

OCTOBER HIGHLIGHTS

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WHAT IS THE WOMEN OF B'NAI ISRAEL, AND WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SISTERHOOD?

By Susan Walden



Since I became President, I have been asked by many members, new and old, about our Sisterhood. Other than seeing the optional fee listed on everyone's statement, most congregants do not even know that the Sisterhood still exists or what they have been doing.

We have a long tradition of Sisterhood involvement at Congregation B'nai Israel. Twody Schless and Jan Jacobs, who have been treasurer and president for many years, have been holding down the fort on their own. Although they have been passionate about the mission, our congregation has divided up much of what Sisterhood used to accomplish and, sadly, younger women who work or shlep kids all over town don't have the time to invest or feel inspired by the mission of the past Sisterhoods.

Historically, sisterhoods (and Congregation B'nai Israel's is no exception) have been fundraising arms of congregations and have been made up of the elder women of the congregation who ran Purim carnivals,

contributed to refreshments at onegs — where they actually poured your coffee — and purchased Bibles for confirmands. But as times changed and the Union for Reform Judaism wanted to engage younger women, The Women of Reform Judaism was born. In 1993, the Union voted to change the name to try and reach women of all ages, providing opportunities for connection. We have come a long way here at Congregation B'nai Israel as well, and I am happy to share that what we once called the B'nai Israel Sisterhood is now called the Women of B'nai Israel.

So, what have they been doing? You may not know that your optional dues have gone to purchase a couch for the rabbi, furniture for the women's lounge and BIFTY, and the refreshments for the Sisters' Schmoozes (gatherings to schmooze without an agenda in women's homes) and the Women's Game Nights.

But, I have heard that you want more, and I am committed to making that happen. Which is why a group of six women from all age groups recently met with Rabbi Marion and me to develop a plan of action and a mission statement, which is:

Our mission is to bring together women of all ages to serve our temple, support our community, and enrich our lives through social events, educational and spiritual programs, fundraising and community service.

We also brainstormed some ways to engage a multigenerational group of women. The consensus was that the Women of B'nai Israel (WOBI) would be an umbrella group that would work with and support other groups at the temple. WOBI will help with

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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.

Steven & Jessica Reisberg and Kyla, Hailey & Felicity
Fairfield, CT

Joshua & Stephanie Scherr and Abigail
Bridgeport, CT

Vladimir & Allison Galperin and Alexa & Natalie
Fairfield, CT

Ilana Roby and Laila & Hayes
Fairfield, CT

Jessica Levy & Luca Bruga and Jackson, Andie & Lex
Fairfield, CT

SINCERE SYMPATHY

We extend our sympathy to the bereaved families of:

Adele Zuckerman

Richard Lieb, father of Rick Lieb (Karen Spring)

Jerry Pressman, husband of Jane Pressman, father of Karen (Ken) Ferleger, Steven (Julie) Pressman, and Jeffrey (Amy) Pressman.

SHARING OUR JOY

In Celebration of:

Judy & Michael Katz, on the belated wedding celebration of their son Peter and Ailish Keating, who were legally married during COVID.

BULLETIN BOARD

MITZVAH MORNING

Mitzvah Morning
Sunday, October 22, 2023
10:00 a.m. – noon

For our October Mitzvah morning, we will be working with the Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants (CIRI). The event will take place at Congregation B'nai Israel on October 22, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. More details will follow in future emails and in the October bulletin on how volunteers can participate and help CIRI succeed in its mission.

CIRI is a statewide nonprofit organization that provides services assisting refugees and immigrants in resolving legal, economic, linguistic and social barriers so that they become self-sufficient, integrated, and contributing members of the community. CIRI families have a significant need for health and wellness items, as well as school supplies.

To learn more about CIRI, visit <https://cirict.org/>.

Mitzvah Morning
November 12, 2023
10:00 a.m.

For our November Mitzvah Morning project, we will be partnering with

nOURish BRIDGEPORT to bake pies for their upcoming Thanksgiving Feast in a Box event.

nOURish BRIDGEPORT, a regular Congregation B'nai Israel partner, will be supplying Thanksgiving meals to those in need within the Bridgeport community. Congregation B'nai Israel volunteers will have the opportunity to help complete those meals.

We will be meeting at the nOURish BRIDGEPORT headquarters, located at 2200 North Avenue in Bridgeport at 10:00 a.m. on November 12. Once there, we will get a brief tour of the kitchen and set ourselves up to start baking large quantities of holiday pies.

Volunteers are encouraged to bring some of the necessary ingredients, which include flour, butter, sugar, salt, apples, blueberries, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cornstarch.

This will no doubt be a rewarding event as we do our part to feed hungry families in our own backyard.

About nOURish BRIDGEPORT: nOURish BRIDGEPORT (capitalization intentional) is a food-centered, volunteer-powered, community-anchored 501(c)(3) bringing hope to Bridgeport through direct service programs.

Bridgeport is defined as a food desert, with 1 in 4 residents facing daily food insecurity and inaccessibility to nutritious produce. nOURish provides thousands of neighbors weekly with groceries from its food pantry, formula and diapers from the baby center, hot meals from the soup kitchen, education through English classes and hope from their hearts. Learn more at www.nourishbpt.org.

