

JANUARY
HIGHLIGHTS

Rabbi Schultz illuminates ways in which engaging with prayer and Jewish ritual can serve as a canvas for artistic expression. page 3

Rabbi Marion discusses her fascination with artistic representations of biblical text that serve as *midrash* and shares artists' renderings of stories from Exodus as we return to this book of the Torah. page 5

Alexa Cohen shows us how Kehilah students have demonstrated the Jewish value of *Tikkun Olam*. She also provides a window into the many ways Bonim embraces art. pages 6-7

The B'nai Israel Mental Health Group brings together congregants who hope to investigate best practices for promoting awareness and addressing the challenges of mental illness. page 10

Learn more about the meaningful opportunities for congregants to create social reform available through Congregations organized for a New Connecticut (CONNECT). page 15

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THE ART ISSUE

CELEBRATING OUR ARTISTS IN 2023!

Starting in January, our lobby will be transformed into an incredible art display! Our congregation has a number of talented artists, photographers, and painters. Each month, one of them will share their work in the B'nai Israel lobby for our entire congregation to enjoy. B'nai Israel has a proud tradition of celebrating the wonderful talents of our congregants, and we hope their artwork will inspire conversations and elevate everyone's experience of being together in our sacred space.

The exhibit schedule for 2023 is as follows:

- January — David Pressler
- February — Nathan Rosler
- March — Kehilah Photography Chug
- April — Lisa Greenberg

- May — Deena Spector
- June — Elaine Clayton
- July — Barbara Saltman
- August — Kate Eisemann

Thank you so much to Amy Rich for helping to get this project up and running, and, of course, to all our artists! If you are an artist and would like to share some of your work in the B'nai Israel lobby, we'd love to hear from you! Please email Rabbi Schultz, eschultz@cbibpt.org, if you are interested.

Artwork by Nathan Rosler



Personal space



Different Expressions of Rhythm



Outside looking in

WELCOME! WELCOME!

A warm welcome to our newest members. We look forward to their participation in our many programs and hope their affiliation will not only enrich their lives, but that of our congregation.

Anne Chessin & Michael Susol, Emmett & Parker Susol
Fairfield, CT

SHARING OUR JOY...

In celebration of:

Jeff Ackerman & Andrea Goodman, on the birth of their grandson Benjamin Edward Capuano to parents Dani Ackerman & John Paul Capuano.

David Kraft & Erica Kerber, on the birth of their son Owen Phillip Kraft, brother to Makayla and Ben.

Stephen & Grace Weitzer, on the birth of their granddaughter

Delilah Angela Grace Weitzer to parents Joseph & Tiffany Weitzer.

**If you would like to list something in Sharing Our Joy, please email the office with any information you would like to share.*

SINCERE SYMPATHY

We extend our sympathy to the bereaved families of:

Esther Siegel, mother of Rhea Siegel.

Lloyd Albin, father of David (Catherine) Albin

Raye David, mother of Ari (Wendy) David

BULLETIN BOARD

A Message from the Congregation B'nai Israel Brotherhood

Did you ever wonder where your brotherhood dues go?

In addition to supporting the Saturday morning breakfasts after the 8 a.m. services, the Temple Brotherhood has supported the Religious School Scholarship Fund as well as purchased items requested by the senior staff, such as the large TV screen you often see in use.

This year we are doing something different. The Brotherhood is honored to be able to pay for the repair of the chapel Torah. The Sofer will be taking the Torah and repairing it to preserve its integrity.

*For more information, please contact
Rich Rosen at rhosen@aol.com or
Jim Greenberg at jim@unionmachinery.com.*

Important Note about Online Worship Services

Please note that starting in January 2023, we will be shifting our online worship services from a Zoom meeting format to a Zoom webinar format. This means that congregants on Zoom will only see worship services and no longer one another's screens. You will still be able to chat with the rabbis and with one another and offer names for *yahrzeits* and for the *Mi Sheberach* healing prayer that will be read aloud. For those who wish to have a space to socialize before services, there will be a zoom room for anyone to come and schmooze online beforehand!

Please see Hashavua and our weekly Friday email for the updated links.

