



# News & Notes

Congregation Beth David PO Box 125 Amenia, NY 12501

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*Construction of new plaza begins*

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## A Note From Our Rabbi



Dear Members,

On top of a world that has been turned upside down by Covid-19, we find ourselves approaching the 2020 election with uncertainty and hope that the result will bring much needed harmony to our divided country.

Although it is a brand new year for the Jewish people (5781), our year together at Congregation Beth David is winding down. We will have worship services on November 7th & 21st, which will take place from my home. On December 12th and 26th, I will be back at Beth David and I am very pleased and honored that Rabbi Hershel Jaffe, former Rabbi of our congregation, will be our guest speaker (4:30pm) on the 26th. There will be Zoom information preceding each of the upcoming services with links, time and details.

In spite of the pandemic, we have continued to meet and our recent High Holy Day services were attended virtually by over 40 families. We were lucky to have the tech expertise of Michael & Abby Auerbach as well as the Shofar expertise of Dr. Mark Hochberg and Stewart Rosen. Many thanks to all of you who made these holidays as special as they were. We were also able to finally meet in person at the home of Ruth Lloyds & Bil Ehrlich for Sukkot. It was a beautiful day to be outside with approximately 60 members who socially distanced and wore masks until the Oneg was served.

I look forward to seeing you at our remaining services and wish you good health.

Rabbi Jon Haddon

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## A Note From Our President, Bil Ehrlich

We are underway with our new entry plaza and relocated doorway to the community room. Ducillo Construction, our general contractor, has started on the project. All the planting around the building has been removed as well as the sidewalk and stairs. Excavation for the low retaining walls has been completed and foundation footings are about to be poured. We will be regrading around the perimeter of the building to control water runoff and keep our foundation dryer. We are hoping that the weather cooperates and allows us to finish by the end of the year. It's very exciting to see the renovation launched. We are going to have a refreshed and beautiful building and one that is handicap accessible. Thanks again for all of your generous support in helping to make this happen.

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## Construction Photos



*Left: New Community Room Entrance    Right: Handicap Sidewalk for Community Room*



## A Former Congregant Remembers Beth David

Harriet Rothstein Cooper brought her family from Long Island to introduce them to the Synagogue she attended when growing up in Amenia. She has kindly shared her notes with us so that you could learn a little more about the history of our Shul.

My grandparents lived in a small shtetel (Jewish village) in Russia. They were able to leave and come to America because of a wealthy Jewish Belgian philanthropist, Baron de Hirsh. He tried to bribe the Russian rulers with money to allow Jewish children to attend school and was refused. He then decided it was time for these Russian Jews to leave. Baron de Hirsh not only paid the rulers to get the Jews out but provided transportation by boat and bought land for them in America. It was part of a program called **Am Olam** or "Eternal People" which aimed to help Jewish immigrants through farming the land. My grandparents were extremely fortunate to be part of this unusual program.

