



Scholar-in-Residence Weekend May 20-22, 2016



Rabbi Jonathan Porath

Rabbi Jonathan Porath comes to Beth Mordecai from Israel, where he has lived with his family for the past 32 years. He is the 18th generation of rabbis in his family. An inspiring speaker and educator who makes Jewish texts come alive and teaches Torah and Jewish values with passion, he specializes in conveying Jewish pride and passion; he always speaks from the heart and inspires.

He was born in Atlantic City, NJ, and grew up in the Washington, D.C. area. He received his B.A. from Brandeis University, his M.A. from Columbia University and his rabbinical ordination by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. He served as the Hillel rabbi at the University of Oklahoma and the congregational rabbi at Temple Beth Ohr in Clark, NJ, before making Aliyah.

Rabbi Porath recently completed 15 years as a member of the Senior Staff of the Russian Department of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the foremost international Jewish humanitarian organization; also known as the JDC), where he commuted back and forth from Jerusalem to Russia more than 175 times. He first traveled to the then-Soviet Union in 1965, and authored the book, [Jews in Russia: The Last Four Centuries](#).

He recently published the memoirs of his late father, [Loving Memories of Tzvi: The Life of Rabbi Tzvi H. Porath](#).

From Being Jewish to Doing Jewish: Deepening Our Personal Jewish Identity

Friday, May 20

7pm - Shabbat Services
Featuring Cantor Rav Bronwen Mullin

8pm - Dairy Potluck Dinner
& Presentation by
Rabbi Porath:
*Nurturing Our Jewish
Hearts & Jewish Souls*

Saturday, May 21

10am - "I DID IT!" Shabbat Services, Kiddush Lunch
& Presentation by Rabbi Porath:
How to be Even More Jewish in Perth Amboy
Services will feature Cantor Rav Bronwen
Mullin and organ music by Jon Tyillian.

8pm - Patron Dessert Reception & Presentation by
Rabbi Porath:
*Leaving Home & Coming Home: A Quarter
of a Century on Aliyah to Israel*

Sunday, May 22

10am - Brunch & Presentation
by Rabbi Porath:
*175 Trips to the Jews
of Russia*

Sponsor the program by
becoming a Patron
or Benefactor
(see pages 5-7).

View the Detailed Schedule of Events on Pages 5-7



Congregation Beth Mordecai

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"Tzedaka is equal in importance to all other commandments combined."
-Talmud

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- ☐ **Rabbi's Discretionary Fund**
Allows the rabbi to support special programs and individuals in need.
- ☐ **General Fund**
Applied to the operating budget of the congregation.
- ☐ **Friday Night Oneg Fund**
Used for cookies and other noshes following Friday night services.
A contribution of \$75 supports one oneg.
- ☐ **Shabbat Morning Kiddush Fund**
Used for luncheons and noshes following Saturday morning services.
A contribution of \$125 supports one Kiddush.

...in honor, memory or appreciation of:

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**Please send this contribution form and check directly to the synagogue office.
Checks should be made payable to "Congregation Beth Mordecai".**

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**Contributions to the above listed funds may
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through our secure PayPal link.**

*Thank you for your generous and thoughtful support of our funds
which are used to enrich & invigorate our community.
Todah Rabbah - many thanks to you all!*

General Fund Donations

Alvin Kravet, in sponsorship of Mordy's Brunch
Mike Shevell

Betty & Marc Fertik, Patrons, Scholar in Residence Weekend



The Choice to Do More Jewish is Up to Us

Dear Hevreh,

Is life pre-destined or do we have free will to choose what happens to us? This is one of the oldest and still pertinent religious questions we could ask, even for scientists. For instance, one of my hevrutot (study partners), Richard Estock, shared with me that Stephen Hawking wrote in his book, *A Briefer History of Time*, that "of course, you could say that free will is an illusion" (p.115). *(Stay tuned for an Ask the Rabbi this month on this topic!)* When it comes to the Jewish tradition you won't be surprised to learn that you could choose *either* side of the debate. When it comes to pre-destination, the Talmud teaches us that "God appointed unto [all of creation] fixed laws and times, that they should not change their tasks. They rejoice and are glad to do the will of their Creator" (Masekhet Sanhedrin, 42b). Yet on the side of free will (and in time for Holocaust Remembrance Day May 4-5), we learn that "if you see that there are bad things in the world, it's because there are bad people in the world, and sometimes the righteous are that first to suffer" (Masekhet Bava Kamma, 60a).