Shabbat Dinner and Speaker: Jake Joseph January 20, 2023

Join us for services, Shabbat dinner, and a post-dinner talk with Jake Joseph. The Rev. Jake Miles Joseph is ADL Connecticut's Associate Regional Director. His work at ADL focuses on incident response and statewide capacity building to fight hate and bias. He received his BA in French from Grinnell College and his Master of Divinity and Graduate Certificate in Human Rights from Emory University. Jake served UCC (Congregationalist) congregations for over seven years in Colorado and in Connecticut, focusing on LGBTQ+ equality and affordable housing. Since 2021, Jake has taken on the new challenge of combating antisemitism, extremism, hate, and bias on a daily basis as the associate director for the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) Connecticut Region.

Jake currently serves as a commissioner for Milford Housing and Redevelopment, on the DEI Committee of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials as the chair and founder of the LGBTQ Subcommittee, and he is a member of Grinnell College's national alumni council. He and his scientist husband are slowly renovating a 1930 home off the Milford Town Green.

Shabbat Dinner is \$25 per person. Please RSVP to Susie Hallman, shallman@cbibpt.org.



FROM THE RABBI'S DESK/RABBI EVAN SCHULTZ

WHY DO I LOVE JEWISH PRAYER? TO ME, IT'S AN ART FORM.

Every Friday night and Saturday morning, our community gathers together for what we Jews traditionally refer to as “services,” or “worship.” Certainly, for many of us, myself included, the time we set aside to gather in our sanctuary, chapel, or on the shores of the beach, prayerbooks in hand, is an opportunity for worship; to connect both personally and communally with God. We may offer thanks for the blessings in our lives, or sing hymns of praise for the divine, or ask God to help heal a loved one in need or bring peace to the world around us

Lately, however, I have been thinking about the notion of prayer, services, and Jewish ritual also as a form of art. Think about when you go to an art museum. Walking through the halls, looking at masterful paintings, wondrous sculptures, or beautiful photography — what does that experience evoke for you? Why does a piece of art speak to you or not? To me, an incredible piece of art is often a metaphor to understand the world from a new perspective, or see the Earth from a new angle, or understand my relationship to humanity in an incredible new way. The greatest artists, to me, are those who bring their authentic selves to the canvas and craft something that allows for interpretation and conversation; art is a medium to make a statement or offer a fresh perspective on the universe around us.

At its best, I think prayer can evoke the same kind of experience and fresh perspective as an incredible piece of art. Each week, we pick up our paintbrush and paint, and we become the artists! Collectively we begin to paint the walls with melodies, words, ideas, and songs. And just like a great artist, the prayer service reaches its greatest potential

when we each bring our authentic selves and our unique experiences to the space. When we allow ourselves to be vulnerable and open, when we bring the fullness of our week to the pews of our sanctuary. We don't want to be artists who simply make copies, for example, of the previous week's service; when we are truly at our best, we are artists that craft something beautiful and unique each and every week.

As Rabbi Larry Hoffman writes, “The one thing I know is that artists never just copy wholesale: composers write “variations” on other composers; poets, says the late great literary critic Harold Bloom, write in anxious response to

At its best, I think prayer can evoke the same kind of experience and fresh perspective as an incredible piece of art.

prior poets; Alfred North Whitehead says all philosophy is a footnote to Plato. We inevitably beg, borrow and steal from our predecessors, but we never just copy them. Dutch artist, Han von Meegeren (1889-1947) so successfully copied the style of Dutch master Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675) that for years, no one knew the difference. But if a Von Meegeren actually looks like a Vermeer, why isn't it as valuable as a Vermeer? Because it was just a copy, a good one, mind you, almost a perfect one, but even a brilliant

copy is just a copy.”

And we too want to create space for dynamic interpretation and developing meaning. Art, in my opinion, loses something when the artist tells you exactly what the piece means. The same is true for prayer and worship. We want to set the space to leave room for each participant to craft their own understanding of the *Shema*, or the *V'ahavta*, for example. And, too, we want to leave room for spontaneity and creativity in our sacred spaces! I agree with author Iain McGilchrist, who writes in his book, *The Master and His Emissary*, “Many things that are important to us simply cannot withstand being too closely attended to, since their nature is to be indirect or implicit. Forcing them into explicitness changes their nature completely, so that in such cases what we come to think we know ‘certainly’ is in fact not truly known at all. Too much self-awareness destroys not just spontaneity, but the quality that makes things live; the performance of music or dance, of courtship, love, humor, artistic creation and religious devotion become mechanical, lifeless, and may grind to a halt if we are too self-aware.”

