



From the
Beit Midrash of
Rav Julius



**A Life in Judaism:
Journeys, Seasons, and the
Communities That Carry Us**

Recently, Ellen and I attended a gathering sponsored by the synagogue she has belonged to for the past decade or so in New York, Romemu. The event brought together a small circle of members to share the story of how

they arrived at this point in their Jewish lives. It reminded me of a project I undertook when I first arrived in Norwich -- asking people how they had come to be here, what roads had led them to this community, what they hoped to find -- and whether they found it.

At the Romemu gathering, I found myself recalling my own story with surprising clarity: the blessing of being born to two Holocaust survivors who built a deeply Jewish home; the Yeshivah education they insisted upon; the long desert that followed, spanning nearly two decades in which Judaism receded into the background. And then the moment of return, sparked by Ellen's gentle invitations to re-enter Jewish life, and you know the rest.

Around the room, others shared their own paths. Some began with little or no Jewish connection. Others were shaped not by parents but by a grandparent, a teacher, a neighbor, or even a stranger. And because this was New York City, the stories traveled across continents -- Judaism in different languages, different melodies, different foods, different assumptions about what it means to be part of a people.

Listening to these stories, I was struck by how many ways there are to be Jewish, and how many seasons a Jewish life contains. We often speak of 'the Jewish journey' as though it were a single road. But in truth, it is a series of roads, sometimes straight, sometimes winding, sometimes disappearing for a while only to reappear when we least expect it. And at each stage of life, Judaism meets us differently.

When we are children, Judaism is often something given to us. It comes in the form of parents or grandparents who insist on

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BETH JACOB SYNAGOGUE

**ANNUAL
MEETING**

THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2026

**President's Box
June 2026**

As we approach the end of another synagogue year, I find myself reflecting on the rhythm of our communal life — a rhythm shaped not by the secular calendar, but by the cycle of Jewish time. Each spring, as we move from Pesach toward Shavuot and beyond, we naturally take stock of where we have been and where we hope to go. It is a moment to pause, to appreciate, and to imagine.

This past year has been full of meaningful moments for our congregation. We gathered for holidays, learned together, supported one another, and continued the quiet, steady work that keeps a synagogue vibrant. Congregants used our Shabbat Kiddushes to celebrate family events, we received generous sponsor-ships for our Congregational events. We had a very well attended Hanukah Celebration with a great meal, live "cabaret" entertainment for 55+ attendees. That was quickly followed by a very well attended 1st night Pesach Seder, heavily subsidized by Harry Leiser

These are not small things. They are the building blocks of community — the acts that remind us why our synagogue matters and why we choose to support and be part of it.

Looking ahead, we have opportunities to deepen our connections, strengthen our programming, and continue shaping a synagogue that reflects our values and aspirations. With our enhanced resources, we will be able to reach out with more services for our current members, and to search out unaffiliated Jewish persons to join our society. Each of these possibilities represents a chance to grow, to renew, and to reaffirm our commitment to Jewish life in Norwich.

Of course, we are not blind to the realities we face. Though we are small, and the demographics of our congregation skews older, that brings challenges, we are capable of meeting. *We know who we are!* We know what we care about. And we possess significant resources — not only financial, but human: a core of dedicated members who believe in our future and are willing to work for it.

As we close out this synagogue year and prepare for the next, I am filled with gratitude for what we have accomplished and optimism for what lies ahead. With creativity, commitment, and the strength of our community, I believe we can thrive — because of the heart and resilience that define us.

—*Martin Shapiro*
President, Beth Jacob Synagogue

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Hebrew school, or Shabbat candles, or a kiddush cup. It comes in melodies we don't yet understand, in stories that feel ancient and mysterious, in rules that seem arbitrary until they suddenly don't. It is the Judaism of being shaped.

