

OCTOBER HIGHLIGHTS

Rabbi Schultz shares some of his recent writings on the devastating loss of six hostages in an effort to comfort us as we mourn. Page 3

Rabbi Marion reminds us that Jewish tradition makes room for joy and grief to exist side by side. Page 5

Meet two B'nai Israel families and learn about their efforts to start an engagement team at CBI for families involved in Bonim and/or Kehilah. Page 6

Learn about updated security measures and other information to know in advance of attending High Holiday Services at B'nai Israel this fall. Pages 9-10



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October Musician-in-Residence:

Cantor Becky Mann



October 18-20, 2024

Friday, October 18:

5:00 p.m. Shabbat Play and Pray
(for families with children ages 0-5)

6:00 p.m. Shabbat Evening
Services

Saturday, October 19

8:00 a.m. Shabbat Morning
Services

9:30 a.m. Torah Study

Sunday, October 20:

11:15 a.m. Concert for Kehilah
Students and Parents (Sanctuary)

Join us as we welcome Cantor Becky Mann to Congregation B'nai Israel, October 18-20, 2024! Becky Mann serves as the Assistant Cantor of Temple Israel of Westport, CT. When not at Temple Israel, she serves as a touring Artist in Residence, sharing her original music and soulful prayer-leading with Jewish communities around the country. A composer, guitarist, and cantor, she has been called "one of the brightest voices of a new generation of Jewish songwriters carrying our tradition forward in new and exciting ways." Originally from Las Vegas, she received a Bachelor's of Arts in Jewish Sacred Music from Indiana University and a Masters of Sacred Music from the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music at Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion in New York, where she was ordained as a cantor in 2023. Her passion for creating community through music and meaningful worship has inspired her work as both a cantor and composer.

Sukkot and Simchat Torah 5785

Sukkot

October 16

6:00 p.m. Sushi in the Sukkah (rsvp req.)

7:00 p.m. Service, bonfire, and singalong

October 17

10:00 a.m. Festival services in the sukkah
and programming for young children



Simchat Torah

October 23

5:00 p.m. Pizza and crafts

6:00 p.m. Services ft. Radio Klez

October 24

10:00 a.m. Yizkor services



Our B'nai Israel Community mourns the passing of Rabbi Arnold Sher. See page 2.

SINCERE SYMPATHY

We extend our sympathy to the bereaved families of:

Ruth Barcham, mother of Stewart Barcham

Nancy Rosenthal, wife of Jonathan Rosenthal

Marcia Meyers, mother of Amy Moorin and Debbie Ross and grandmother of Samantha Moore and Rachel Wolff

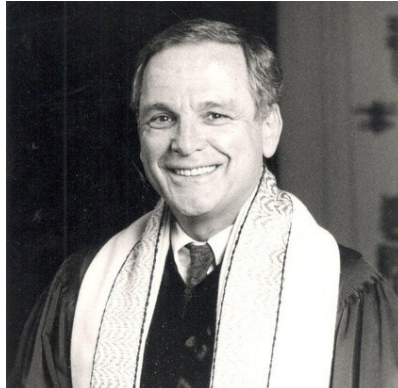
Emily Eastwood, mother of Carson Berkowitz

Kevin Patrick Kilgallen, father of Bill Kilgallen

Karen Cramer, sister of Marcia Tubin

B'nai Israel Rabbi Emeritus, Arnold Sher, husband of Serena Sher

Rabbi Arnold Sher



Our Congregation B'nai Israel Community collectively mourns the passing of Rabbi Arnold Sher. Rabbi Sher served as the Senior Rabbi of Congregation B'nai Israel from 1968-1990. His life and legacy will remain with our congregation always. May his memory be for an eternal blessing.

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.

Ruth Cavayero
Stratford, CT

Jason and Dana Aponte and Amelia & Stella
Trumbull, CT

Andrew and Kate Beck and Oliver & Hannah
Easton, CT

Matthew and Kerry Epstein and Hayley, Amy & Zoe
Westport, CT

SHARING OUR JOY

In Celebration of:

Richard and Joanne Krantz, on the birth of their grandson Samuel Cohn, son of David Krantz and Chloe Cohn

MITZVAH MORNING



For our first Mitzvah Morning event of the new season, volunteers gathered at the B'nai Israel cemetery and cleaned the grime and algae off headstones. Our rabbis teach us that some of the most important mitzvahs we can perform are good deeds for those who are unable to thank us. And this event certainly met that standard. Stay tuned for future Mitzvah Morning events. All are welcome.



OCTOBER MITZVAH MORNING

On Sunday, October 20, we will be partnering with Homes for the Brave, an organization that provides housing, vocational training, and like skills coaching to military veterans.

We will meet at 8:00 a.m. (a little earlier than most other Mitzvah Mornings) at the Homes for the Brave facility in Bridgeport, where

we will be preparing and serving a full breakfast to the HFTB residents. We will be providing the staples for breakfast (eggs, toast, potatoes, etc.), but volunteers are welcome to bring additional food, such as bagels, yogurt, smoothies, granola bars, breakfast bars, fruit, cereal, or any other healthy breakfast food. Homes for the Brave residents are also in need of additional items such as hand soap, deodorant, shampoo, napkins, toilet paper, bottled water, dish soap, laundry detergent, and toothpaste.

Due to the size of the kitchen facilities, this event will be limited to 15 volunteers. A sign up sheet will be shared in the weekly Hashavuah newsletter.

For further information, please reach out to Annie Block (annblock53@yahoo.com), Nina Silberman (ninahv@aol.com) or Mitch Weinstein (mitchellew@yahoo.com).



FROM THE RABBI'S DESK/RABBI EVAN SCHULTZ

REMEMBERING ORI, HERSCH, CARMEL, ALMOG, ALEX, AND EDEN

Last month, following the discovery of the bodies of six hostages, Ori, Hersch, Carmel, Almog, Alex, and Eden, I wrote a few pieces in their beloved memory. I wanted to share those with all of you as we continue to mourn their passing as a Jewish people. May their memories be for an eternal blessing.