As we celebrate our artists in the year 2023 at B'nai Israel, I invite you all to know that you too are artists! Join us each week on Friday night or Saturday morning as we paint the room with incredible prayer and song. At our best, we create beautiful, original art that inspires us to see the world in new ways, to be spontaneous creators, filling the room with Jewish creativity, inspiration, and meaning.

SHABBAT SERVICE SCHEDULE

In person on Fridays at 6:00 p.m. and Saturdays at 8:00 a.m. where indicated.
All services at this time can also be viewed on Zoom. The link is sent out in our weekly email.

Friday, January 6

5:00 p.m. Shabbat Play & Pray
6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom
Torah Portion – Vayechi, Genesis. 47:28-50:26
Haftarah – 1 Kings 2:1-12

Exodus, 1:1-6:1
Haftarah – Isaiah 27:6-28:13, 29:22-23

9:00 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast – in person
9:30 a.m. Torah Study – in person and on Zoom

Saturday, January 14

8:00 a.m. Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom
9:00 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast – in person
9:30 a.m. Torah Study – in person and on Zoom

Friday, January 27

6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom
Torah Portion – Bo, Exodus 10:1-13:16
Haftarah – Jeremiah 46:13-28

Saturday, January 7

8:00 a.m. Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom
9:00 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast – in person
9:30 a.m. Torah Study – in person and on Zoom
11:00 a.m. Bar Mitzvah of Matthew Oberhand, son of Mark & Heather Oberhand

Friday, January 20

6:00 p.m. Chanukah Shabbat Service! – in person and on Zoom
Torah Portion – Va'era, Exodus 6:2-9:35
Haftarah – Ezekiel 28:25-29:21
7:00 p.m. Community Chanukah dinner

Saturday, January 28

8:00 a.m. Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom
9:00 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast – in person
9:30 a.m. Torah Study – in person and on Zoom

Friday, January 13

6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom
Torah Portion – Shemot,

Saturday, January 21

8:00 a.m. Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom



Joint Mitzvah Morning/Green Team Event

On December 4, we raked leaves at Rockland Park, a park in Fairfield with native plants maintained by the Mill River Wetland Committee.

B'nai Israel participants were Mitch and Josh Weinstein, Michelle Serlin, and Anne Kirsch. Also present were members of the Board of Realtors and local neighbors.



FROM THE RABBI'S STUDY/RABBI SARAH R. MARION EXPLORING BIBLICAL TEXT THROUGH ART

In rabbinic school, I learned about an online collection of biblical art and commentary sponsored by the TALI Education Fund in Israel, which can be found at talivirtualmidrash.org.il/en. The writer and project coordinator for the site, Yoel Duman, was one of my professors of biblical history when I studied at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem. This online site has sparked my fascination with artistic representations of Jewish text and literature. The site — which organizes its artistic collection by biblical story, theme, topic, character, or event — proves that artistic representations of biblical text can serve as *midrash*: a type of commentary that fills in the “gaps” that the terse biblical text leaves unexplained. I love looking at the various ways that artists throughout the ages have envisioned and imagined how biblical characters might have looked, dressed, or interacted with one another, and how certain biblical events might have unfolded.

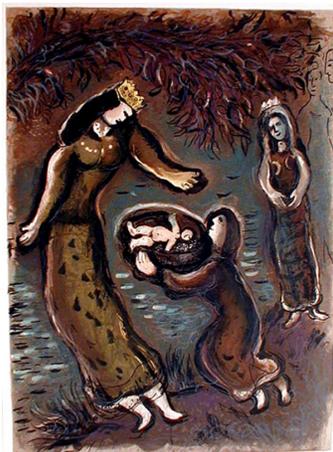
In Torah this month, we delve into the Book of Exodus — a book and a narrative that leaves so much to the imagination.

Where was Yocheved when she decided to put her baby boy in a basket down the Nile, and who was or wasn't there with her? What was the expression on Miriam's face as she watched from afar, while her brother floated towards Pharaoh's palace? What did the parting of the Red Sea really look like? In so many ways, our Exodus story lends itself so well to the art of visual midrash, with its grandiose and larger-than-life events, plot twists, and settings.

In honor of our January art issue and our upcoming Exodus Torah readings, I thought I would share with you some of the Exodus artistic images found on the Tali Virtual Midrash webpage that I find the most poignant and compelling. I would love to hear your reflections and reactions to these pieces and would welcome the opportunity to discuss the unresolved questions about the biblical text that each image attempts to answer. And, finally, if there are certain pieces of art—Jewish or not — that spark something in your own soul, please feel free to share!