Please contact Nina Silberman at ninahv@aol.com or Mitch Weinstein at mitchellew@yahoo.com for more information. We look forward to seeing you.



GIFT SHOP

Looking for a new Kiddush cup or candlesticks? Check out the Judaica Boutique, open on Sundays during Kehilah.



FROM THE RABBI'S DESK/RABBI EVAN SCHULTZ

PASSING LECH L'CHA TO THE NEXT GENERATION

I've been to many bet mitzvah services throughout my life. My own, of course, back in the early 1990s, when I read from the Torah at Temple Beth Hillel Beth El in Wynnewood, PA. And as a 13-year-old Jewish day school student, I was often on the "circuit," going to services and parties almost every Saturday for an entire school year, amassing a most excellent collection of bar and bat mitzvah t-shirts, flannel boxer shorts, and inflatable electric guitars.

And now all these years later as a rabbi, I have had the honor of joining with so many of you at your child's services, learning from them as they offer their d'var Torah, sharing in the joy with family members and friends as they lead the community in prayer and the weekly Torah portion. I love listening to the parents as they impart words to their kids about the meaning of the day (and perhaps share a few embarrassing but loving stories as well).

And now Jenny and I are just a few weeks away from passing this tradition on to our oldest child, Koby, who will be called to

the Torah as a bar mitzvah at the end of October. I can't quite believe the moment is so near, as I'm sure so many parents have remarked as they order kippot and centerpieces for their children's services and celebrations.

Koby was just two years old when we arrived at Congregation B'nai Israel. We attended Havurah each week, both as a rabbi and as a family looking to raise our child with a love of his faith and Jewish community. He has grown up here, attending Kehilah, participating in the Jewish holidays, and getting lots of sound advice from the Prosnit boys about what it's like to be the rabbi's child. Thank you, Jonathan, Ethan, and Jake!

What's really quite special for me personally is that Koby will be chanting from the same Torah portion that I did as a bar mitzvah all those years ago, parshat Lech L'cha. I have always loved the message of that Torah portion, about going on unknown journeys and finding strength both from God and from loved ones along the way. It always felt so true to life — from when I went to college,

to when I moved to new homes as a child, to when Jenny and I moved here to Connecticut back in 2012 so I could begin as your assistant rabbi alongside Rabbi Prosnit and Cantor Blum.

I know that I can't quite anticipate what it will feel like to watch Koby stand on our bimah in a few weeks, but I'm sure it will move me as a parent and rabbi of our community in countless ways. I could not be more grateful that Koby has grown up with so many role models here at Congregation B'nai Israel, to show him what it means to live out the values of our tradition, both within our walls and outside of them.

I hope you will join us on the Friday night of Koby's bar mitzvah, on October 27, from 5:00 – 6:00 p.m. as we will have an expanded and special oneg with our community and our family and friends from across the country before services. And certainly, the service on October 28 is open to all who wish to join. Thank you for making this such a special Jewish home for our future Jewish adult. I can't wait to experience it all.

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Sisters' Schmoozes, Game Nights, Rosh Chodesh, and the Women's Seder and will offer financial support for refreshments for other programs as well. On occasion, you may see that coffee prior to Kehilah or a Havurah program is sponsored by WOBI, or that a Mitzvah Morning is being held in conjunction with WOBI. The thought was, why reinvent the wheel? Why not include WOBI leadership in great programs that already exist in an effort to engage women of all ages?

The first event will be a Women of B'nai Israel Sisters' Sukkah Schmooze at

5:30 p.m. on October 3. By the time of this publication, you will have heard about or attended it!

So, how can you help? If you would like to be part of the brainstorming group to continue to formulate the direction of the Women of B'nai Israel, please reach out to me or Rabbi Marion and let us know. We hope to have another meeting in late fall to discuss next steps.

Additionally, if you have not paid your \$40 dues (which appear as an optional fee on your statement), you can do so

right on ShulCloud, or you can drop off payment or mail it to the temple anytime. Sadly, only 100 congregants have chosen to support the Women of B'nai Israel so far this year. Dues are the only source of revenue used for all of the women's programming you are asking for (most of the events and programs are free of charge for participants) and to help our youth and our synagogue as noted above.

I know you will be as excited as I am to see where the Women of B'nai Israel is headed. Just remember, it is no longer your bubbie's Sisterhood!

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.