What I take away from this debate is that we will never know for sure which answer is correct. However, our predisposition towards one answer or the other plays a great role in helping us understand how to interpret and understand the choices before us. If we believe in pre-destination we may be unwilling to learn something new because "it's not for me, it's not what I'm used to." When we don't think we have an ability to do something, a pre-destination outlook rationalizes our unwillingness to try.

On the other hand, a free-will outlook looks at each choice we are given and says "I could do this if I want to." Of course will refuse some choices, there are too many out there. But this outlook gives us the freedom to make that decision ourselves while giving us the flexibility to change our mind in the future.

Many of us, whether consciously or sub-consciously, have made similar choices about our Jewish practice based on pre-destination or free will outlooks. Some of us say "this is what I do and no more because that's just who I am" and some say "this is what I do now and we'll see what happens." During our upcoming Scholar in Residence Weekend on May 20-22, we will be making the argument that whatever our religious practice, we should make the conscious choice to have a free-will outlook; that it is in our hands to make conscious Jewish choices. Each of us has the ability to do anything Jewish we want to do, as long as we put in the effort to try. As such, many of our members during this weekend will be reading Torah for the first time or for the first time in a long time. Some will also take an *aliyah* to the Torah for the first time. And one of our leaders, Cheryl August, will be reading her *WHOLE* Bat Mitzvah haftarah (when for her actual Bat Mitzvah she only read half) after I challenged her to do so. Her acceptance is not to say that everyone should dust off their Haftarah booklets and do it again. That may not be your choice. But her acceptance of this challenge as well as all of those who participate in our "I-Can-Do-It" participatory service on May 21st teach us that we have the free will to do it if we want to.

I asked Cheryl to share some thoughts about her upcoming "Bat Mitzvah Renewal." Take a look as to why she decided to accept this challenge:

Q: Why did you accept my challenge?

A: There have been moments when I asked myself, What have you done? But I always come back to the same answer Why Not? Being open to challenges creates a myriad of possibilities. Being challenged allows for learning new things, combating fears, not getting into rut. We live in a crazy fast paced world filled with obligations and responsibilities. It has been really nice having to carve out time just for me to work on this.

Q: What has it been like to "dust off" the old haftarah book and practice your part? What have you learned through this experience?

A: Not sure dusting off and practicing is the right phrase. It's been more like meeting it for the first time and learning. This time I have a much deeper connection to the process and the outcome. In an odd way it feels like a Rite of Passage, from the student to the board member working tirelessly to ensure Beth Mordecai's future. Don't you think that it's rather interesting that I still even had that book? Don't know what made me keep it, but I did.

continued on the next page

The Choice to Do More Jewish is Up to Us

continued from the previous page

Hmmm. What have I learned? That I was much more fearless at the age of 13. That it is never too late. The true meaning/impact of this event is wasted on a 13 year old. I think that I'm still figuring that out. Ask me again on May 22nd. You know, my grandfather was never Bar Mitzvah'd at the age of 13. So after having been very active in his shul for many, many years, the Rabbi said it's time to do something about that. In his 70's my grandfather was called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah and all his grandchildren sat in the sanctuary and watched.

Q: What were the most memorable features of your bat mitzvah? What do you hope will be memorable about your bat mitzvah renewal?

A: The most memorable feature is that it actually happened. During my Sunday/Hebrew school years girls were Confirmed while the boys were Bar Mitzvah'd. Karen and I were the first to do what we did. What I remember (other than my yellow dress) is that the sanctuary was full and, following, the social hall so crowded that you could barely get around.

As I said in my Rosh Hashanah speech, I have always felt a connection to Beth Mordecai. Since becoming a Board Member that pull has deepened. What do I hope will be memorable? That is a 3 part answer: First, it is my profoundest hope that on that day, the sanctuary will once again be filled and those attending will feel what I feel. Second, that others will be inspired to be challenged. And by the way, that challenge doesn't have to be a Bar/Bat Mitzvah renewal. (If you haven't been Bar/Bat Mitzvah'd do it, organize a program, get outside your comfort zone and do something for your shul and for you.) Third, that all will just be inspired to become active and participatory members of this congregation. That Beth Mordecai is once again a place where the Congregation congregates. It was so exciting to stand on the bimah, Rosh Hashanah and see 300 people, yet week after week we struggle to make a minyan. To quote myself, Beth Mordecai is nothing without all of you.

Q: What message do you want to send to the congregation by accepting my challenge?