9/2/24

Earlier this afternoon, the front row of our synagogue sanctuary turned to beautiful colors, as the sun reflected through the stained-glass windows above the ark.

And for a moment I could see the six of them in the colors right there in front of me. Eden in the orange, and Alex in the purple. Hersch in the dark blue and Almog in the yellow. Carmel in the green and Ori in the light blue.

I gently sat down next to them and quietly whispered, "You are now in the colors. And in the sunlight that passes through the windows in the late afternoon. As Rachel cried, you are now free."

And as the sun set and the colors slowly faded to darkness, I found a small comfort amidst the grief that God-willing I will return tomorrow to find them there again. Illuminating the quiet afternoon, long after they are gone.

9/3/24

Jews generally don't place flowers upon one's grave. My teachers once taught me that it's because when someone has died, we don't want to create more death by cutting up flowers for the occasion.

So instead we scour the cemetery grounds or a nearby forest for a stone or a rock, which we gently place upon the grave. Whereas flowers represent temporality, the stone is eternal, lasting for generations.

But I don't want to cover Hersch's or Eden's graves with stones. All they saw was stones. And rocks. And shades of gray. In their colorless days and months beneath the earth.

Instead I want to blanket their graves in flowers. Pinks, yellows, reds and

oranges. Beautiful, vivid colors. Petals and stems. I want to envelop them with all the flowers they did not get to see or smell before they died.

I don't want to give them rocks. Or stones. I think God will understand. I know their spirits will last far beyond eternity.

For them, I want to bring flowers.

9/5/24

The year I lived in Jerusalem I used to wander around, or "shul-hop" on Shabbat mornings. I'd take my tallit, or prayer shawl, tuck it under my arm, and saunter slowly through the sunny streets of this ancient and complex city.

I recall one morning I was walking down one of those distinctly Jerusalem streets, with the golden bricks and pink flowers hanging from the quiet balconies. And then, from an open door I could hear the sounds of prayers echoing from beneath the streets.

Curious, I entered the door and walked down the stairs, the sounds of the voices and singing getting slightly louder with each step deeper into the earth. And almost as if I entered a dream, there was a tiny little synagogue, with ugly green carpeting, no windows and harsh fluorescent lights.

Continued on page 4

OCTOBER 7 COMMEMORATIONS

Shabbat Shuvah October 7 Healing Service — October 4, 2024, 6:00 p.m.

In lieu of our regular Shabbat evening services, we will gather together for a special Shabbat healing service focused on the one-year anniversary of October 7, where over 1,200 Israelis lost their lives at the hands of terror. We will offer songs, readings, and space to reflect on the past year and offer healing and hope to one another during this very difficult and painful time.

Community October 7 Commemoration — October 7, 2024, Time TBA — Temple Israel of Westport

Join together with the entire Jewish community for an evening to mark the one-year anniversary of the horrific October 7 attacks, where over 1,200 Israelis lost their lives at the hands of terror. Please check Hashavua emails for more details.

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, October 4 | | Saturday, October 12 | | Friday, October 25 | |
| Rosh Hashanah Day 2 | | Yom Kippur | | 5:30 p.m. | Oneg |
| See High Holy Day | | See High Holy Day | | 6:00 p.m. | Shabbat Service – |
| Services 5785 Schedule | | Services 5785 Schedule | | | in person and on Zoom |
| Saturday, October 5 | | Friday, October 18 | | Torah Portion – | |
| 8:00 a.m. | Shabbat Service – | 6:00 p.m. | Sukkot | Genesis 1:1-6:8 | |
| | in person and on Zoom | | Shabbat Service – | Haftarah – | |
| | Torah Portion – | | in person and on Zoom | Isaiah 42:5-43:10 | |
| | Deuteronomy 32:1-52 | | Torah Portion – Holidays | Saturday, October 26 | |
| | Haftarah – Hosea 14:2-10, | | Exodus 33:12-34:26 | 8:00 a.m. | Shabbat Service – |
| | Micah 7:18-20, | | Haftarah – | | in person and on Zoom |
| | Joel 2:15-17 | | Ezekiel 38:18-39:7 | 9:00 a.m. | Brotherhood Breakfast |
| 9:00 a.m. | Brotherhood Breakfast | Saturday, October 19 | | 9:30 a.m. | Torah Study – |
| 9:30 a.m. | Torah Study – | 8:00 a.m. | Shabbat Service – | | in person and on Zoom |
| | in person and on Zoom | | in person and on Zoom | 11:00 a.m. | Bet Mitzvah of Macy |
| 11:00 a.m. | Bet Mitzvah of William | 9:00 a.m. | Brotherhood Breakfast | | Cohen, daughter of James |
| | Messler, son of David & | 9:30 a.m. | Torah Study – | | & Danielle Cohen |
| | Beth Messler | | in person and on Zoom | | |
| Friday, October 11 | | 11:00 a.m. | Bet Mitzvah of Julia | | |
| Kol Nidre | | | Wise, daughter of Jeremy | | |
| See High Holy Day | | | Wise & Randi Cohen | | |
| Services 5785 Schedule | | | | | |

Our synagogue Caring Committee is able to help provide rides to and from services to congregants in need of assistance. If you are in need of a ride to temple for Shabbat or another synagogue event, please reach out to Chris Rocha at crocha@cbibpt.org, or you can call the temple office.

REMEMBERING ORI, HERSCH, CARMEL, ALMOG, ALEX, AND EDEN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

A few people smiled and gently waved hello, although most were too deeply engaged in their morning Shabbat prayers to notice me — their prayer shawls draped over their heads as they mumbled the Hebrew words of our ancient ancestors.