Sh'mini Atzeret – Simchat Torah

Friday, October 6

5:00 – 5:30 p.m. Pre-Shabbat Meditation with the Clergy.
6:00 p.m. Outdoor Shabbat Service and Simchat Torah Celebration
Torah Portion – Deut. 33:1-34:12, Gen. 1:1-2:3
Haftarah – Joshua 1:1-18

Saturday, October 7

10:00 a.m. Simchat Torah Yizkor
Sanctuary – in person and on Zoom

Friday, October 13

6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service Sanctuary – in person and on Zoom
Torah Portion – B'reishit, Gen. 1:1-6:8
Haftarah – Isaiah 42:5-43:10

Saturday, October 14

8:00 a.m. Shabbat Service Chapel – in person and on Zoom
9:00 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast – in person
9:30 a.m. Torah Study – in person
11:00 a.m. Bar Mitzvah of Eli Wolfson, son of Al Wolfson and Loren Greenberg

Friday, October 20

6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service Chapel – in person and on Zoom
Torah Portion – Noach, Gen. 6:9-11:32
Haftarah – Isaiah 54:1-55:5

Saturday, October 21

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

11:00 a.m. Bat Mitzvah of Samantha Dreizen, daughter of Jonathan and Shelley Dreizen

Friday, October 27

6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service Sanctuary – in person and on Zoom
Torah Portion – Lech L'cha, Gen. 12:1-17:27
Haftarah – Isaiah 40:27-41:16

Saturday, October 28

8:00 a.m. Shabbat Service Chapel – in person and on Zoom
9:00 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast – in person
9:30 a.m. Torah Study – in person
11:00 a.m. Bar Mitzvah of Koby Schultz, son of Rabbi Evan Schultz and Jenny Goldstein

LOOKING FOR A WAY TO TAKE ACTION TO HELP THE ENVIRONMENT IN 5784?

JOIN THE CONGREGATION B'NAI ISRAEL GREEN TEAM AND
MEET OTHERS IN OUR COMMUNITY WHO SHARE YOUR PASSION!

Ongoing Green Team Projects:

- Waste reduction and recycling efforts, including planning for curbside composting
- Planning environmentally-themed educational/community events
- Local and national advocacy
- Maintaining and expanding our new pollinator garden
- Clothing swaps
- Efforts to reduce energy at CBI and among congregants

Join our Bnai Israel and Bonim Shares Facebook group (similar to a “buy nothing” group) to connect with others in our community by gifting or requesting unused household items.



Please join us at one of our upcoming meetings:

October 9 at 7:00 p.m. (on Zoom),
November 14 at 7:00 p.m. (on Zoom),
December 18 at 7:00 p.m. (in-person at CBI).

Please contact co-chair Michelle Serlin (mserlin@mac.com) or Anya Mezak (anyamezak@gmail.com) for more information.

AARP DRIVING CLASS

Please join our congregant Ernest “Ernie” Malecki on Wednesday, October 11 from 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. for this one-day class designed by AARP for senior drivers.

Please pre-register to Ernie directly by calling 203-913-6742 or emailing enmalecki113@gmail.com.

The cost is \$20 for AARP members and \$25 for non-members (checks payable to AARP). Passing this course can save you money on your car insurance.



BOOKS MATTER: INTRODUCING OUR NEW BANNED AND CHALLENGED BOOK GROUP AT CBI

BY RABBI MARION

Our senior staff team spent time this past summer reading banned and challenged books. We each chose a book from the American Library Association's list of the top 13 most challenged books of 2022 to read and discuss with the rest of the group. The books that we read all included beautiful, important, and powerful lessons on identity, inclusivity, and love. (For the full list, visit <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/top10>).

Through our reading, we also learned about the difference between books that are banned and books that are challenged. As the ALA writes, "A challenge is an attempt to remove or restrict books, based upon the objections of a person or group. A banning is the removal of those books. Challenges do not simply involve a person expressing a point of view; rather, they are an attempt to remove books from a curriculum or library, thereby restricting the access of others."¹

Last winter, I delivered a sermon about the alarming number of books currently being banned or challenged across the country. Since then, the trend has worsened. The organization PEN America, which stands to protect free expression in the United States and worldwide, reported the removal or censorship of 1,477 individual books during the first six months of the 2022–2023 school year, an increase of 28 percent from the previous six months, which equates to more instances of book banning than recorded in either the first or the second half of the 2021–2022 school year. Over that six-month timeline, the total instances of book bans affected over 800 titles, as over 100 titles were removed from student access each month. PEN is currently tracking over 50 new grassroots groups that are now

pushing for book bans, three-quarters of which didn't exist before the year 2021.²

Though, fortunately, we have yet to see the same level of book challenge and banning here in Connecticut that we are seeing elsewhere in the country, this is an issue that warrants our attention. Because for us, books matter. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks describes the extraordinary connection that we have with our Torah, our holiest ritual object, which, in the most basic terms, is simply, a book: "Judaism is the story of a love affair between a people and a book,"³ he writes. And, of course, from this relationship with Torah, we earn our designation as "The People of the Book." To us, books matter. And even when books are heartbreaking, and painful, and uncomfortable, and even when they challenge our most cherished values and ideals, we read them anyway. And we respect them, anyway. Because as much as we love and adore our sacred scroll, there is, perhaps, no book that is more heartbreaking, more painful, more uncomfortable, and more challenging than the Torah scrolls that are housed in our congregation. In every book of Torah, we find corruption. And competition. And misery. And greed. And trauma. And physical and sexual violence. Who is not uncomfortable, reading this book? It would certainly be much easier, and much more pleasant, to read something a bit lighter each week. But we read it, and we stick with it, because for us, books matter.

