, since I have become more active in our congregation, I find it challenging to keep our synagogue in good condition to serve our members and the community. In the past two years, people who did trade work for us are no longer available. Additionally, hurricane Milton caused trees to fall, structural damage, and collapsed wooden fencing that had withstood previous hurricanes. This has added extra work for us to keep the grounds in good condition. While we hope that FEMA can support us with funding to cover the expenses due to damage, there is still work that remains for us to do. A big help is member participation to keep the property in condition to run services, social activities, and to share with Faith Family Church.

Maintaining our facilities means that people with other religious beliefs take care of the grounds and fix things. Unless we have people in our faith who do skilled work, we rely on the greater population to make things happen. Below are statistics that can be loosely applied to Hillsborough County.

From a global perspective and how we fit in, I searched Google, and the artificial intelligence (AI) statistics below show people's beliefs.

Christianity	32% and stable
Islam	24% and growing
Irreligion (atheists, agnostics, spiritualists)	16% and stable
Hinduism	15%
Buddhism	7%
Folk religions (Chinese)	6%
Judaism	0.2%

As the world population grows, more people are following a religion, although the relative percentages remain the same. The only open question is whether people from other religions are switching to Islam, contributing to its statistical growth.

I plan to continue expanding on this topic to shed light on our congregation and its future for the sake of L'dor Vador.

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. Additionally, there is a lot of tree debris to clear, along with removing the damaged wooden fencing. We have doors that need repair or replacement, and the blue canvas on the entrance awning needs changing. If you know someone who does work for you regularly, please send their name and contact information to: cbsbuilding@outlook.com.


Shalom
Gabe Lifschitz



Shabbat Morning Service

SATURDAY, JUNE 7TH, 10:00 AM
Rabbi Katz will be attending
Shabbat Naso

Potluck dairy lunch to follow.
Please contact Toby Koch to let her know
what you'd like to bring.
You're Invited to Celebrate Naso with Us!



Dinner With the Tribe

Yummy House China Bistro

Yummy House China Bistro

2620 E Hillsborough Ave

Tampa, FL 33620

Saturday

June 28, 2025

7:00 PM

As summer approaches, it's been far too long since we've indulged our appetite for good Chinese food. Let's change that! This June we'll be dining at what is arguably the best Chinese restaurant in the Tampa Bay area. While we may not be in New York or San Francisco, the flavors are still delightful. Join us as we savor delicious dishes from that ancient cuisine.

Please let Anita Clifford know if you'll be joining us so she can save a seat for you at niewdnarb@yahoo.com

More Than a Meal: The Ethics of Eating

Rabbi Israel Salanter, a renowned Jewish ethicist, was once invited to a wealthy man's home for dinner. The host, eager to impress, served an extravagant meal with fine dishes and expensive wine. Yet, as Rabbi Salanter ate, he noticed the servants rushing about, visibly anxious. The host was impatient, quick to scold them for the slightest mistake.

After the meal, the host asked, "Did you enjoy the food?"

Rabbi Salanter replied, "The meal was delicious, but I could not fully enjoy it. A meal is not just about taste—it is about the atmosphere, the kindness shared, and the peace at the table. If those who serve us are distressed, how can we truly savor our meal?"

The host was humbled and resolved to treat his servants with more kindness. From that day forward, his meals were not only rich in flavor but also in warmth and generosity.

This story reminds us that eating is not just about nourishment—it is about community, compassion, and the way we treat others.

Congregation Beth Shalom



You're Invited!

Annual Meeting

Sunday, June 8th

1:00 PM

Please join us as we come together to reflect, plan, and strengthen our synagogue community. Your voice matters, and we welcome your participation in shaping the future of our congregation.

We are excited to share the latest updates about our congregation and the proposed 2025-2026 fiscal budget. Additionally, we will be introducing the slate of officers and holding votes for the following positions:

- **Secretary:** Neil Spindel
- **Treasurer:** Sandy Schwartz
- **Member at Large:** Linnie Kaler

The continuing officers (Second year of two year term)

- **President** – Steve Billor
- **First Vice President** – Gerry Pliner
- **Second Vice President** – Toby Koch
- **Third Vice President** – Dave Friedman
- **Members-at-Large** - Anita Clifford, Gabe Lifschitz

Whether you're a long-time member or new to our community, your input is valuable. Light refreshments will be served. Be sure to attend, we'll be having a send-off for **Carol Anne and Dave Friedman** who will be moving. We look forward to seeing you there!

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=V3RlZzRXWkdaTjhscElBpNWJFTjIBUTo9>

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

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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.