Simeon Solomon, *The Mother of Moses*
Jochebed, mother of Moses, holds the infant in her arms. By her side, young Miriam looks at the baby and holds the ark.
Source: Exodus 2 | Portion: Shemot
Oil on canvas
Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington
Date: c. 1860



Marc Chagall, *Pharaoh's Daughter and Moses*
A maidservant shows the daughter of Pharaoh Moses in his ark. Miriam watches from a distance.
Source: Exodus 2
Portion: Shemot
Lithograph
Musée National
Marc Chagall, Nice
Date: 1965



Unknown Artist, Sarajevo Haggadah: *The Splitting of the Red Sea*
Two columns of Israelites walk between walls of water in which Egyptians drown. On the left, Pharaoh appears on the surface of the water, so far unharmed.
Source: Exodus 14 - 15
Portion: Beshalakh
Illuminated manuscript
National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo
Date: c. 1350



Laura James, *Crossing the Red Sea*
Miriam and the Israelite women sing and dance, with an angel above them, as Pharaoh's army is drowned in the sea. Moses stands to the far left, while God, surrounded by angels, hovers above him.
Source: Exodus 14 -15 | Portion: Beshalakh
Acrylic on canvas
Private collection, New York
Date: 1999



ALEXA COHEN/DIRECTOR OF THE EDUCATION CENTER



BONIM BUZZ

ART HAS
THE ROLE IN EDUCATION
OF HELPING CHILDREN
BECOME LIKE THEMSELVES
INSTEAD OF MORE
LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.
— SYDNEY GUREWITZ CLEMENS

Each spring, Bonim Preschool holds its annual fundraiser and celebration. The theme of the evening has changed a few times over the years (for example, magic, casino night, and a vendor fair) but the theme that we always come back to is art, with an art auction featuring masterpieces by the children of Bonim. Bonim parents get dressed up to come to the B'nai Israel Social Hall on a Saturday night and bid on their children's art.

Sometimes, it is a piece of pottery that all the children have worked together to create or a splatter paint canvas that was created on warm day on the playground. Often, the kids get hosed off after flinging their paint wherever they want (sometimes the fence and concrete underneath remain the true piece of art long after, the canvas is auctioned off). Other times, there are individual self-portraits painted by our pre-K, framed and displayed creatively on the walls of the social hall.

These art auctions helped us raise much of the money for B'nai Israel's new playground, which I am happy to say will finally be completed this school year. Art is all over Bonim Preschool each day. Paint, shaving cream, wine corks, dish brushes, branches, marbles; I could go on all day. Our youngest students in the infant and toddler rooms might experience their first interaction with a paint brush or glue stick at school.

While many parents expose their children to all types of art mediums at home, the truth is art is often messy and we hear from parents who are happy to have their children explore these items at school. While it is not a new phenomenon that most early childhood programs believe in the "process over product" approach, it is often hard for some adults to let their children's art not resemble the model. If a child chooses to put one big googly eye in the middle of their forehead on their self-portrait or wants 15 candle sticks on their Shabbat placemat, that is okay with us.

We provide mirrors for the kids to look at while they are drawing their portraits so they can see what their eyes look like and where they are on their face and then provide plenty of materials so they can create however they like. Prior to making the Shabbat placemats, we also read books and model which items (and how many) are in a Shabbat set. That explanation is just the tip of the iceberg regarding the way we support children at Bonim Preschool. Each child is celebrated for who they are and what they want to be and is encouraged to be proud and show it for everyone to see (if they want).



Giving Tuesday (and Thursday and Sunday too)!

Tikkun Olam literally means repairing the world. That is what the Kehilah students have been focusing a great deal of attention on this year. This is evident from the coins (and dollars) that the kindergartners, first, second and third graders collect each week to add to their classroom tzedakah box to the ADL workshops that the upper grades participate in and the many mitzvah projects that the keif (fun) students work on each Sunday and the seventh and eighth graders participate in many Tuesdays. The Kehilah kids know they have a Jewish responsibility to make this world a better place in any way they can.

The students in Kehilah recently baked cookies for St. John's and Operation Hope (the two organizations that B'nai Israel supports to help our neighbors with the challenge of food

insecurity) on both Tuesday night and Sunday mornings. In addition, the keif students decorated toolbelt aprons for the Mitzvah Morning volunteers who volunteered at Habitat for Humanity so they could build in style. The week before Thanksgiving, the students brought in food donations to support families from Central High School by adding to their family feasts. In December, the students supported another Mitzvah Morning and wrapped presents for Al's Angels toy drive.