Then comes adulthood, and the first real choice. Some of us lean in. Some drift away. Some walk away entirely. Some return decades later. And some discover Judaism for the first time as adults, drawn by a partner, a teacher, a book, or a moment of crisis or wonder. Adult-acquired Judaism is different because it is chosen. It asks something of us -- not only to receive, but to build.

And then, for those who become parents, Judaism shifts again. Suddenly the question is not "What does Judaism mean to me?" but "What do I want Judaism to mean for my children?" We find ourselves searching for the right balance between the Judaism we received and the Judaism we hope to pass on. And whether our children will find meaning in the things that sustained us. And we discover, often to our surprise, that our children's questions push us into deeper learning than we ever did on our own.

Later still, when grandchildren arrive, or when we reach the stage of life where we look in the rear view mirror more than the road ahead, Judaism takes on yet another shape. It becomes a lens for memory, and for the stories we want to leave behind. It becomes a source of continuity, a reminder that we are part of something larger than our own years.

Through all these stages, one constant remains: the role of community. It is the place where our individual journeys become part of a shared journey. Communal religious life does something that no private spirituality can do. It gives us people to grow with. It gives us a rhythm -- Shabbat, holidays, life-cycle moments—that steadies us when the rest of life feels unpredictable.

Fact: people who participate in religious communities tend to live longer, feel less isolated, and report higher levels of meaning and purpose. Being part of a religious community reminds us that we are responsible for one another, and it teaches us to practice compassion, not as an abstract value but as a lived reality.

Most importantly, a religious community accompanies us through the seasons of our lives. It celebrates with us when we are young and strong. It steadies us when we are uncertain. It holds us when we are grieving. It honors us as we age, and that our stories, our journeys, are not lost.

As I listened to the stories in that New York City living room, I realized that every person there, no matter how different their background, had been shaped by the communities that welcomed them. Some had been carried by synagogues in childhood. Others had been rescued by them in adulthood. Still others had found in community the courage to ask questions they had never dared ask alone.

And I thought of our own community here in Norwich -- how many journeys have converged in this place, how many stories have been woven together, how many lives have been shaped by the simple act of showing up for one another. We are, each of us, still on the road. Still learning. Still discovering what Judaism has to teach us at this stage of life.

May we continue to be a community that welcomes every story, honors every journey, and helps each of us find meaning in the season we are in. And may we remember that the path of a Jewish life is not walked alone. It is walked together -- across generations, across experiences, across the many roads that lead us home.

Revisions to Prayer Services for latter half of June

As you may know, Rav Julius will be undergoing surgery to 'fix' his broken leg on June 12. As a result, we will be revising the prayer services for the latter half of June at this time, as follows:

On Friday nights of June 12, 19, and 26, at 6:00 pm, we will conduct Friday night services on ZOOM only, and the ZOOM link each week will be sent out before Shabbat for your convenience.

On Shabbat mornings of June 13, 20 and 27, at 10:00 am, Beth Jacob members are invited to Ahavath Achim Synagogue, 84 Lebanon Avenue, Colchester, with a ZOOM link at: <https://zoom.us/j/95065762534?>

Book of Joshua

We continue our journey studying the Book of Joshua with our friends at Park Congregational Church, with their minister, Paster Erica, on **Saturday, June 6**, as we venture into the third leg of this study. This session will follow our usual 10:00 am Shabbat morning service, but end at 11:30 am, for our Kiddush, which will be followed by joint study led by Paster Erica and Rav Julius. On this session, we will examine 'Farewell Addresses', specifically those made by Moses, Joshua, Jesus and George Washington.

Donations

We gratefully acknowledge the following contributions to
Beth Jacob Synagogue's Special Funds.