I sat there for a while, looking around and trying to keep up with the traditional style of praying, or davening. At one point the descendants of the Priests, or Kohanim, blessed us, their fingers held high over their heads. After a while I packed up my tallit, said thank you to the man sitting by the door and left.

I still think about that little synagogue and the people I prayed with that morning.

It exemplified the term, "everyday holiness." How those Kohanim blessed us. The gentle wave of the man sitting by the door. The words uttered by generations before us, still echoing in this tiny little synagogue beneath the earth.

Perhaps that's what it means to be part of our people — to share in moments of blessing with people I've never even met before in some tiny little synagogue beneath the earth.

Perhaps that's why so many of us are mourning this week the six hostages who so few of us even had the joy of knowing.

Because maybe we did pass one of them walking through the streets of Jerusalem

on a Shabbat morning. Or happened to be in synagogue one day with one of their parents. Or saw them laughing with their friends in a coffee shop in Tel Aviv.

The holy interconnectedness. Most days it brings comfort, or joy. And some days it brings a whole lot of pain, like watching six funerals of Jews we've never even met from thousands of miles away.

I guess that is all part of what it means to be a people. And I'm proud and lucky to be part of this people. When I sing with them, pray with them, smile with them, and even mourn with them. And even on the most difficult days, I still hope with them too.



WHEN A WEDDING AND A FUNERAL CROSS THE ROAD

BY RABBI MARION

This month, we will celebrate the joyous festival of Sukkot, aptly described in Jewish tradition as the “season of our rejoicing.” This month, with heavy hearts, we will also observe the one-year commemoration of the October 7 massacre. Below is a sermon I offered a few months ago about the dissonance that often arises when we encounter joy and sadness, all at the very same time.

October 7, 2023 was a terrible, terrible day. And, yet, for me, October 8, 2023 actually felt far worse.

Because even though October 7 was the day on which we learned of the massive Hamas infiltration, and even though October 7 as the day on which we learned of the music festival massacre, the hostage-taking, and the sirens blaring across Israel’s southern kibbutzim, October 8 was the day on which it all really started to sink in. October 8 was the day on which the excruciating images began to circulate on the news and social media. October 8 was when I awoke, realizing that none of it was a dream...October 8 was the day on which I realized that Israel — and the Jewish community, worldwide — would never, ever be the same.

October 8th was also the day of my daughter’s 8th birthday. And it was the day of her long awaited, very carefully planned Pokemon-themed birthday party for 15 of her closest seven- and eight year-old friends. Now my daughter takes birthday parties very, very seriously. So seriously, in fact, that the day after her birthday party is when she begins planning the next one.

On that day, October 8, 2023, I remember arriving early at the party venue to set up.

I remember sitting off to the side with my phone, scrolling through the emerging

headlines for the umpteenth time, when a staff member from the party venue approached me asking, “Where would you like us to hang the giant Pikachu banner?” And I remember the small talk among the parents of Michaela’s non-Jewish friends — chats about school and homework and afterschool activities — as if it were just another ordinary October day. I felt like I was living in some kind of bizarre, alternate universe. Shockwaves of grief, sadness, devastation, fear, were reverberating throughout the entire Jewish community....and there I was, placing candles on yellow and red frosted cupcakes and counting goodie bags to make sure that we had one for each party guest. Though I was going through the motions, the motions were not enough to shake the guilt, the unease, the heaviness that followed me wherever I went. How can we be having a lighthearted, carefree party at a time like this? The balloons, the cupcakes, the party snacks set out with such precision and care...it all felt like a disrespectful discounting of the bombs, the hostages, the devastated kibbutzim. How can we celebrate at such a time as this? Is it possible — is it right — to feel and experience joy at a time like this?

Perhaps you, too, encountered similar experiences of dissonance in the wake of October 7, wondering if and how it would be possible to go on with regularly scheduled celebrations, milestones, and events. Perhaps over the past twelve months, your joy has also been interlaced with twinges of guilt, knowing that as we continue to celebrate, so many in Israel and Gaza and around the world continue to struggle and suffer.

And perhaps you have also experienced these sorts of feelings and emotions on a much deeper, much more personal level. Perhaps at one point or another, you have thought or pondered to yourself,

how can we go on with the bar mitzvah, just weeks after burying our dad, our beloved grandfather? How do we go on with the wedding, while mom is still in the hospital? How can I take that long awaited, much needed weekend away, when my child is having a such a hard time...when my best friend is in so much pain?

Amidst the ongoing weight of the world...amidst the ongoing sorrows and troubles that plague our everyday lives... these are questions that all of us will ask of ourselves at one point, or another. How can I celebrate at a time like this? It is possible, is it right, to feel and experience a little bit of joy at a time like this?

Shortly after October 7, the *Times of Israel* interviewed several rabbis about the experience of officiating at wedding ceremonies in the midst of so much communal tragedy and devastation. One rabbi spoke about a couple’s hesitance to continue on with their wedding as planned. The couple wondered if they should postpone their celebration to a less tumultuous time. In response, the rabbi reminded this couple about a famous Talmudic passage that actually tells us exactly what to do when joy meets grief, when sorrow meets celebration.

The Talmud, she explained, presents a scenario in which a funeral procession and a wedding procession meet at the exact same time, in the exact same place, right in the center of town. “What to do?” the Talmudic rabbis wondered, “When the bride comes out from her father’s home to go to the wedding hall at the very same time as those accompanying a dead body for burial are processing towards the cemetery? What to do, when both groups are shouting, one group with joy, and the other in mourning? What to do, when both groups meet at a busy

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ALEXA COHEN/DIRECTOR OF THE EDUCATION CENTER ENGAGING FAMILIES!



Hello, my name is Rachel Whitmore but many in this community know me by my maiden name of Rachel Beitman. I was raised in Fairfield and grew up belonging to Rodeph Shalom and was affiliated there until I graduated Merkaz in 2006. I am now a wife to Lorenzo and mom to Charlie, who is six and attends Kehilah, and Ellie and Sophie, who are two and a half and are in the 2s program at Bonim.