These are examples of ways the students are helping to repair the world by giving items, but equally important are the lessons they learn about being fair to everyone and treating others with respect. The ADL conducts several workshops each year with the Kehilah students on the topic of antisemitism and how important it is to end hate for good and stand up for what they believe and who they are as Jews.

I am very proud of our Kehilah students and all they do for others.



4th grade keif making muffins



Habitat volunteers sporting their "fancy" aprons



8th grade baking for Operation Hope



Thanksgiving food donations

Thank you to everyone who reached out to join the ADL Kulanu working group. We are excited for our new co-chairs, Jeff Madwed and Andrea Ruskin, and grateful to them for stepping up! For meeting information, check Hashavua or email Chris Rocha at crocha@cbibpt.org or Susan Walden at swalden@cbibpt.org.

REPORT AN ANTISEMITIC OR BIAS INCIDENT

We all have a responsibility to report and respond to antisemitism or hate when we see it.

TO REPORT AN ANTISEMITIC OR HATE INCIDENT, VISIT:
[ADL.ORG/REPORTINCIDENT-KULANU](https://www.adl.org/reportincident-kulanu)

IF YOU FEAR FOR YOUR SAFETY OR THE SAFETY OF OTHERS,
CALL 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY.

What should I report?

You should report any incident you perceive as antisemitic, biased or hateful.

Here are some examples:

- Antisemitic or other hateful graffiti in public places, including synagogues and schools.
- Vandalism of religious artifacts such as mezuzahs or menorahs and holy places.
- Online harassment, including hateful social media posts and emails. Remember to take a screenshot!
- Verbal harassment, including emails and voicemails.
- Media-based incidents, including antisemitic or hateful content in a news story.
- White supremacist propaganda.

Make an impact in the fight against antisemitism and hate.

Scan this QR code to report an incident:



JANUARY DONATIONS

(We greatly appreciate all donations to our special purpose funds.)

Rabbi Schultz Discretionary Fund

Bonnie Alterman, in memory of Miriam and Ed Payess.

Edward Burger & Shari Elias, in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz for all his support and in memory of Anita Burger-Kolonjari.

Aaron & Pamela Graf, in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz for being such an integral part of Dylan's Bar Mitzvah and conducting such a beautiful service.

Barbara Kauders, in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz for all of his good work.

George & Alice Kelly, in memory of brother Peter Zimroth, and in appreciation to Rabbi Shultz.

Andrea, Ethan, & Juliette Macnow, in memory of our grandmother and great grandmother, Esther Spiegel.

Luise Mann, Marc Rottman, Adrienne Levi and Lucas, in memory of Anita Burger.

Luise Mann, in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz.

Rebecca & Richard Rosen, in honor of naming of our grandson, Levi Walden Gombos.

Scott, Susan, Elena & Evan Smith, in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz for his comfort and friendship following the passing of our mother/grandmother, Linda Paris Smith.

Jon & Cleo Sonneborn, in memory of Esther Spiegel, mother of Rhea Spiegel.

Rhea Spiegel and Kathy Spiegel, in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz for his support, kindness, and caring during our mother's funeral and Shiva.

Fredric & Ronni Zinn, in memory of Allan Shumofsky; in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz.

Rabbi Marion Discretionary Fund

Ken & Lori Berger, in memory of Lester Davis, Lori Berger's father.

Edward Burger & Shari Elias, in appreciation to Rabbi Marion for all her support and in memory of Anita Burger-Kolonjari.

Aaron & Pamela Graf, with thanks to Rabbi Marion for being a big part of Dylan's Bar Mitzvah and his Jewish education.

Sheila Kaminsky, with thanks to Linda & Jay Matz for a wonderful Thanksgiving.

Barbara Kauders, in appreciation to Rabbi Marion for all of her good work.

George & Alice Kelly, in memory of brother Peter Zimroth, and in appreciation to Rabbi Marion.

Jacqueline & Jeffrey Madwed, in appreciation to Rabbi Marion for her words during the unveiling for Ruth Madwed. Thank you.

Luise Mann, in appreciation to Rabbi Marion.

Ellen Sheiman and Family, in appreciation to Rabbi Sarah Marion for the gravesite unveiling for the stone for Dr. Robert Sheiman.

