

Simchat Torah 5786



אֱשֶׁר יָדְעוּ יְהוּדָה פָּנִים אֶל פָּנִים לְכָל הָאָתָּוָה
וְהַמּוֹפָתִים אֱשֶׁר עָלָיו יְהוּדָה לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם לְפָרְעֹה וּלְכָל עֲבָדָיו וּלְכָל אֶרֶץ וּלְכָל
הַיָּד הַזֹּאת וְלְכָל הַמּוֹרָא הַגָּדוֹל אֱשֶׁר עָשָׂה מֵעַתָּה
לְעַיְנֵי כָל יִשְׂרָאֵל

Celebrating
50
Years



Beth Am
HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

Simchat Torah 5786

On this Simchat Torah, we complete the year-long reading of the Torah and begin the next cycle. This year also marks our celebration of Beth Am's 50th anniversary, which we have celebrated by highlighting the five pillars of Beth Am: commitment to place, diversity, tzedek, sacred community, and learning. Throughout the year, including on special Shabbatot, congregants whose experiences exemplify each of these values have spoken movingly from the Bimah, helping give meaning and shape to the way the values are lived in our synagogue community. In addition, the values have been expressed through multiple special programs including a festive opening weekend with a Jewish fusion band and inter-generational reflection, a jazz concert open to our neighbors and beyond, Lox and Learn sessions focusing on each of the five pillars, a presentation by a female Sofer (professional scribe) about the values inherent in creating Jewish art, and programs designed for Lab students and young families.

This Simchat Torah we also highlight Beth Am's values by inaugurating a community-made artwork. Soferet and artist Rachel Jackson designed the piece and congregants decorated the leaves forming the background. You're invited to enjoy the new work, which is installed on the lower landing of the main staircase.

WELCOME FORMER CLERGY AND STAFF

We are pleased to welcome several of Beth Am's former rabbis, cantors, and staff back to Eutaw Place on this Simchat Torah to acknowledge and honor their roles in creating the community Beth Am has become over the last 50 years.

Rabbi Ira Schiffer

Rabbi Sheila Russian

Rabbi Kelley Gludt, Director of Congregational Learning

Cantor Ann Sacks

Cantor Emeritus Ira Greenstein

Executive Director Emeritus Henry Feller

Executive Director David Rothenberg

Sandy Winters, Ritual Coordinator

Gail Wohlmuth, Administrative Assistant

Norm Weinstein, Bookkeeper

Rachel Weitzner, Development Liaison

Jamie Aaron, Program Coordinator

Asella Medina-Smith, Communications Director

Opposite: Founding members scribe the first letter in our new Sefer Torah.

SCRIBING BETH AM'S NEW SEFER TORAH

The last of the 613 commandments in the Torah tells us that writing a Torah scroll is a mitzvah. Deuteronomy 31:19 reads, "Now write down this song and teach it to the Children of Israel." According to the Talmud Menachot 30a, if a person writes even a single letter of the Torah scroll, it is as though they received it at Mount Sinai. While there is no special blessing to be recited when writing or completing the Torah, the commandment is bound up with the use and reading of the Sefer Torah.

This Simchat Torah we will read from Beth Am's new Sefer Torah for the first time. In the morning the entire congregation will be called up for Aliyot. Over half of Beth Am member families participated in scribing the new scroll, the marquee activity of our anniversary year. Together with a Sofer, congregants completed a letter at the beginning or end of our new Torah. Scribing took place at Beth Am and at the homes of congregants who were unable to travel. Scribing days also featured a Torah Fest with activities for all ages, such as creating Lego mezuzot, thinking together about parshiyot ("Parsha Pods"), and viewing the inside of a retired Torah and teffilin.

We are deeply grateful to Bonnie Stainman and Alex Salzberg, co-chairs of the Scribing Task Force, and the many volunteers on their team, for superb planning and implementation of the scribing events. Many thanks to Karen Sugar for her excellent work in helping select accessories for the new Torah.



THE TORAHS OF BETH AM

Our new Torah, scribed by members of our congregation, joins other Torahs in our Ark that have notable histories.

The Sephardic Torah was a gift of the Levy family, whose descendants are Beth Am members, to mark the opening of our building as Chizuk Amuno's new home in 1924.

The story of the Torah was told in an October 12, 1990 issue of *The Baltimore Jewish Times*.

"Julius [Levy], on a trip abroad, was attracted to the beauty of Sephardic Torahs he saw in the Orient. [He] wanted to make a contribution to Chizuk Amuno, in honor of its new home [on Eutaw Place], so he made arrangements to have an Egyptian artist in Alexandria design a case, and a *sofer* inscribe the Torah scroll. [In 1924] The Torah was presented to Chizuk Amuno...."

When Beth Am bought the Eutaw Place building, Chizuk Amuno rented the Torah to the new congregation—for \$1.00 per year.

Our Westminster Torah, rescued after World War II, is on loan to Beth Am for 99 years. The congregation dedicated Scroll #1332 on May 26, 1985, Shavuot, the Festival of the Giving of the Torah.