When we decided to raise our kids in Fairfield, knowing that my husband was not Jewish and my children were mixed, I was initially hesitant as to where we would “belong.” Not just in regard to a synagogue and High Holidays but where we could make friends and my children would feel welcome, loved, and safe. When one of my daughters was diagnosed with a congenital heart defect upon delivery in 2022 and required an extended hospital stay and numerous surgeries, this community rallied around us. We had dinners delivered for months; gift cards, phone calls, prayers and offers came from people we hardly knew to help with Charlie and Sophie anyway they could. Both Lorenzo and I were so grateful during such a time of desperate need, this community rallied not only around us but all three of our children. Now, two and a half years later, my girls are toddlers, and my son in 1st grade, and we are no longer hanging on for dear life. We are in the thick of raising little people. What hasn’t changed is this community being so incredibly important to us! The majority of our friends are from B’nai and Bonim. I have reconnected with childhood friends as we navigate

parenthood, I have made lifelong friends, and my kids have found their crew to grow up with.

It is an absolute privilege to give back in any way to support young families so they can feel the warmth and belonging that is this community! Getting young families together to form relationships, have play dates, or even just have a conversation is what makes this phase of our lives a bit more manageable and WAY more fun!

Looking forward to meeting new people and continuing to grow existing friendships with all of you.

Best,
Rachel Whitmore



My name is Rebekah Rosler, for the last three years I have been the school social worker at Bonim. I have lived in Israel, been a Birthright leader, worked for multiple Jewish organizations (AIPAC, HILLEL, AMIT), and always found home and comfort within the Jewish community.

My family, Nathan, Harper (8), Marley & Jory (7), moved here from New York City during the pandemic. I am a psychotherapist and Nathan is a designer (of many things — you may have seen his art around the synagogue or on the cover of Rabbi Evan’s incredible book of poetry), but for 18 months, I was home with my, then two-and-a-half-year-old twins and four-year-old daughter. We had left the city and were squatting in the Hudson Valley before venturing into the unknown.

We knew nothing of this town, its people, or the Jewish community, other than that a friend of ours who used to be the cantor at the synagogue on the Upper East Side (where an unmarried younger version of ourselves would attend Shabbat Unplugged) had moved to Fairfield years prior; his name is (Rabbi) Evan. We reconnected while sharing that we were looking for our next home and a warm and open town. We needed a place for our twins to attend preschool, and I needed a place to support children, families, and staff, a place that could feel like home. He welcomed us in with open arms, even in the middle of COVID when most arms were not open.

The past couple of years I have hosted a few events for our young couples and young families here at B’nai, and this year we decided it was time to expand the effort.

Being Jewish in this day and age, particularly post October 7, has been terrifying while simultaneously never more important. My twins graduated Bonim a few years ago and all my children have been/are Kehilah participants. That said, there is no right way to be Jewish. Being Jewish is being part of a community; it’s a tradition, a way of life, an honor and privilege. Surrounding ourselves with other members of this incredible tribe is just so imperative that Rachel Whitmore and I decided to focus on engaging more young families and young couples, in a multitude of different ways. As a snapshot this year will look different:

- Beach nights, families
- Mah Jong, women
- Evening at Elicit Beer Garden, adults
- Toy Drive, the whole mishpacha
- Two Roads Brewery, adults
- Apple Picking, families
- Offsite family event (IT/Sky Zone/etc.)
- Poker/golf/some other activity, men

Continued on page 7

We are so excited to launch this engagement effort and are starting now! The first opportunity we are offering is to help us choose a name! We've come up with a few — but would love your input. We will have a box in the Bonim office and a notebook during Bonim and Kehilah hours starting the first day of Kehilah. Please share your thoughts!

1. B'nai Israel Family Circle
2. Young Roots of B'nai Israel
3. B'nai Israel Family Tribe
4. NextGen Families of B'nai Israel
5. B'nai Israel Family Connections

6. B'nai Israel Family Collective
7. Young Hearts of B'nai Israel
8. B'nai Israel Family Tree

Rachel and I want to do this alongside any of you who are looking to help make a difference in our community too!

Please email us at rrosler.cbibpt@gmail.com to let us know if you're interested in hosting or chairing an event, helping me and Rachel organize in general, or have other events or ideas you'd like to head up.

Come by for 10, 20, 30 minutes, and just

say “hi” or connect with other parents.

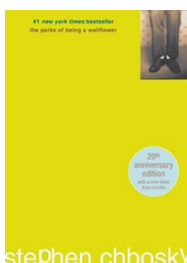
We are so looking forward to seeing all of you somewhere down the line this year. Stay tuned for information about specific events In the meantime, Rachel and I will have a blanket set up to ring in Rosh Hashanah at the Jennings Beach Service before the holiday comes in and the music starts. Come find us; we'll have snacks and drinks for the kids and open arms for all of you.

Warmly,
Rebekah

BANNED BOOK MEETINGS

Join us for our Banned and Challenged Book Group Discussions this Year!

This year, two of our Banned and Challenged Book Group discussions will be hosted and facilitated by two of our Tikkun Olam Committees, who have chosen banned and challenged books that reflect the important work of their committees. All are welcome to join these discussions; you do not need to be a member of these committees in order to participate in the book discussions. Participants are encouraged to read each book in advance of each meeting. Save the dates and happy reading!



The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky

#4 on the American Library Association's 2023 Most Banned and Challenged Book List
Monday, December 2, 7:00–9:30 p.m.

Facilitated by Annie Tranquilli-Bausher

A coming of age novel about Charlie, a freshman in high school who is a wallflower, shy, introspective, and very intelligent. He deals with the usual teen problems but also with the suicide of his



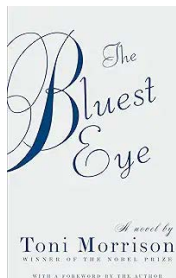
best friend.