Cleo & Jon Sonneborn, in celebration of the birth of Benjamin Edward Capuano, grandson of Andrea Goodman and Jeff Ackerman.

Rhea Spiegel, in appreciation to Rabbi Marion for her caring and kindness.

Rabbi James Prosnit Legacy Fund

Mark & Barbara Edinberg, in honor and celebration of the birth of Benjamin Edward Capuano, grandson of Jeff Ackerman and Andrea Goodman.

Barbara Kauders, in celebration of

Leslie Neigher's marriage to Greg Kaplan.

Ellen Sheiman, in memory of Esther Spiegel, what an amazing and accomplished woman.

Cantor Rubel Discretionary Fund

Edward Burger & Shari Elias, in appreciation to Cantor Rubel for all her support and in memory of Anita Burger-Kolonjari.

Aaron & Pamela Graf, in appreciation to Cantor Rubel for being such an integral part of Dylan's Bar Mitzvah and conducting such a beautiful service.

Barbara Kauders, in appreciation to Cantor Rubel for all of her good work.

Andrea, Ethan, & Juliette Macnow, in memory of our grandmother and great grandmother, Esther Spiegel.

Rhea Spiegel and Kathy Spiegel, in appreciation to Cantor Rubel.

Music Fund

Ellen Sheiman, in appreciation to Cantor Rubel, for the honor of chanting.

Enhancement Fund

Carol Barsky, in memory of sister-in-law, Gertrude Barsky Kelly.

Barbara Berkowitz, in loving memory of husband Barry Berkowitz.

Nancy Bond, in memory of Esther Spiegel.

Dale & Jerry Demner, in memory of Lorraine Hirsch, sister of Jerry Demner; in memory of Jessie Demner, mother of Jerry Demner.

Abe & Sarah Fridman, in memory of Anita Burger, mother of Allison Burger, may your mother's memory be a blessing.

JANUARY DONATIONS

(We greatly appreciate all donations to our special purpose funds.)

Michael Jacobson & Anne Lampert, in memory of Jake, father of Michael.

The Kindergarten Kehilah Class, in memory of Anita Burger, mother of Allison Burger. May your mother's memory be a blessing.

Albert & Alida Kleban, in memory of Al's father, Irving Kleban.

Jacqueline & Jeffrey Madwed, in honor of the birth of Beth & Jordan Posner's granddaughter, Aurelia; in memory of Anita Burger.

Luise Mann, in memory of Allan Shumofsky, husband of Claire Shumofsky; in loving memory of Muriel Mann and Mary Plotkin.

Jon & Cleo Sonneborn, in memory of Allan Shumofsky, husband of Claire Shumofsky.

Judith Stern, in loving memory of Sylvia Edelson, mother of Judi Stern and Debra Goldstein.

**Arthur and Gladys Lunin Fund
Fairfield County Community
Foundation**, a donation.

**Bonim Preschool Enrichment Fund
Luise Mann**, in appreciation to Alexa Cohen and Sarah Fridman.

**Religious School Scholarship Fund
B'nai Israel Brotherhood**, a donation to help provide a Jewish education to a needy family.

Stew & Dale Barcham, in memory of Anita Burger, mother of Allison Burger.

**Rabbi Arnold Sher Social Action Fund
Bari Dworkin**, in memory of Esther Spiegel.

Barbara & Mark Edinberg, in memory of Esther Spiegel.

Sheryl Santiago, in loving memory of Esther Spiegel.

Scott Smith and Lisa Goodman, in memory of our mother, Linda Paris Smith.

Jon & Cleo Sonneborn, in memory of Clark "Rowdy" Rawdon, Cleo's dad.

**Vision Loan Reduction Fund
Patti & Samuel Rosenberg**, in appreciation of Nancy & Irv Silverman.

**Gillette Judaic Enrichment Fund
Carol Barsky**, in memory of Esther Spiegel.
Scott, Susan, Elena & Evan Smith, in memory of our father/grandfather Stephen Smith.