And books matter, because they allow us to see into worlds that we might never otherwise be able to identify with, appreciate, or understand. Overwhelmingly, book banners continue to target stories by and about people of color and LGBTQ+ individuals. According to PEN, 30% of the unique

titles that were banned in the first half of the 2022–2023 school year were books about race or racism, or featured characters of color. Meanwhile, 26% of those unique titles had LGBTQ+ characters or themes.⁴

When we consider just how many banned and challenged books give voice to those who have been persecuted, marginalized, and denigrated within our society, we realize that book bans aren't really about sex, or violence, or profanity. As Monica Washington, the 2014 Texas State Teacher of the Year, writes:

Those who support book bans often try to hide behind a banner of 'protecting children,' when what they are actually doing is banning the life experiences of students who sit in our classrooms. They are banning students who are struggling with their identities, and who need the story of a character who has struggled and overcome similar issues. They are banning students whose first language is not English, but who want to see their culture and life experiences reflected in their reading. They are banning students whose religion is not Christianity. They are banning discussions about race and discrimination, as if the banning of a book will prevent students from ever experiencing racism in school, or in society. They are banning perspectives that are not their own, and in doing so, they are telling students who have been forced to the margins of society that their voices have no value. Book banning is an audacious act that harms students and violates everything we profess to love about freedom of expression in this country. Book bans are

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¹ About Banned & Challenged Books | Advocacy, Legislation & Issues (ala.org)

² 2023 Banned Books Update: Banned in the USA (pen.org)

³ The Torah as G-d's Song – Covenant & Conversation – Parshah (chabad.org)

⁴ 2023 Banned Books Update: Banned in the USA (pen.org)

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE FIRST DAY OF KEHILAH

Rabbi Evan pitches in to serve pizza.



Vav (6th grade) students listen intently as they learn some new Rosh Hashanah songs.



Rabbi Evan and Zayin students (7th grade) proudly display the Torahs dressed in white for the holidays.



New Gan (Kindergarten) families enjoy the pizza lunch picnic together.



Cantor Scott and Zayin (7th grade) prepare the Torahs for the High Holidays.



Cantor Scott photobombs Hey (5th grade) families during the Kehilah picnic.



Join us for a special “behind the scenes” lecture and gallery tour hosted by CBI congregant Dr. Philip Eliasoph on October 25, 2023

7:00 – 9:00 p.m. at Bellarmine Hall, Fairfield University

How did a newly-landed Polish Jewish artist transform his brush and ink pen into powerful anti-Nazi propaganda weapons in the months before Pearl Harbor?

This fall, the Fairfield University Art Museum presents a special exhibition “Arthur Szyk: Artist and Soldier for Human Rights” (on view September 29 – December 16, 2023). Through scathing editorial cartoons and anti-fascist satires, Szyk came to be recognized by First

Lady Eleanor Roosevelt as a true “soldier in art.” Dr. Philip Eliasoph, Professor of Art History, offers an overview of this acclaimed exhibit on loan from the Magnes. collection of Jewish Art & Life at the University of California at Berkeley.

Arthur Szyk and his family rented Compo Beach cottages in the summers of 1941–1945 and purchased a sprawling colonial property in New Canaan in 1946. He died at the age of 57 in 1951.

Celebrating our Artists in 2023!

Our lobby has been 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.

Upcoming Art Showcases/Displays:

October – Eric Gross

November – Elaine Clayton

December – Nathan Rosler



ALEXA COHEN/DIRECTOR OF THE EDUCATION CENTER

CONNECTICUT'S NEW KINDERGARTEN CUTOFF WILL AFFECT MANY FAMILIES AND LOCAL PRESCHOOLS



Many local early childhood programs could be overloaded with students, as a coming change in the statewide kindergarten cutoff date will require that many children remain in preschool for an extra year.

Starting in the 2024–25 school year, Connecticut students must turn 5 years old by September 1 to enter kindergarten. Previously, children could be 4 years old until January 1 to start kindergarten. While this change will have a strong impact on elementary schools and families, preschool programs will also be affected, as they're likely to see an increased demand for services.

I shared with my many fellow preschool directors that it was just bound to happen at some point. The State has been trying to get this pushed through for many years. I will say I am quite surprised that it is taking effect next school year. I thought it would be a two-to-three-year rollout. Whenever it did happen, the transition was going to be a little rocky, but we're really lucky in our B'nai Israel community to have a lot of resources to meet families' needs.

Connecticut was one of only a few states with the late (January 1) cutoff. The new rule will likely affect Bonim Preschool and other local preschools as we will need to organize our classes differently. Luckily, Bonim Preschool already has a PreK – 5-year-old program designed to give children with fall birthdays “the gift of an extra year” before entering kindergarten. Previously, this was always a parent's choice but now will be a must. We need to be prepared to offer multiple programs for children who don't meet the new cutoff date. Since Bonim students have the option of PreK, they don't have

the big transition of moving to another school, but they do have the transition of moving to another classroom with another group of friends. We will have the benefit of knowing where they are as far as their progress is concerned.

According to a State Department of Education and Office of Early Childhood memo, more than 9,000 students will not be able to enroll in kindergarten because of the Sept. 1 deadline.