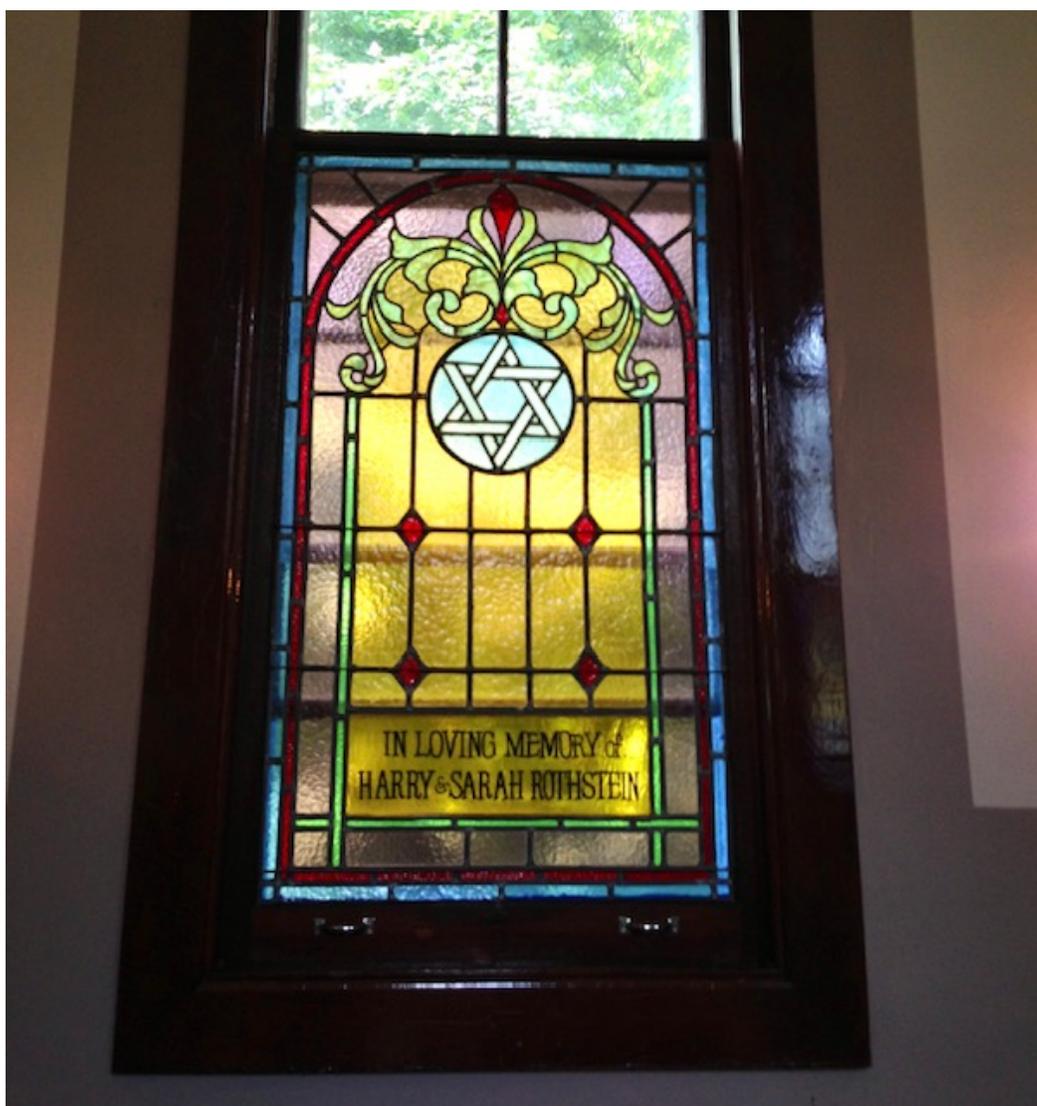
The Shul was built in 1929 with money from Baron de Hirsh and a mortgage taken by its members. There are windows in the sanctuary that were donated by my grandparents. My father was born here in 1909. The announcement in the local newspaper said "there was an infant born New Year's Day to a family that lives on a farm formerly owned by Julius Jary. It was of Jewish persuasion." The "IT" was my father. His name did not appear, and they called him an "it". The farm was referred to by its previous owner, who wasn't Jewish. My father went to a one-room schoolhouse. The school was heated by a stove in the front and had neither running water or electricity. Every morning they said prayers from a Christian Bible, but surprisingly, the school was closed on the High Holy Days.

What was it like growing up here? Amenia was a very small town without many Jewish families. I was the only Jewish student in my class of 23. What I learned to appreciate is that even in this small town, it was important to my parents to show us a Jewish way of life. They were very proactive in making sure we experienced a Jewish identity. One winter in a desperate attempt to balance the Shul budget, the board voted to turn off the heat Sunday morning when Hebrew School was scheduled

to meet. This was not acceptable to my parents, so they arranged for classes to be held in a saloon owned by one congregant. The bar was closed Sunday mornings because liquor couldn't be sold until 1pm.

By bringing my family here today to Beth David, it allows me to pay tribute to my grandparents who travelled to America and had to start an entirely new life very different from what they had known. They were brave and it was a difficult road, but they raised six children here. I also want to pay tribute to my parents who passed this heritage to me, and it is my deepest wish that I can pass it on to my family. There could be nothing more important to me than being at Congregation Beth David with my husband, children and grandchildren today. I am very thankful for having the privilege of this honor.

Harriet Rothstein Cooper  
August 2020



*Rothstein Window*



*Harriet Cooper Rothstein with her family*

## High Holidays 2020

These were our first virtual High Holiday Services which were held in the sanctuary with the technical help of Abby & Michael Auerbach and congregants Dr. Mark Hochberg and Stewart Rosen.





*Mark Hochberg and Stewart Rosen*

## Sukkot in Shekomeko



*Sasha Leven, Ben & Dean Ofer*

On Saturday October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 we all gathered at the property of Ruth Lloyds & Bil Ehrlich to celebrate Sukkot. The weather was perfect; we were socially distanced and Rabbi Haddon led a beautiful service. This was followed by an Oneg catered by Carol Kalikow and Ruth Lloyds. There were over 60 members in attendance.





### A Bat Mitzvah at Beth David



*On October 24<sup>th</sup> Beth David member Amy Jenter celebrated her Bat Mitzvah with her husband Carl in attendance. We were all able to watch her ceremony on Zoom. Congratulations Amy!*