A: It's never too late and you're never too old to accept a good challenge. The rewards far outweigh the fear. This sense of accomplishment will fuel your all your future endeavors. What's the saying, a journey begins with the first step. Last but most assuredly not least, working with you is fun.

Kol Tuv,

Rabbi Ari Saks



Scholar-in-Residence Weekend

May 20-22, 2016

From Being Jewish to Doing Jewish: Deepening Our Personal Jewish Identity

Friday, May 20

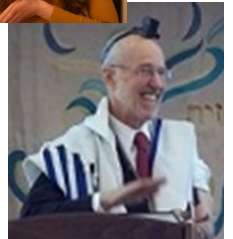
7pm **Musical Shabbat Services Featuring Cantor Rav Bronwen Mullin**

Come enjoy a special musical Friday night service with singing, dancing, great music and inspirational teachings from Cantor Rav Brownwen Mullin & Rabbi Saks.



8pm **Dairy Potluck Dinner & Presentation by Rabbi Porath: *Nurturing Our Jewish Hearts & Jewish Souls***

Participate in a delicious dairy potluck Shabbat dinner with opening presentation from our Scholar-in-Residence, Rabbi Jonathan Porath, who will share evocative stories with discussion from the community of our own meaningful Jewish experiences.



Saturday, May 21

10am **The First "I DID IT!" Participatory Service, Kiddush Luncheon & Presentation by Rabbi Porath: *How To Be Even More Jewish in Perth Amboy***

In this special Shabbat service, we will feature:

- Cheryl August - will read her entire Bat Mitzvah Haftarah portion
- Various Members - will be reading Torah and leading prayers
- Elliot Rubin - will be celebrating the discovery that he is a Kohen
- Cantor Rav Bronwen Mullin - will be sharing her voice and leading songs
- Jon Tyllian - will be playing the recently restored organ in the sanctuary



Following services will be a blowout Kiddush luncheon and our Scholar-in-Residence, Rabbi Jonathan Porath, will discuss the contemporary application of Jewish practices, values and mitzvot in today's America with practical ideas and suggestions on how to be more Jewish. Lots of audience give and take.

8pm **Patron Dessert Reception & Presentation by Rabbi Porath: *Leaving Home & Coming Home: A Quarter of a Century on Aliyah to Israel***

A special dessert reception at the home of Rabbi Ari & Rachel Saks for those Patrons and Benefactors who sponsored the Scholar-in-Residence weekend. Our Scholar-in-Residence will be sharing a special presentation about a family's story of leaving the US for Israel and what it is like to live in Jerusalem today.

Sunday, May 22

10am **Brunch & Presentation by Rabbi Porath: *175 Trips to the Jews of Russia***

Join us for brunch and a special, open-to-the-public presentation by our Scholar-in-Residence, Rabbi Jonathan Porath, about his personal experiences, stories, photos and insights from visits to the Soviet Union and Russia from 1965 to the present.



Scholar-in-Residence Weekend

May 20-22, 2016



Cantor Rav Bronwen Mullin

Playwright, composer, educator and rabbinical student at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (ord. 2016). BA 2006 from Sarah Lawrence College in Theater and Religious Studies, Arts Fellow 2008-2011 in musical theater composition at the Drisha Institute for Jewish Education. Bronwen has served as a Jewish Educator for the last 15 years throughout the tri-state area. She has been a featured speaker at Limmud NY, Limmud Philly, Nehriim Eastern Conference, and Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center. Bronwen's work employs a creative and often haunting exegetical entrance into the world of Jewish text. Her recent works include "Hagar and Sarah" (Drisha Arts Fellowship 2008); "Honi the Circle Maker" (Drisha Arts Fellowship 2009); "Sensation/Cessation: 7 Movements for Sabbath" (Drisha Arts Fellowship 2010); "Two Little Lights" (on the tormented life of Rabb Elazar Azikri); "Tzipporah's True Blood" and "Serach Bat Asher" (Meta-Phys Ed in residency at the Sixth Street Shul April 2012); "The Wedding Funeral of Bat Yiftach: a punk opera" (Meta-Phys Ed at The Jewish Theological Seminary June 2012); and "CHALOM: A Dream Opera" (Hebrew/Aramaic, 2012 International Fringe Festival/FringeNYC). Bronwen has also composed for Mir Productions, Infinite Variety Productions, the Cygnus Ensemble, StorahTelling and 24/6 Theater Company. She is the co-founder of Meta-Phys Ed, with performance artist/director Jesse Freedman. META-PHYS ED is a multi-disciplinary performance-based collaborative, a gymnasium where the mind and body meet and there is only one rule of play: the inseparable relationship between spirituality and creativity. (www.metaphysedperformance.weebly.com).