“It will be critical that these families, including those living in rural areas of our state, are supported to the greatest extent possible so that they can access high quality preschool educational opportunities for one more year,” the memo stated.

The memo also states that about 71 percent of students entering kindergarten have access to preschool and that early childhood education providers may need to offer services to more children.

“To meet the increased demand, early care and education programs may need to make adjustments and have wider age ranges in preschool classrooms/programs,” the memo states.

However, some programs may not be able to expand their services because of town regulations.

I spoke to a colleague who has already started researching this and he said, “In the past couple of years, we went to Planning & Zoning, just because of our property, and we were limited to (a maximum capacity of) 148 because of our parking.” They are not able to increase their licensed capacity to accommodate more children.

The director of a local home day care says, “Most day cares are at capacity and find it almost impossible to expand due to stringent state and local regulations that pose formidable hurdles for daycare expansions. By providing guidance and financial assistance, such as grants or subsidies, we can alleviate the administrative and financial strain and enable esteemed day care establishments like ours to meet the burgeoning demand efficiently.”

While most of the preschool directors I spoke to are in support of the kindergarten cutoff date change, we all understand the financial burden childcare can put on families.

One said, “I certainly understand for families who were looking forward to, for example, the relief of the childcare expense because there's no doubt about it, it's formidable,” she said. “I certainly understand the point of view of thinking, ‘Oh my gosh, one more year that we hadn't planned on.’ So that's certainly a disadvantage. (But) as far as readiness and experience is concerned, I really am firmly on the side of thinking it is a wise decision.”

Due to this change, it would be helpful if the state government could make scholarships and other forms of financial assistance more available.

“By providing financial support for daycare services, we can effectively ensure that no child is unjustly deprived of the opportunity to flourish due to socioeconomic constraints,” she said.

OCTOBER DONATIONS

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

Rabbi Schultz Discretionary Fund
Henry & Marilyn Banach, in memory of the yahrzeits of Robert Cohn and Shirley Banach.

Phyllis Bausher, in appreciation to Rabbi Evan Schultz.

Barbara Berkowitz, in memory of Evelyn Toss.

Rachel Cramer, in memory of Jerry Pressman, husband of Jane Pressman.

Barry & Linda Diamond, in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz for the beautiful baby naming ceremony celebrating our great grandson David Andrew, son of Nicole and Ryan Lestranger, grandson of Robin and Brian Diamond.

Gary & Gail Felberbaum, with thanks for the beautiful shiva service in memory of mother, Helen Sacks.

Robert & Stacy Giglietti, in memory of Jerry Pressman, husband of Jane Pressman.

Leonard Glantz, in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz for the beautiful service for my father's unveiling.

Myrna Kaufman, in memory of my father Robert Kaufman.

George & Alice Kelly, in memory of mother Ruth Zimroth.

Justin & Brenda Kreuzer, in loving memory of our dads, Matthew Furman & Barton Kreuzer, and in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz for his many kindnesses to us.

Beth Lazar, wishing all the clergy, staff, and members of Congregation B'nai Israel a sweet new year.

Aleksey & Raisa Ledvich, in memory of our family members, mother Emilia Ledvich; grandfather Max Dovolsky; grandmother Adel Dovolskaya; uncle Yuri Sotnik.

Hallie MacDonald & Lester Dean, Jr., in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz for welcoming us to the Jewish community and his guidance in helping us honor the traditions.

Peter & Karen Montagna, in memory of the yahrzeit of James Giblin.

Rick & Carol Offenbach, in memory of our parents Vivienne Zimmer Goldstein & Robert Offenbach.

Pressman Families, in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz and with gratitude from our family during this difficult time.

Randy & Beth Reich, in memory of our mother and grandmother, Vivienne Zimmer Goldstein.

Charlie & Brooke Russell, with thanks to Rabbi Schultz for his guidance in leading our family through Cameron's naming.

Richard Sheiman, in memory of Jerry Pressman, husband of Jane Pressman.

Howard & Eileen Tolk, in loving memory of sister Helen Cramer.

Burton & Sheila Yaffie and family, in memory of Jerry Pressman, husband of Jane Pressman.

Rabbi Marion Discretionary Fund

Barbara Kauders, in memory of Dr. James Kauders and Anne Disken Cohen.

Beth Lazar, wishing all the clergy, staff, and members of Congregation B'nai Israel a sweet new year.

Pressman Families, in appreciation to Rabbi Marion and with gratitude from our family during this difficult time.

Howard & Eileen Tolk, in loving memory of father Samuel Tolk.

Cantor Scott Harris Discretionary Fund

Judith Lessler & family, in appreciation to Cantor Scott Harris for his kind help.

Pressman Families, in appreciation to Cantor Harris and with gratitude from our family during this difficult time.

Music Fund

Barry & Linda Diamond, in celebration of the engagement of Rachele and Brett, son of Marcia Tubin.

Beth Lazar, mazel tov to Cantor Scott Harris and family on the birth of his granddaughter Stella Maeve Mark. A sweet new year to everyone.

Enhancement Fund

Robert & Judith Jacobson, in honor of Eileen and Howard Tolk's 60th wedding anniversary.

Neil & Joanne Lippman, in memory of Jerry Pressman, condolences to the family.