Building Fund

In Memory of Ashley Lorinsky

Irene Schienberg

Barbara Lewis

In Honor of Harry Leiser's Bar Mitzvah

Irene Schienberg

In Memory of Max Korman

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In Memory of:

Sidney & Stelle Littman

Zena Bokoff

Cecilia Bokoff

Marc & Roz Bokoff

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

In Honor of the Wedding of Michael & Sarah Wolf

Marc & Robin Wolf

June Birthdays

June 14	Michael Goldblatt
June 19	Lily Indrawati
June 20	Roslyn Etra
June 26	Ellen Shapiro
June 29	Daniel Franklin

June Anniversaries

June 4	Kevin & Kara Franklin
June 17	Jerry & Linda Holzschlag
June 18	Martin & Millie Shapiro





JUNE 2026 YAHRZEITS



June 1 16 Sivan

Lillian Jacobson
Emma Sears
Cantor Zachary Kupperstein

June 2 17 Sivan

Daniel Golden
Anne Schwartz —
Mother of Lisa Gawendo
Edward Kaufman

June 3 18 Sivan

Simon Kashar —
Father of Marc Kashar

June 4 19 Sivan

Freda Katz
Anne Bowin —
Grandmother of Renee Kohanski

June 5 20 Sivan

Fran Kashar —
Sister of Marc Kashar
Sarah Goldblatt
Estelle Shankman —
Aunt of Marc Kashar
Taleba Wolf —
Mother of Marc Wolf
Fannie Katz

June 6 21 Sivan

Louis Goldblatt —
Father of Michael Goldblatt and Ellen DeLeon
Abraham Nollman
Bernard Schwartz

June 7 22 Sivan

Marjorie Mandell
Anna Fellerman
Mary Gootman

June 8 23 Sivan

Elias Rutchik —
Father of Martin Rutchik
Morris Wollman
Helen Epstein
Elaine Engel

June 9 24 Sivan

Lorraine Katz
William Trachtenberg
Samuel Fraitag

June 10 25 Sivan

Frances Plotnick
Adoff Nisan

June 11 26 Sivan

Israel Budnick
Samuel Gorin —
Father of Lester Gorin

June 12 27 Sivan

Max Kashar —
Grandfather of Marc Kashar
Anne Moskowitz
William Sherman

Nathaniel Gere —
Father of Michael Gere

June 13 28 Sivan

Maurice Schoenberg
Maxwell Margolis
Gertude Schatz
Braina Furman

June 15 30 Sivan

Rutherford Blinderman
Samuel Katz

June 16 1 Tammuz

Philip Feldman
Leon Katz
Rose Oelbaum

June 19 4 Tammuz

Samuel Adelman
Betty Cramer
Boris, Mina & Isadore Liberman
David Goldblatt
Morton Brown —
Father in Law of Hazel Brown

June 20 5 Tammuz

Ann Silverman
Lena Burchman

June 21 6 Tammuz

Esther Cramer
Lillian Seserman

June 22 7 Tammuz

Yetta Cohn
Annie Goldberg
Hattie Perlman —
Grandmother of Gabe Perlman

June 23 8 Tammuz

Minna Forman
Rose Chait

June 25 10 Tammuz

Gertrude Cohn
Harry Fischer

June 26 11 Tammuz

Abraham Gootman

June 28 13 Tammuz

Susan Lax

June 29 14 Tammuz

Robert Miller
Jacob Reisler
Esther Knasin
Dorothy Later —
Mother of Nancy Gordon

June 30 15 Tammuz

Annie Fishbone
Rachel Gordon

Mishebeirach

Berne Vasquez Kapili	Pamela Magliano Cannata
Beth Camassar	Michael Francis
Billy Maynard	Patricia Tilley
Bonnie Curkin	Tiffany Gravel
Emma Fries	Tim Menard
Shirley Christian	Ahoova Hana bat Gila
Seth Curkin	Chaim ben Libba
Rabbi Gary Atkins	Michal ben Sarah
Jenn Rockwell	Moshe Ben Rochel
Jeremy Federman	Tzvi ben Basha
Marvin Levine	Yosefah Chaya bat Leah
Michelle Nash	