The Yellow Wallpaper, a short story by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Monday, January 13, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

Facilitated by Marj Freeman, co-chair of the Mental Health Committee

A woman is diagnosed with a “temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency” in the 1880s. She is confined to rest, alone in a nursery with peeling yellow wallpaper. She records her growing obsession with the “horrid” wallpaper in a journal, but her quest to unlock the wallpaper's mystery leads not to the truth, but into the darkest depths of madness.



The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison

*#6 on the American Library Association's 2023 Most Banned and Challenged Book List
Monday, March 3, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

Facilitated by Jeff Schwartz and Laura Stern, co-chairs of the CONECT committee

At the root of our interfaith work in CONECT is deepening our understanding of sexism and racism, along with working toward legal reforms and equality. The *Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison is one of the most frequently banned books and a perfect one for us to debate. Should it be banned for its depiction of violence and incest? Or should it be read as a classic as are other novels by Toni Morrison, who later earned the Nobel Prize?



Sold by Patricia McCormick

*#10 on the ALA's 2023 Most Banned and Challenged Book List
Monday, April 28, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

Facilitated by Susan Walden

Thirteen-year-old Lakshmi leaves her poor mountain home in Nepal thinking that she is to work in the city as a maid only to find that she has been sold into the sex slave trade in India and that there is no hope of escape. Written in spare and evocative vignettes, this powerful novel renders a world that is as unimaginable as it is real, and a girl who not only survives, but triumphs.

CONGREGATION B'NAI ISRAEL HIGH HOLY DAY SERVICES 5785

All Sanctuary services will also be available over Zoom for members.

*No Ticket Required **Havurah Service

Members are required to bring tickets to all services.

If you do not have a ticket, you will be required to pre-register for the services below:

For Havurah Services - RSVP to Alexa Cohen – acohen@cbibpt.org

For Family Services and Yizkor – go to our website www.cbibpt.org or click the registration link in our weekly email.

Wednesday, October 2

Erev Rosh Hashanah Services:

*5:30–6:30 p.m. — Service at Jennings Beach
7:45–8:45 p.m. — Service in sanctuary and on Zoom

Thursday, October 3

Rosh Hashanah Day 1

****Rosh Hashanah Havurah Service for Families with Young Children:**

Geared toward children ages 0–5 and their families

9:00–9:30 a.m. — In the chapel

Sign Up Required — RSVP to Alexa Cohen — acohen@cbibpt.org

Rosh Hashanah Children's Programming & Babysitting:

Ages 0–5 years — 1st floor education wing; Ages 6–11 (grades K–5) — 2nd floor education wing

9:45 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Sign Up Required — RSVP to Alexa Cohen — acohen@cbibpt.org

Rosh Hashanah Morning Service:

10:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m. — In the sanctuary and on Zoom

Rosh Hashanah Morning Service:

10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. — In the tent (Rabbi James Prosnit Outdoor Community and Prayer Space)

***Rosh Hashanah Family Service:**

Geared toward elementary school age children grades K–5 and their families
3:30–4:30 p.m. — In the sanctuary

Friday, October 4

Rosh Hashanah Day 2

Rosh Hashanah Day 2 Service:

10:00–12:00 p.m. — In the sanctuary and on Zoom

Tashlich:

12:30 p.m. — On Brooklawn Parkway (off Stratfield Road)

Sunday, October 6

Cemetery Memorial Service:

1:00 p.m. — Fairfield

2:00 p.m. — Monroe

Friday, October 11

Kol Nidre:

7:45 p.m.–9:45 p.m. — In the sanctuary and on Zoom

Saturday, October 12

Yom Kippur Services

****Yom Kippur Havurah Service for Families with Young Children:**

Geared toward children ages 0–5 and their families

9:00–9:30 a.m. — In the chapel

Sign Up Required — RSVP to Alexa Cohen — acohen@cbibpt.org

Yom Kippur Children's Programming & Babysitting:

Ages 0–5 years — first floor education wing; Ages 6–11 (grades K–5) — 2nd floor education wing

9:45 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Sign Up Required — RSVP to Alexa Cohen — acohen@cbibpt.org

Yom Kippur Morning Service:

10:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m. — In the sanctuary and on Zoom

Yom Kippur Morning Service:

10:00–12:30 p.m. — In the tent (Rabbi James Prosnit Outdoor Community and Prayer Space)

***Yom Kippur Family Service:**

Geared toward elementary school age children grades K–5 and their families
1:30–2:30 p.m. — In the sanctuary

***Meditation with Al Dressler:**

1:30–2:30 p.m. — In the chapel

***Class led by Cantor Scott Harris:**

1:30–2:30 p.m. — In the library

***Afternoon Cello Concert:**

2:30–3:15 p.m. — In the chapel

***Yom Kippur Afternoon Service:**

3:15–4:45 p.m. — In the sanctuary and on Zoom

***Yizkor Service:**

4:45–5:45 p.m. — In the sanctuary and on Zoom

***Neilah:**

5:45–6:30 p.m. — In the sanctuary and on Zoom

***Closing Havdalah:**

6:30–6:45 p.m. — In sanctuary and on Zoom

Please Note — The Tent Service Has Been Moved to The James Prosnit Outdoor Community and Prayer Space



REVISED HIGH HOLIDAY LETTER TO B'NAI ISRAEL CONGREGANTS

HIGH HOLIDAYS 2024/5785

Rosh Hashanah begins sunset Wednesday, October 2

Yom Kippur begins sunset Friday, October 11

Dear Friends,

We hope you are having a wonderful start to fall! We are preparing for High Holy Days this year and are excited to welcome everyone for our incredible services, music, and programs.