Jeffrey & Jackie Madwed, in memory of Jerry Pressman, husband of Jane Pressman.

Park Royal Condominium

Association, in appreciation to Congregation B'nai Israel for allowing our residents to use your parking lot.

Howard & Eileen Tolk, in loving memory of mother Justine Tolk.

Judy Zeisler, in memory of the yahrzeit of Olga Zeisler.

Bonim Preschool Enrichment Fund

Gary Drucker, in celebration of Aviva Nessa Blumenthal, daughter of Michael Blumenthal & Robyn Drucker.

Sam & Cheryl Green, in memory of my mother, Visselle Glazer. We greatly appreciate the Congregation B'nai Israel family's kind words and outreach.

Neil & Joanne Lippman, mazel tov on the birth of grandson Dylan Patrick, son of Jen and Conor!

Chris Markley, in memory of my mother, Mary Nahabedian, whose yahrzeit is on September 2.

Bonim Preschool Scholarship Fund

Rabbi Arnold & Serena Sher, in memory of Jerry Pressman, beloved father of Steve (Julie) Pressman and beloved grandfather of Justin and Kayla.

Steven Soberman & Suzanne Phillip, in honor of the birth of Marnie, granddaughter of Sylvia and Alan Neigher.

Religious School Enrichment Fund

Deborah Baer, in honor of the upcoming Bet Mitzvah of Nathaniel, son of David Cohen and Kendra Falkenstein.

Rabbi Prosnit Discretionary Fund

Pressman Families, in appreciation to Rabbi Prosnit and with gratitude from our family during this difficult time.

Dr. Glen & Kelly Reznikoff, in memory of Jerry Pressman, husband of Jane Pressman.

OCTOBER DONATIONS

(CONTINUED)

Rabbi Arnold Sher Social Action Fund Michael & Judy Blumenthal, in memory of Helen Sacks, mother of Gail Felberbaum.

Dennis & Jan Magid, in memory of Ellen Rost, with our love; in memory of Jonathan Uman, son of Susan Blomberg, our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Michael & Linda Epstein, in memory of Jerry Pressman, husband of Jane Pressman.

Beth Lazar, in memory of Jerry Pressman, father of Jeffrey, father-in-law of Amy Pressman.

Samuel Miller & family, in memory of Jerry Pressman, husband of Jane Pressman.

Randy & Beth Reich, in memory of our mother and grandmother, Beatrice Reich Burchman.

Rabbi Arnold & Serena Sher, in memory of Jonathan Uman, beloved son of Susan Blomberg.

Rabbi Arnold & Serena Sher, in memory of Jerry Pressman, beloved husband of Jane Pressman.

Rabbi Arnold & Serena Sher, in memory of Jerry Pressman, beloved father of Jeffrey (Amy) Pressman and beloved grandfather of Hannah and Jacob.

Rabbi Arnold & Serena Sher, in memory of Jerry Pressman, beloved father of Karen (Kenneth) Ferleger and beloved grandfather of Samantha and Daisy.

Mazon

Elaine & Marc Silverman, in memory of Jerry Pressman, husband of Jane Pressman.

Vision Loan Reduction Fund

Jim & Lisa Greenberg, in memory of Richard (Dick) Lieb, father of Rick Lieb.

Jim & Lisa Greenberg, in memory of Jerry Pressman, husband of Jane Pressman.

The George Markley Chesed Fund

Martin & Alayne Burger, in memory of Jerry Pressman, husband of Jane Pressman.

Gary & Gail Felberbaum, in appreciation to the beautiful shiva service Janet Jurow led for my mother, Helen Sacks.

Sherry Fogel, in memory of my father, Herbert Bernstein, on his yahrzeit.

Beth Lazar, in memory of George Markley and wishes for a sweet new year to Chris Markley & family.

Glenn & Amy Rich, in memory of George Markley.

Howard & Judy Rosenbaum, in memory of Allan Heyman, father of Phil Heyman.

Steven Soberman & Suzanne Phillip, in memory of Helen Sacks, mother of Gail Felberbaum.

Howard Weisman & Nina Silberman, in memory of Jerry Pressman, husband of Jane Pressman.

Gillette Judaic Enrichment Fund

Pressman Families, in appreciation to Janet Jurow and with gratitude from our family during this difficult time.

Alan Weinstein Scholarship Fund

Scott Modlin & Hillary Black, in memory of my mother, Donna Bleier Black Glassman.

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.

TWO ACTION ISSUES FROM THE MENTAL HEALTH GROUP

1. Support 988 Lifeline

It's been one year since the launch of the 988 Suicide Crisis Lifeline, the nationwide phone number established to help people in a mental health, substance use, or suicide crisis. In this first year, nearly 5 million people have reached out to 988 for support. But there is more work to be done to ensure everyone in a crisis can get the help they need. Congressperson Tony Cardenas (D-CA) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) have re-introduced bipartisan legislation to ensure that our communities have the

necessary resources to fully implement 988.