June Yahrzeits

Agnes Antonak	Grandmother of Lee Schwartz
Beth Clare	Friend of Gail Verlin
Edward Fink	Father of Felicia Melcer
Robert Hirshenson	Father of Steven Billor
Michael Plesur	Father-In-Law of Carole Plesur
Chaya Pliner	Grandmother of Gerald Pliner
Clara Shienbaum	Mother of Marvin Shienbaum
Oliver Workman	Father of Anna Feldman

Donations

Diana & Gerry Gutenstein



Candle Lighting Times

Date	Time	Parsha
Sunday, June 1	7:50 PM	Shavuot
Monday, June 2	8:47 PM	Shavuot
Friday, June 6	7:52 PM	Naso
Friday, June 13	7:55 PM	Behaalotecha
Friday, June 20	7:57 PM	Shlach
Friday, June 27	7:58 PM	Korach



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 Wisdom of Shavuot: A Folk Story

In a small Jewish village, the people eagerly prepared for Shavuot, the festival celebrating the giving of the Torah. The baker kneaded dough for cheesecakes, farmers gathered fresh milk, and children adorned the synagogue with fresh greenery and flowers. The excitement in the air was palpable.

Just before the holiday, a weary traveler arrived and asked, “Tell me, why do you celebrate Shavuot with dairy foods?”

The villagers exchanged glances. They had always followed the tradition, but few knew its origins.

An elderly scholar stepped forward and explained, “When Moses received the Torah on Mount Sinai, the Israelites realized they needed to follow new dietary laws. Without time to prepare kosher meat, they ate simple dairy meals instead. And so, we honor that moment with dairy foods on Shavuot.”

The traveler smiled. “And why do you stay up all night studying?”

A young boy eagerly answered, “Because when our ancestors stood at Sinai, they overslept and had to be awakened by Moses! To show our devotion, we stay awake learning Torah all night.”

The traveler nodded, then gestured to the synagogue decorated with fresh blossoms. “And the flowers?”

A woman responded warmly, “Mount Sinai burst into bloom when the Torah was given. We fill our homes and synagogues with greenery to remember that sacred moment.”

The traveler listened thoughtfully, then said, “You have taught me much. Shavuot is not just about tradition—it is about remembering, learning, and celebrating the Torah with joy.”

That night, as the villagers gathered for their all-night study session, they shared stories, wisdom, and laughter. The traveler joined them, no longer a stranger but part of their community, bound by the beauty of Shavuot.



An AI generated story told by Rifka

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Gerry Pliner

2nd Vice President

Toby Koch

3rd Vice President

Dave Friedman

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Members at Large:

Anita Clifford

Myron Feldman

Carole Ann Friedman

Lynn Kaler

Gabe Lifschitz

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For current news and events

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<http://www.bethshalombrandon.org>



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Best No-Bake Cheesecake

By Makinzi Gore (Delish)



Ingredients

FOR THE CRUST

1 sleeve graham crackers, crushed
5 Tbsp. butter, melted
1/4 cup granulated sugar
Pinch kosher salt

FOR THE FILLING

1 cup heavy cream
2 (8-oz.) blocks cream cheese, softened
1/4 cup sour cream
1 cup powdered sugar
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1 tsp. lemon juice
Pinch of kosher salt



Directions

Step 1

In a large bowl, mix together graham cracker crumbs, butter, sugar, and salt. Press into the bottom of an 8" springform pan and up the sides.

Step 2

In a large bowl using a hand mixer (or in the bowl of a stand mixer), beat heavy cream until stiff peaks form, 5 minutes.

Step 3

In another large bowl beat cream cheese and sour cream until smooth then add powdered sugar, vanilla, lemon juice, and salt. Fold whipped cream into cream cheese mixture then pour mixture over crust and smooth top with an offset spatula.

Step 4

Cover and refrigerate at least 4 hours.



June Rabbis

06/07 Rabbi Katz
 06/13 Myron Feldman
 06/20 Steve Billor
 06/27 Neil Spindel

June 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 8:21 Shavuot	2 Shavuot 	3	4 Hebrew Lessons 6:00 PM	5	6 No Services 	7 10:00 AM Shabbat Service
8 1:00 Annual Mtg Friedmans' Send-off	9	10	11 Hebrew Lessons 6:00 PM	12	13 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 	14
15 HAPPY Father's DAY 	16	17	18 Hebrew Lessons 6:00 PM	19 JUNETEENTH FREEDOM DAY 	20 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 	21 Summer Solstice
22	23	24	25 Hebrew Lessons 6:00 PM	26	27 Erev Shabbat Service 7:00 	28 DWT 7:00 PM
29	30					

Annual Meeting



****Date:**** Sunday, June 8



****Time:**** 1:00 PM



****Location:**** Congregation Beth Shalom of Brandon