Jon Tyillian

Organist at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Perth Amboy. Accompanist and Assistant Conductor of the Forest Hills Choir, in Forest Hills, NY.

Sponsorship Opportunities

Benefactor

\$500 per individual, couple or family

(includes invitation to the Saturday night dessert reception and a full page on program)

Patron

\$50 per individual or \$100 per couple or family

(includes an invitation to the Saturday night dessert reception and name mentioned in the program)

All events are FREE to attend, but we kindly encourage you to support this program by becoming a Benefactor or Patron. Please send payment to Congregation Beth Mordecai no later than May 14, 2016.

Scholar-in-Residence Weekend

May 20-22, 2016

From Being Jewish to Doing Jewish: Deepening Our Personal Jewish Identity

Dear Hevreh,

When I first arrived at Beth Mordecai nearly four years ago, I took the time to meet with members to hear about their Jewish journeys. What experiences made a significant impact on their Jewish identities? But our journeys aren't static; they are constantly evolving. Every day, every month, every year we can ask the question "what experiences are **making** an impact on our Jewish identities now?" That is the question we are asking this **Scholar-in-Residence Weekend**. How are we not only showing pride in **being** Jewish, but seeking to make our Jewish identities stronger by **doing** whatever we describe as "Jewish?" It is my hope that the lessons from our **esteemed Scholar-in-Residence, Rabbi Jonathan Porath**, and the examples of members of our community, like Cheryl August & others, to challenge themselves to **do** more Jewish will inspire us to take another step forward in our Jewish journeys. **Please join us and support this wonderful program!**

Rabbi Ari Y. Saks

Please detach and return no later than May 14, 2016

I/We will be attending the following events:

_____ Friday, May 20
Friday Night Service, Potluck & Presentation:
Nurturing Our Jewish Hearts & Jewish Souls

For the dairy potluck, I/we will bring:

_____ Saturday, May 21
Shabbat Morning Service, Lunch & Presentation:
How to be More Jewish in Perth Amboy

_____ Saturday, May 21 **(Benefactors & Patrons ONLY)**
Dessert Reception & Presentation:
Leaving Home & Coming Home

_____ Sunday, May 22
Brunch & Presentation:
175 Visits to Russia

Name(s) _____

I/We will be sponsoring the weekend as a:

_____ **Benefactor** (\$500 per person/couple/family)

For the program, please include this message:

Please print my/our name(s) as follows:

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Please print my/our name(s) as follows:

Please enclose this form with your check, made payable to Congregation Beth Mordecai.

got shabbat? now, shalom!



732.331.4049
straussjer@gmail.com



732.407.0821
bettymf@me.com

Friday Night Services - Open to All

Join us for spirited and lively participatory services. Each service includes elements of singing, storytelling and conversation with the community. Monthly themes:

Celebration Shabbat - May 6 - 8pm

Commemorate your birthday or anniversary in the upcoming month with a special celebration, to be followed by a Blowout Oneg Shabbat. (To sponsor an oneg contact Jeremy Strauss.)

Pardon the Interruption - May 13 - 8pm

A series of 3 conversations that interrupt the Jewish ritual service in order to understand different prayers and sections of the service on a deeper level. The conversations, each 5-7 minutes long, are thematically tied and interspersed throughout the service.

Scholar in Residence - May 20 - 7pm

See page 5.

Traditional Service - May 27 - 8pm

Join us for a traditional, egalitarian service with Rabbi Saks.

Saturday Morning Services - Open to All

Connect to traditions while actively engaging in the service. There is opportunity for in-depth learning of the prayers and the Torah portion. Monthly themes:

Torah Talk - May 7 - 10am

Delve into the rich teachings of the week's Torah reading. In lieu of a formal sermon, we will pause the service after the Torah reading for a lively 10-15 minute discussion on how we can apply the wisdom of the Torah to the needs of our every day lives.

Pardon the Interruption - May 14 - 10am

See description to the left.

Scholar in Residence - May 21 - 10am

See page 5.

Traditional Service - May 28 - 10am

Join us for a traditional, egalitarian service with Rabbi Saks.



If there were cellphones at the Red Sea

Tot Shabbat

CONNECTING YOUNG FAMILIES TO JEWISH LIFE.