As we have looked at logistics and planning, security has been front of mind, especially after the 10/7 attacks in Israel. We have made a few changes to enhance our security procedures and keep everyone in our community as safe as possible. The changes are highlighted below:

Security and Entrance

For the protection of all our congregants, there will be only one access point to enter the building during the Holidays. Everyone will be directed to enter services through the main entrance of the synagogue. Ushers will check tickets before you enter the building.

Please bring your tickets to present at ALL High Holy Day services. This includes Family Services and Yizkor.

In addition to the one access point to enter the building, this year we will have Bridgeport Police on hand at all services and increased guard patrol both at the front of the building and near the tent.

We ask that you please do not bring large bags to services. We reserve the right to inspect all bags entering into the building.

For several years, congregants have expressed their concern about the security vulnerability of the tent service being so close to Park Avenue. This year we have made the decision to move the tent to the Rabbi James Prosnit Outdoor Community and Prayer Space and grassy area behind the chapel. This area will be more secure and protected for our congregants.

Tent Services

This new location for the tent will hold about 150 congregants, nearly half as many as could be accommodated on the Park Avenue side. Seating will be first come, first serve as always, but everyone should note that it may be harder to secure a seat. If the tent reaches capacity, congregants will be directed to join the service in the sanctuary. Additionally, congregants will be directed to enter and exit the tent through the front entrance of the building rather than walking along Park Avenue.

Traditionally “non-ticketed” Services

Traditionally certain High Holy Day services, including our Family Services and Yizkor, have been “non-ticketed” and open to the public. Although these services will continue to be free of charge, for security purposes, we need to have some control over who is accessing the building. Therefore, we ask that all members who have tickets bring them; showing the ticket will allow access for both the members and their guests accompanying them.

In keeping with our principles of welcoming the guest, and serving the Greater Bridgeport Jewish community during the Holy Days, those services will still be open to other guests, but we will require pre-registration for entry into the building.

Non-B’nai Israel members can pre-register here for Family Services and Yizkor Services:
<https://www.simpletix.com/e/congregation-bnai-israel-high-holy-day-fam-tickets-185708>

Tickets

Tickets will be delivered to congregants in good financial standing as they have been in the past, and we expect to send tickets out on or around September 16th. For congregants making last-minute payments or resolving issues, we are establishing a cutoff date of September 25 for Rosh Hashanah and October 8 for Yom Kippur to allow office staff sufficient time to process payments. We will not be able to accommodate payment processing or ticketing after the cutoff dates. If you have satisfied payment requirements before September 25 and have not received your tickets by then, contact the temple office at

Continued on page 10

HIGH HOLIDAY LETTER..... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

(203) 336-1858 immediately. Your tickets will be available at the will call table if there was not enough time to mail them to you. Anyone in arrears will not receive tickets — for questions regarding this issue, or to request contribution assistance, contact our Financial Secretary at mnigrosh@cbibpt.org.

Please note that NO TICKETS will be available on the day of services for purchase in the office. The Temple office will be closed on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Havurah Services

This year attendance at Havurah (ages 0–5) requires a sign up. RSVP to Alexa Cohen at acohen@cbibpt.org. Thank you for helping us out as we do our best to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone in our community at High Holy Days this year.

Shanah Tovah!

Evelyn Rubak and Debbie Viens, High Holy Day Chairs

Richard Walden, President

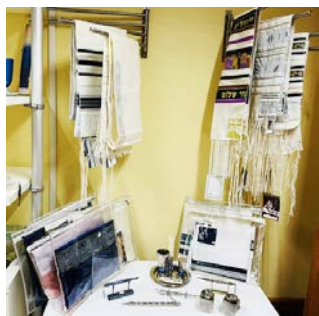
Rabbi Evan Schultz

Rabbi Sarah Marion

Cantor Scott Harris

Alexa Cohen, Director of Education

JUDAICA BOUTIQUE



The Judaica Boutique has a wide tallit selection for bet mitzvah and everything else you need to make this life cycle event special. Check out our selection of Jewish pointers, kiddush cups, and shofrot.



Congregation B'nai Israel's Kulanu Committee
invites adult congregants to join us for

Dare to Lead: Brave Conversations

ADL
CONNECTICUT

Have you or your family members frozen in the face of an antisemitic or hateful comment?

With the rise of antisemitism and hate, we are increasingly confronted with difficult and challenging conversations. Please join the Congregation B'nai Israel Kulanu Committee for this special interactive program led by a trained ADL Facilitator. When you participate in **Dare to Lead: Brave Conversations**, you will leave feeling empowered to respond and lead by example.

Monday, November 18, 2024

Congregation B'nai Israel
7:00pm – 9:00pm

2710 Park Ave.
Bridgeport, CT

**RSVP and questions by November 10th
to Andrea Ruskin at aruskin04@gmail.com**

ADL
kulanu
SYNAGOGUES IN ACTION
AGAINST ANTISEMITISM

UPCOMING EVENTS

B'nai Israel Pet Blessing and Celebration



**Sunday, November 3
11:30 a.m.–noon
B'nai Israel Parking
Lot**

Whether you recently adopted a new puppy or have been a proud pet parent for quite some time, we invite you, and your beloved pet(s), to join us for a celebration of all the ways that our animals bring us comfort and joy. This is an animal-inclusive event — dogs, cats, lizards, and hamsters are all invited. All animals must be leashed and/or in appropriate cages at all times, and all animal attendees will receive a special treat to commemorate the occasion. Kehilah parents & students — bring your pets at 11:30! Kehilah will end at 11:30 that morning. Kehilah parents and families, bring your pets at 11:30 for the blessing!

Save the Date!