Please call your Congressperson. Tell them to cosponsor the 988 Implementation Act — House Bill HR 4851 to:

- 1) Fund local 988 Suicide Crisis Lifeline call centers
- 2) Fund local mental health mobile crisis teams and local mental health mobile crisis centers
- 3) Ensure people have access to crisis care by requiring that all health

insurance plans cover crisis care

Call your own Representative to urge him or her to cosponsor HR 4851:

Jim Himes 203-333-6600

Rosa DeLauro 203-562-3718

To find out who your U.S. Representative is, call the CT Secretary of State's office: (860) 509-6200 or go to <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>.

2. Support Keshet Project Events

The B'nai Keshet Project is a program for Jewish adults with cognitive disabilities run by Rhea Farbman and Sherry Portnoy. Though mental illness and cognitive disabilities are very different, those with either disability face similar struggles: fighting stigma, fighting for

better access to health care services, and fighting to be included in the community. Here are two Keshet Project events that the Mental Health Group supports, and hopes you do too:

● **October 20, 2023, 6:00 p.m.**
Friday night Shabbat service

Keshet members Danny and Tamara will recite the Sh'ma.

● **February 23, 2024, 6:00 p.m.**
Friday night Shabbat service
followed by a community dinner. Members of the Keshet Project will lead the Sh'ma and a song or two.

BOOKS MATTER: INTRODUCING OUR NEW BANNED AND CHALLENGED BOOK GROUP AT CBI

.....FROM P. 5

about erasing the experiences of marginalized Americans. And if we allow students to read about diverse perspectives, the greatest harm that will be done to them is that they just might become open minded.⁵

This coming year, join us in countering the alarming increase in book bans by participating in our new Banned and Challenged Book Group at CBI.

Over the course of the coming year, each member of our senior staff team will lead a discussion about one of the banned books that we read over the summer. You are welcome to join us for all, or as many sessions as you are able! Please see accompanying schedule for details, and mark your calendars!

In her groundbreaking 1990 essay, Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop wrote that books are like mirrors, books are like windows, and books are like sliding glass doors. As we continue to read, may we find truth in these words. May our books be like

mirrors, reflecting aspects of our own lives, and our own selves — reminding us that we are never, ever alone. May our books be like windows, giving us unprecedented insight and newfound understanding into another person's perspective and point of view. And like sliding glass doors, may our books lead us from oppressive, claustrophobic spaces, out into a wide-open world... a world that brings us towards the limits of our own imagination, and beyond.

CBI Banned and Challenged Book Group Meetings

Join us for as many sessions as you can! All meetings will take place at B'nai Israel. We will be discussing each book together, participants are encouraged to read each book in advance.

Gender Queer: A Memoir
by Maia Kobabe

Thursday, November 16 at 7:00 p.m.
Discussion led by Rabbi Schultz, Cantor Harris, and Cadence Pentheny from the

Triangle Community Center

The #1 most challenged book of 2022 according to the American Library Association

***Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Perez**
Thursday, January 18 at 7:00 p.m.

Discussion led by Susan Walden
The 9th most challenged book of 2022 according to the ALA

***Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison**
Thursday, March 28 at 7:00 p.m.

Discussion led by Alexa Cohen and Cadence Pentheny from the Triangle Community Center

The 7th most challenged book of 2022 according to the ALA

All Boys Aren't Blue
by George M. Johnson
Thursday, May 16 at 7:00 p.m.

Discussion led by Rabbi Marion and Cadence Pentheny from the Triangle Community Center

The 2nd most challenged book of 2022 according to the ALA

⁵What are They Banning, Really?" Monica Washington, 2014 Texas State... | by Voices for Honest Ed Team | Medium

KESHER CORNER

October 1, 2023

We've had a lovely summer and are looking forward to Rosh Hashanah and all the holidays that continue to define us and our lives. We do our best to watch our words and actions, and I marvel at the patience of those I know who have speech impediments or physical disabilities. I notice how often they're interrupted while trying to express themselves and how they do not get angry. They are acting from their heart. At The Keshet Project, this is something we work on all the time...giving the speaker space and time to truly express themselves.

One of the games we play to practice this is "Who or What am I?" We each pick a question out of a magician's hat. "What Jewish holiday celebrates with apples and honey?" or "When do we throw our sins away in a river?" We follow with conversation to clarify any thoughts or questions. It's fast moving and fun, and everyone gets the opportunity to speak. We continue with singing and dancing to the songs that celebrate the event and

have a delicious snack related to the holiday to end the evening. Our program is very important because it allows our Keshet friends to maintain their Jewish heritage although there is usually only one Jewish resident in each group home.

We have contacted Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University, and Fairfield



Warde and Ludlowe High Schools to find volunteers. If you know someone of any age who would like to volunteer once a month on a Thursday evening, please contact us at one of the email addresses listed below.

Thank you for your donations. We rely on them. They have allowed us to create wonderful events for more than 25 years. A donation may be made online or in person at our incredible synagogue.