May 21 - 10:00am

LIGHT CANDLES		SHABBAT ENDS	
May 6	7:41pm	May 7	8:45pm
May 13	7:47pm	May 13	8:53pm
May 20	7:54pm	May 21	9:01pm
May 27	8:00pm	May 28	9:08pm

Times are specific to Perth Amboy; from Chabad.org.

**Ask the Rabbi**

12:00pm

Wednesdays - May 4, 11, 18 & 25**Menlo Park Mall Food Court**

Have a question? Have a seat! Bring your lunch and ask the rabbi ANY question you like...seriously! First person there will get a free drink from the rabbi!



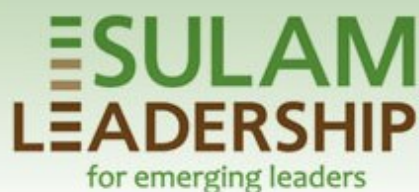
Saturday, May 14

1:15pm

Beth Mordecai

**Wednesday, May 4 - 7:30pm**

The Metuchen-Edison Area Interfaith Clergy Association and the Jewish Community Center of Middlesex County Invite You to Attend Our Annual Holocaust Memorial Program, "Yom Hashoah". For more information contact Jennine Shpigel, Director of Jewish and Family Programming at 732.494.3232 x3621 or email: JShpigel@jccmc.org

**Tuesday, May 24****7:00pm**

The session is part of a national program run by United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and will be co-led by Rabbi Saks & Marilyn Davidoff.

Email Rabbi Saks (ari.saks@gmail.com) if interested.



Wednesdays - May 4 & 18
9:30am at Panera Bread in Woodbridge

At the suggestion of a member and in connection with our pillar of SHABBAT, Rabbi Saks will lead a book group on Abraham Joshua Heschel's, "The Sabbath."



A Memorial Sh'ma®

For Yom Hashoah

By Elliot Rubin



Next Bulletin
Deadline
May 20

submit your
NEWS
or
EVENT

Chazan &
Congregation

Leader

Sh'ma | hear the trains arriving and screeching to a halt

Yis-ro-eil | see the mass of my people herded, waiting for selection

A-do-nai | believe God will take their souls to his bosom

E-lo-hei-nu | know God is my master, not anyone else

A-do-nai | acknowledge that God will see me through my problems

E-chad | believe He is the only one that can.



Can you lend a hand?

Volunteers are needed for:

- Office Assistance
- Writing for the Bulletin
- Caring Committee Visitors
- Opening Up for Services & Events
- Shabbat Morning Coffee Set-Up
- Organizing & Sponsoring Kiddush

To help, please contact the office!



Birthdays

George Brown
Michael London
Yevgeniya Gitelman
Judy Wurtzel
Jason Bass
Barry Adler
Paulette Katz
Jules Einhorn

Anniversaries

Bernice Lamey
Lori & Ron Miskoff
Jackie & Charles Adell



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Who Do I Call?

In the case of a death, call a medical authority, the funeral home and then the synagogue: **Rabbi Ari Saks | 732.442.2431 or 732.442.1373 | ari.saks@gmail.com**

MAY

- | | | | |
|-----------|--|-----------|---|
| 04 | 9:30am - Book Group | 22 | 10:00am - Brunch - Scholar-in-Residence |
| 04 | 12:00pm - Ask the Rabbi | 24 | 3:30pm - Veteran's Home Visit |
| 04 | 7:30pm - Middlesex Co. JCC Yom Hashoah Event | 25 | 12:00pm - Ask the Rabbi |
| 06 | 8:00pm - Shabbat Services - Celebration Shabbat | 27 | 8:00pm - Shabbat Services |
| 07 | 10:00am - Shabbat Services - Torah Talk | 28 | 10:00am - Shabbat Services |
| 10 | 3:30pm - Veteran's Home Visit | | |
| 11 | 12:00pm - Ask the Rabbi | | |
| 13 | 8:00pm - Shabbat Services - Pardon the Interruption | | |
| 14 | 10:00am - Shabbat Services - Pardon the Interruption | | |
| 14 | 1:15pm - Faithful Families | | |
| 18 | 9:30am - Book Group | | |
| 18 | 12:00pm - Ask the Rabbi | | |
| 20 | 8:00pm - Shabbat Services - Scholar-in-Residence | | |
| 21 | 10:00am - Shabbat Services - Scholar-in-Residence | | |
| 21 | 10:00am - Tot Shabbat | | |
| 21 | ~8:00pm - Dessert Reception - Scholar-in-Residence | | |