**Mark Your Calendars for our Fall 2024
Rosh Chodesh Gatherings:
Tuesday, November 12
Thursday, December 12**

Hebrew for “head of the month,” Rosh Chodesh refers to the start of the new Hebrew month. In Jewish circles and

communities worldwide, Rosh Chodesh has long been considered a special holiday for women. Here at B'nai Israel, Rosh Chodesh is an opportunity for women from across the B'nai Israel community to join together for learning, laughter, community building, and conversation. New and prospective members are welcome and encouraged to join. Whether you are a Rosh Chodesh “veteran” or have never attended a Rosh Chodesh gathering, we hope



to see you at one of our upcoming events. All Rosh Chodesh gatherings take place at Congregation B'nai Israel, unless otherwise noted. Watch your email and Hashavua throughout the year for more information about each gathering!

"It's a Wonderful Life" Film Screening

**Special B'nai Israel Holiday Time
Film Program Asks: “So, What’s
Jewish About *It’s a Wonderful Life*?”**

**Sunday, November 24
2:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Congregation B'nai Israel**

How many times have you seen the 78-year-old Hollywood classic, *It's a Wonderful Life*? Have you ever considered

what’s Jewish about this memorable film, popular at Christmastime, starring Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed?

The answer — more than you might first think. For starters, Philip Van Doren Stern, author of the short story the screenplay was based on, was a Jewish writer who grew up in New Jersey.



The influence of Judaic values and teachings in this iconic piece of American cinema are the focus of a special film screening and panel discussion set for Sunday, Nov. 24 at 2:00 p.m. at Congregation

B'nai Israel. B'nai Israel member Jon Sonneborn, a film historian and frequent film lecturer, and Rabbi Sarah Marion, who grew up watching it with her family on TV every year, will share their views following the screening.

It's a Wonderful Life is listed by The American Film Institute as one of the best 100 films ever made. See it again now, through a different lens. Please RSVP to Chris Rocha at crocha@cbibpt.org so we have enough seating for everyone.

FREE MEDICARE ADVICE AVAILABLE

My name is Jerry Demner, and I am a Choices Volunteer Counselor. I provide free Medicare advice to seniors and their caregivers. I served as a Medicare Part D counselor in NY from 2004 until I moved to Fairfield in 2011. In CT, I have been affiliated with the Southwest Connecticut Agency for the Aging since 2012. I am certified by Connecticut and SHIP (State Health Insurance Plans) as an unpaid volunteer to do this work.

Everyone on Medicare is required to have a drug plan that is considered a credible Part D plan.

Everyone's plan should be reviewed annually, as premiums and drugs

included in the program constantly change. Insurance companies negotiate individually with each pharmaceutical company for each drug they cover. Surprises are the rule, not the exception. There is an open enrollment period from October 15th to December 7th that permits participants to change their plan and possibly save a significant amount of money.

There are also other options that are available during this enrollment period. They have to do with Part C Advantage Plans and Traditional Medicare. If you have any concerns regarding any Medicare situation, please feel free to

connect with me.

Please feel free to contact me at medicarehelper@optimum.net. It takes between 45 minutes to a little over an hour for a consultation. If you are prepared with a list of your prescription medications, the process can be considerably shortened. I am not seeing people face-to-face during this pandemic. However, I am working with people via Zoom, FaceTime, and Skype. I am also available to answer questions over the phone. I will be happy to arrange an appointment. As a volunteer, I do not charge for this service. I am here to help you navigate this complex process.

OCTOBER DONATIONS

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

Rabbi Schultz Discretionary Fund

Brian & Linda Barlaam, in memory of Marcia Meyers, mother of Amy Moorin & Debbie Ross.

Ariel & Wendy David, in memory of David David.

Joel Goldfield & Iris Bork-Goldfield, with gratitude a donation for Rabbi Schultz.

William Greenspan, in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz.

Bernie & Janice Jacobs, in loving memory of Jeff Siegel's mother, Alice Siegel.

Mark & Anne Kirsch, in memory of Nancy Rosenthal, wife of Jonathan Rosenthal.

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

Jeff & Jackie Madwed, in loving memory of Nancy Levitt Rosenthal, husband of Jonathan, mother of Alex & Geoffrey.

Jon & Cleo Sonneborn, in memory of Lewis Wein, father of Karen Spring; in memory of Nancy Rosenthal, wife of Jonathan Rosenthal, mother of Jeffrey & Alex.

Judy Waldman, with thanks for Scott and Marty's unveilings.

Artie & Suzanne Weissman, in memory of Ruth Barcham, mother of Stew. Barcham.

Ken West, in memory of Donna BenAmoz, my sister.

Rabbi Marion Discretionary Fund

William Greenspan, in appreciation to Rabbi Marion.

Jane Pressman, in loving memory of my husband Jerry.

Glen & Kelly Reznikoff, in memory of Alice Siegel, mother of Jeff Siegel.

Cantor Scott Harris Discretionary Fund

Marlene Cohen & Jerome Fleisch, with gratitude to Cantor Harris for the lovely service for my mother's unveiling.

Bernie & Janice Jacobs, in memory of Sherry Portnoy's father, Arnold Portnoy. Our thoughts are with you.

Rabbi James Prosnit Legacy Fund

Martin & Elaine Schwartz, in memory of Elaine Rosoff, mother of Renee Noren; in memory of Alice Siegel, mother of Jeff (Mindy) Siegel.

Rabbi James Prosnit Discretionary Fund

Joel Goldfield & Iris Bork-Goldfield, with thanks a donation for Rabbi Prosnit. **Martin & Elaine Schwartz**, in memory of Alice Siegel, mother of Jeff Siegel.

Music Fund

Michael & Linda Epstein, in memory of Arnold Portnoy, father of Sherry Portnoy.

Michael & Joni Greenspan, in memory of Michael Miller, brother of Andi Kern.

Enhancement Fund

Barbara Berkowitz, in loving memory of my mother, Evelyn Toss.

Israel & Paula Hersh, in honor of Debbie Goodman's birthday.

Louise Linsky, with thanks, a donation.