**Yakhani Caring Fund
Mark & Liz Nigrosh**, in honor of the marriage of Jacob Blumenthal and Abby Calish.

HIGH HOLY DAY APPEAL DONATIONS

Pillar of Congregation

Jill & Steve Elbaum
Rabbi Jim Prosnit & Wendy Bloch
Rabbi Arnold & Serena Sher
Mindy & Jeffrey Siegel

Benefactor of Congregation

Daniel & Debbie Viens

President's Circle

Alan & Karen Blau
Marcia Cohen & Mark Hotchkiss
Gail and Gary Felberbaum

Alice & George Kelly
Randy & Beth Reich
Marcie & David Slepian

High Holy Day Appeal Donation

Jeffrey Dworken
Geoffrey Gladstein
Liane May & Peter Greene
Joni & Michael Greenspan
Jordan & Beth Posner
Scott Smith & Susan Zweibaum Smith

REFLECTIONS FROM THE B'NAI ISRAEL MENTAL HEALTH GROUP

Greetings Everyone.

As you may know, mental illness is at the forefront of issues that need to be addressed in our country. At our meeting on November 7, the committee discussed ways in which we can advocate on both a state level and national level for more awareness of mental health problems. Since the pandemic, there has been an increase in anxiety and depression that has affected many children who were isolated at home for nearly two years as well as adults who had to cope with the many challenges of working from home and taking care of other family members. We talked about finding a speaker to address both these issues in May, which is mental health awareness month.

The group thought having a mental health professional, who treats people with these issues, speak would be very valuable for our congregants. If you are interested or know of someone who may be interested in being a guest speaker on the topic of depression and/or anxiety, please contact Beth Lazar, the committee leader. She can be reached at 203-336-9781.



(203) 336-1858 • www.cbibpt.org

The Bulletin of Congregation B'nai Israel is published every month except July.

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Scott Smith	Deputy Bulletin Editor

Congregation B'nai Israel, founded in 1858, seeks to be a vibrant Reform synagogue dedicated to the perpetuation of Jewish life and values within the framework of contemporary American Judaism. We are a gateway to Judaism for all. The Congregation B'nai Israel Bulletin publishes monthly 11 times a year (except July). To submit an article, announcement or ad to the Bulletin, please contact Co-Editors, Amy Pressman at apressman@cbibpt.org or Lauren Tropp at ltropp@cbibpt.org. Submissions are due by the first day of the month preceding the publication month. We reserve the right to edit all submissions for length or style.

We also discussed supporting The Third Place, an alternative to police custody or the emergency room for people in mental health crisis. A workshop on opioids, fentanyl, and how to use Narcan was also proposed.

We invite anyone who is interested in joining our committee to attend a meeting. The committee meets once

a month on Zoom. Please watch Hashavua for date, time, and Zoom link information. We welcome all ideas and suggestions about how we can work together effectively to improve mental health awareness in our community. It is our hope to have more people join us monthly.

WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

CONGREGATION B'NAI ISRAEL CORE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

At B'nai Israel we...

- ...TREAT each person in our community as created b'tzelem Elohim, in the image of the divine,
- ...DEVELOP, foster and nurture vibrant and meaningful Jewish lives in accordance with the values of our Torah and sacred texts,
- ...BUILD and deepen sacred relationships both within the synagogue community and the broader Greater Bridgeport community,
- ...ACT justly with a sacred obligation to tikkun olam (repair the world),
- ...FOSTER and deepen a love, commitment and connection to the land and people of Israel.

JANUARY EVENTS

Bagels and Burning Questions: A New Sunday Series with Rabbi Schultz Sunday, January 22, 9:45-11:15 a.m.

Topic: What is Truth?

Join with Rabbi Schultz over bagels to discuss some of Judaism's deepest burning questions! January will focus on the question of truth. What is truth? Is the Bible "true"? What does Judaism have to say about truth in a modern era of "truthiness"? Join with Rabbi Schultz to explore some of these burning questions and meet some amazing congregants! Open to all ages.

Rosh Chodesh Shevat/January Gathering: Join us for a Potluck Tu Bishvat Tasting! Monday, January 23, 7:00–9:00 p.m.

During the Hebrew month of Shevat, we celebrate Tu Bishvat, also known as the "Birthday of the Trees." On Tu Bishvat, it is customary to participate in a Tu Bishvat seder featuring foods that grow on trees. In particular, we eat and celebrate these three categories of fruits and nuts:

~ Category #1: Fruits/nuts with an inedible outer covering and edible inside (melons, nuts, pomegranates, coconuts, citrus, bananas, etc.)

~ Category #2: Fruits with an edible outside but inedible pit inside (dates,

olives, plums, peaches, apples, avocados, nectarines, pears, etc.)

~ Category #3: Fruits that are entirely edible (berries, figs, grapes, etc.)