Please like us on Facebook at The Keshet Project and The Keshet Project Songfest and contact us at the following addresses if you have any questions or comments:

Rhea Farbman
rheasmusic@icloud.com

Sherry Portnoy
sherrysmeow@optonline.net

Keshet
keshetdramaclub@gmail.com

Rosh Chodesh October/Cheshvan Gathering

Monday, October 16, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Join with women from across the B'nai Israel community for conversation, laughter, and learning as we celebrate the start of the Hebrew month of Cheshvan. Women of all ages are welcome to participate, current and prospective members are both welcome. Watch your email for more information. For questions, please reach out to Rabbi Marion at smarion@cbibpt.org.

Caregiving Support Group Select Sundays at B'nai Israel With Rabbi Marion and Rachel Yurdin, LCSW

Caregiving can feel like an overwhelming and isolating task. Our caregiving support group is designed for those who are:

- Directly caring for an aging parent or always "on call" for an aging parent
- Caring for a loved one — of any age — with a chronic illness

This group will provide space for caregivers to come together for friendship, community, and mutual support. We will share the challenges and joys of our individual caregiving journeys, be witness to one another's experiences, and turn to sources from our tradition for comfort and guidance. Coffee and a light nosh will be provided. Participants are welcome to drop in when they are able to attend or join for all of the sessions. To join, RSVP to Rabbi Marion at smarion@cbibpt.org.

This caregiving group will meet on the following Sundays, from 10:30 a.m.–noon at Congregation B'nai Israel:

October 29
November 19
December 10
January 28

Sisters' Sukkah Schmooze

Tuesday, October 3, 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.

James Prosnit Outdoor Patio and Prayer Space

Join us in the sukkah for a Sisters' Schmooze to celebrate the harvest festival! The "Schmooze" is an opportunity for women of Congregation B'nai Israel to gather without an agenda to enjoy light refreshments and connect with one another. This event is sponsored by The Women of B'nai Israel (formerly the Sisterhood). RSVP to Ilene Feuerberg at ifeuerberg@cbibpt.org.

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JOIN US FOR SIMCHAT TORAH CELEBRATIONS AND SERVICES

Outdoor Erev Simchat Torah Service and Celebration – Friday, October 6

Pre-Shabbat Meditation: 5:00–5:30 p.m.

(see separate description for details)

Pizza and Crafts: 5:00–6:00 p.m.

Family-Friendly Simchat Torah Service: 6:00–7:00 p.m.

Join us for pizza dinner and kid-friendly Torah themed crafts outside in the parking lot at B'nai Israel. All are welcome to stay for our outdoor family friendly Erev Simchat Torah service, starting at 6:00 p.m., which will feature the joyful sounds of Radio Klez as we unroll and dance with the Torah! If you plan to join us for pizza dinner, RSVP to Lisa Hurlbert at lhurlbert@cbibpt.org so we can be sure to order enough food.

**New This Year:*

Pre-Shabbat Meditation with the Clergy – Select Fridays, 5:00 – 5:30 p.m. in the Chapel

We all arrive at Shabbat each week with many different emotions and needs. Some



of us are celebrating simchas, others are mourning loved ones or navigating illness and sorrow. This pre-Shabbat meditation will provide a quieter space for prayer and contemplation, specifically designed for community members who are mourning loved ones, experiencing illness, praying for the health of a loved one, or who have had a particularly difficult or challenging week. Each pre-Shabbat meditation will always include recitation of Mi Sheberach for healing, Mourner's Kaddish, as well as an opportunity to reflect and find comfort in the presence of one another. Following

our time together, participants are welcome and encouraged to join for Shabbat oneg at 5:30 p.m., followed by our congregational Shabbat service at 6:00 p.m. For more information, please contact Rabbi Marion at smarion@cbibpt.org.

Our Pre-Shabbat Meditations will be offered on the following Fridays from 5:00–5:30 p.m.:

October 6
November 3
December 8
January 19
February 16
March 15
April 19
May 3

Simchat Torah Morning/Yizkor Service – Saturday, October 7, 10:00 a.m.

**Note: There will be no 8:00 a.m. service, Brotherhood breakfast or Torah study that morning.*

Simchat Torah morning/Yizkor services will begin at 10:00 a.m.



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

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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.



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B'nai Israel is going to Washington, DC! November 10-12, 2023

- Shabbat services in DC
- Dinner in Georgetown
- Visit the Holocaust Museum
- Learn about the work of the RAC
- Havdalah at the Jefferson Memorial
- Explore our nation's capitol!

Trip is for adult members of Congregation B'nai Israel. Cost including bus and hotel to be determined. For more information and to express interest, please email Luise Mann, butterfly3956228@gmail.com.



BIFTY

Thank you for donating to the High Holiday Food Drive! BIFTY is excited for our fall programs! We meet on Thursdays from 7:00–8:30 p.m., in the BIFTY lounge upstairs in the back of the education wing. All CBI high school teens are invited to attend. For updated information and to hear about our weekly programs, follow us on Instagram @cbi.bifty and ask to join our text group. Reach out to advisor Marisa with any questions at munderberger@gmail.com. We hope to see you at our next event!

- October 12 Escape Room at Mind Factory Escape Games in Bridgeport at 6:15 p.m – note time change! Follow us on Instagram for more details as the date approaches.
- October 19 Celebrate "Challah"-ween with BIFTY!
- October 26 Show off your artistic talents as we carve pumpkins!