From the May, 1985 Beth Am bulletin:

"In the Ark...one Torah...is not dressed as the others—it has no 'jewelry' for one thing—nor does it wear the luxuriant embroidered velvet mantle. Instead, the tallis-like covering gives it an aura of holiness unique to itself.

"Once it stood proudly in the Ark of the Pinkas Synagogue in Prague. The Nazis removed it...and intended it to become part of their 'Museum of an Extinct Race.' Instead, it became part of the 'Precious Legacy' of European Jewry. Through the efforts of the Westminster Trust, our Torah and her sisters have been placed in synagogues all over the world.

"Each time we open the Ark we will be reminded of our enormous good fortune and attendant responsibility in being able to live rich and fulfilling Jewish lives in a land of freedom. We will also be reminded of the incalculably high price others have paid for the honor of being call 'Jew.'"



Above: Levy Sephardic Torah
Right: Westminster Torah

THANK YOU

Scores of Beth Am'sers contributed their creativity, energy, and time to make this an extraordinary 50th anniversary year. With apologies if we've inadvertently omitted anyone, we are deeply grateful for the work of the following committee and task force chairs as well as the many others who volunteered.

Julie Gottlieb & David Finkler

Co-chairs, 50th Anniversary Steering Committee

50TH ANNIVERSARY STEERING COMMITTEE

Ana Pavich, Clara Salzberg
Opening Weekend

Becky Eisen
Founders to the Future event

Rabbi Alex Salzberg, Bonnie Stainman
Torah Scribing

Melissa Gerr, Barry Kessler
Lifelong Learning

Simon Birenbaum
Youth Education

Evan Serpick
Tzedek Beth Am

Rabbi Daniel Burg, Rabbi Tyler Dratch
Sanctuary Shabbatot

Steve Himmelrich, Robin Rose-Samuels
Communications

Hillary Jacobs, Monica Whippo
History of Beth Am

Lisa Akchin, Jim Jacobs
Development

Adina Amith, Ellen Spokes
Closing Party

Jim Burger, Aaron Levin
Photography

We are thankful to Beth Am's clergy, lay leaders, and staff for their extraordinary commitment, engagement, and guidance in helping make this 50th anniversary year so meaningful.

Rabbi Daniel Cotzin Burg

Rabbi Tyler Dratch

Ba'alat Tefilah Abby Woloff

President Sally Scott and
the Board of Trustees

Executive Director Alex Pomerantz

50th Anniversary Project Manager
Jennifer Millard

Director of Congregational Engagement
and Programming Susannah Kolstad

Administrative and Communications
Manager Courtney Luby

Former Communications Director
Asella Medina-Smith

Former Office Manager Devora Cohen

Custodians Warren McFarlane,
Milton Jackson, Denis Ocan

RABBI JANE KANAREK PH.D.

SCHOLAR IN RESIDENCE

**FRIDAY AND SATURDAY,
NOVEMBER 14 AND 15**

Rabbi Kanarek is Professor of Rabbinitics and Dean of Faculty at the Hebrew College Rabbinical School. She is the author of *Biblical Narrative and Formation of Biblical Law* and the forthcoming book *Beyond Brutality: Reclaiming Female Presence in Bavli Sotah*.

Friday, November 14

6:00pm – Klei Kodesh

Kabbalat Shabbat Services

7:00pm – Catered Dinner

(please register in advance)

8:00pm – Rabbi Kanarek speaks on "Reading the Talmud Through Feminist Eyes."

Saturday, November 15

1:00pm – Rabbi Kanarek discusses

"Seeing God Under an Apple

Tree: The Righteous Women of

Tractate Sotah."

7:00pm – "How the Bible Became

Rabbinic" is Rabbi Kanarek's

final lecture. The evening will

include Havdalah and a wine and

cheese reception.

Learn more and register:



**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13
6:00PM-10:00PM**

Be part of the final celebration of Beth Am's 50th anniversary year.

Dance to the joyful music of Machaya Klezmer Band and a DJ spinning a 1970s playlist. Enjoy heavy hors d'oeuvres and desserts. Sip signature cocktails, mocktails, wine, and beer.

**Bell bottoms and platform shoes
are optional!**

**This event is limited to adults
aged 21+.**

Learn more and RSVP at

bit.ly/4mdCF59

or scan the QR code below:





The Carob Tree Endowment

Celebrate Beth Am Today, Plant Seeds for Tomorrow

Beth Am, founded and named *House of the People* in 1974, is a thriving urban synagogue community today because others planted seeds for us.

Established in Beth Am's 50th Anniversary year,

The Carob Tree Endowment offers a way to ensure that the Beth Am we love will thrive for generations. Endowment funds will be invested to provide annual spendable income so that our modest-size congregation can continue to offer the experiences and excellence members seek.

More than 40 congregant households across generations have made early commitments to

The Carob Tree Endowment, totaling \$2.7 million toward a goal of \$5 million.

To learn more about the synagogue's fiscal needs and how you can support Beth Am's financial sustainability, visit

bethambaltimore.org/donate/carobtree

or contact Jim Jacobs (jjacobs@jdlaw.com)
and Lisa Akchin (akchinbetham@gmail.com).