For this Rosh Chodesh gathering, please cook or purchase an appetizer, entrée, or dessert that features food(s) from one of these three categories. Watch your email for an online sign up, where you can indicate which category you will feature in your dish. *(A dish with foods from more than one category is okay, but please sign up for only one category on the sign-up page.)*

At our gathering, we will enjoy everyone's dishes and cooking creativity, and we will participate in an abbreviated Tu Bishvat seder ritual altogether. Recipe/ingredient cards are welcomed and encouraged! For questions, please reach out to Rabbi Sarah at smarion@cbibpt.org.

Seniors Lunches

Join with our B'nai Israel Seniors community for a monthly lunch series to schmooze with one another and discuss interesting and important topics of the day. Please bring your own lunch. Coffee and tea will be served. Meet in the Natt Family Library.

January 24 at noon—David Pressler will speak about some of his artwork

that will be on display in the synagogue during the month of January.

February 21 at noon—Jake Joseph from the ADL will speak about antisemitism and the local work of the ADL in Connecticut.

B'nai Israel takes New York City! "I'll Have What She's Having: The Jewish Deli" at the New York Historical Society Sunday, April 2, 2023

Bus leaves B'nai Israel at 9:15 a.m.; returns approximately 4:00 p.m.

Join us for a one-hour private guided group tour of "I'll Have What She's Having: The Jewish Deli" at the New York Historical Society. The tour will take place from 11:15 a.m.–12:15 p.m., followed by lunch on your own on the Upper West Side. Bus will leave Upper West Side at approximately 2:30 p.m. and return to B'nai Israel at 4:00 p.m. Cost of trip is \$70 per person – includes cost of bus and admission to museum.

Limited to 40 participants. Please RSVP to Susie Hallman, shallman@cbibpt.org.

CEMETERY PLOTS AVAILABLE

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On CONECT

by Emily Lehrman and Jeff Schwartz

CONECT is an interfaith network of over 30 congregations that organizes for legislative change on pressing issues. On Sunday, October 23, B'nai Israel hosted the Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut (CONECT) Pre-election Candidate Assembly for 500 participants in-person and online. At the assembly, Republican and Democratic candidates for governor, secretary of state, and treasurer supported positions for which CONECT advocated, including the Early Vote referendum, education, criminal justice reform, mental health initiatives, and closing the wealth gap.

Since its inception, B'nai Israel congregants have made significant contributions to CONECT. We've actively supported legislative reforms for criminal justice and health care, and since 2018, have organized grass-roots voter registration in the local area, particularly in an ongoing relationship with Housatonic Community College. Recently, we joined with other Reform congregations to write postcards to potential voters in the South, hosting two postcard parties for all ages at B'nai Israel.

In 2019, our "2 Books, 2 Movies Discussions on Racism in America" series was recognized with an Irving J. Fein Social Justice Award at the URJ's Biennial in Chicago. Since then, we've continued to sponsor film and book discussions every year. In 2021-2022, several dozen of us read Clint Smith's award-winning book, *How the Word is Passed*. This winter, we plan to read *Solito* by Javier Zamora, a memoir of his solo journey at age nine from El Salvador to reunite with his parents in the U.S.

You can join the book discussion, a CONECT issue team (education, health/mental health, gun violence prevention, and criminal legal reform), and/or participate in a local or state-wide action. B'nai Israel's CONECT Core Team, which meets every three months, is also open to new members. Let us know if you are interested.

Emily Lehrman (emilylehrman@gmail.com) and Jeff Schwartz (jeff.schwartz2991@gmail.com), co-chairs of CONECT at B'nai Israel.



Photo by: Jeff Schwartz



Photos above by: Jack O'Melia



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BIFTY JANUARY 2023

BIFTY is B'nai Israel's high school youth group. We meet on Thursdays from 7:00–8:30 p.m. in the BIFTY lounge in the back of the education wing. In December, we officially welcomed B'nai Israel 8th graders to join BIFTY! Come to BIFTY when it works for your schedule, whether that is every week, every other week, or once a month; you are always welcome! There is no need to RSVP. To stay up to date on upcoming events, follow us on Instagram @cbi.bifty and reach out to advisor Marisa munderberger@gmail.com with any questions. We look forward to seeing you at our

January events!

We will be meeting on:

- January 12
- January 19
- January 26

Look out for next month's bulletin with the date of our annual ice-skating trip!