Neil & Joanne Lippman, our deepest condolences to the Siegel family upon the death of Alice Siegel, mother of Jeff Siegel; and Stew Barcham upon the death of mother Ruth Barcham.

Jeff & Jackie Madwed, in loving memory of Alice Siegel, mother of Jeff Siegel, grandmother of Jaclyn Epstein and Rebecca Bacon and great grandmother of Avery and Jade Epstein; in memory of Marcia Meyers, mother of Debbie Ross & Amy Moorin.

Bradd & Syrene Robbins, in memory of Nancy Rosenthal.

Bonim Preschool Enrichment Fund

Ken & Lori Berger, in memory of Jeff Siegel's mother, Alice Siegel.

Mark & Anne Kirsch, in memory of Marcia Meyers, mother of Amy Moorin & Debora Ross.

William & Caren Schwartz, in memory of Alice Siegel, mother of Jeff Siegel.

David & Marcie Slepian, in memory of Ronnie Lustig.

Bonim Preschool Scholarship Fund

Eric & Ruth Gross, in memory of Arnold Portnoy, father of Sherry Portnoy.

Slepian Floral Fund

David & Deborah Ross, in memory of Alice Siegel, mother of Jeff Siegel.

Mazon

Dennis & Andrea Feinberg, in loving memory of our mother, Arlene Kay.

Religious School Scholarship Fund

Jaimie & Karen Sanger, in loving memory of Frances Fried, mother of Lisa Verchin.

Religious School Enrichment Fund

Jane Pressman, in memory of Stewart Barcham's mother, Ruth Barcham.

Rabbi Arnold Sher Social Action Fund

David Abbey & Deborah Goodman, in memory of Ruthie Barcham, mother of Stewart (Dale) Barcham.

Stewart & Dale Barcham, in memory of Alice Siegel, mother of Jeff Siegel.

Susan Bauchner, in loving memory of my father, Arnold Kaplan.

Mark & Barbara Edinberg, in memory of Nancy Rosenthal, wife of Jonathan Rosenthal.

Dennis & Andrea Feinberg, in loving memory of our mother, Phyllis Feinberg.

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

Mark & Anne Kirsch, in memory of Arnold Portnoy, father of Sherry Portnoy.

Dennis & Jan Magid, in memory of Arnold Portnoy, father of Sherry Portnoy; in memory of the yahrzeit of Ellen Rost.

David & Judith Pressler, in loving memory of Dr. Max Farber, father of Judith Pressler; Joseph Pressler, father of David Pressler; Jonathan Pressler, brother of David Pressler.

Arnold & Serena Sher, in memory of Alice Siegel, beloved mother & grandmother of Jeff Siegel & family; Elaine Rosoff, mother of Renee Noren; Arnold Portnoy, father of Sherry Portnoy; Jonathan Uman, beloved son of Susan Blomberg.

Vision Loan Reduction Fund

Ellen Sheiman, in memory of Sherry Portnoy's dad, Arnold Portnoy, may his memories bring you many blessings; a speedy recovery to Roger Jackson & wishes for only good health to Linda

OCTOBER DONATIONS

(CONTINUED)

Diamond for the year 5785; wishes to Rabbi Schultz for a speedy recover.

Jim and Barbara Abraham Education Fund

Glenn & Amy Rich, in memory of Arnold Portnoy, father of Sherry Portnoy.

Kesher Project

Bari Dworken, in memory of Arnold Portnoy, father of Sherry Portnoy.

Michael & Linda Epstein, with thanks for the beautiful work of Kesher.

Harold Levine, in celebration of Danny Freeman's 37th birthday.

The George Markley Chesed Fund

Donations in memory of Arnold Portnoy, father of Sherry Portnoy were made by;

Debbie Baer

Jerry & Dale Demner

Sherry Fogel

Mark & Barbara Edinberg

Jim & Lisa Greenberg

Gloria Katz

Beth Lazar

Irwin & Beverly Peck

David & Judith Pressler

Howard Weisman & Nina Silberman

Dan & Lori Underberger

Dan & Debra Viens

Donations in memory of Alice Siegel, mother of Jeff Siegel were made by;

Jake Bogner

Mark & Barbara Edinberg

Jim & Lisa Greenberg

Glenn & Amy Rich

Howard Weisman & Nina Silberman

Jon & Cleo Sonneborn

Mark & Barbara Edinberg, in memory of Ruth Barcham, mother of Stew Barcham.

Jim & Lisa Greenberg, in memory of Lewis Wein, father of Karen Spring.

Eric & Ruth Gross, in honor of Molly & Brian's wedding.

Howard Weisman & Nina Silberman, in loving memory of Francis Fried, mother of Lisa Verchin; in loving memory of Lewis Wein, father of Karen Spring.

Gillette Judaic Enrichment Fund

Ken & Karen Ferleger, in loving memory of Alice Siegel, mother of Jeff

Siegel.

Mark & Anne Kirsch, in memory of Alice Siegel, mother of Jeff (Mindy) Siegel; grandmother of Jaclyn (Asher) Epstein.

Jane Pressman, in memory of Jeff Siegel's mother, Alice Siegel.

BIFTY Greenwald Scholarship Fund

Judith Lessler, in memory of Robert Bretholtz.

Yakhani Caring Fund

Michael & Judith Blumenthal, in memory of Dr. Arnold Portnoy, father of

Sherry Portnoy.

Eric & Ruth Gross, in memory of Lewis Wein, father of Karen Spring; in memory of Ruth Barcham, mother of Stew Barcham.

Roger Jackson & Naomi Schaffer, in memory of Nancy Rosenthal, wife of Jonathan Rosenthal.

Janet Jurow, in memory of Marshall Simon.

Jon & Cleo Sonneborn, in memory of Arnold Portnoy, father of Sherry Portnoy.



Congregation
B'nai Israel
קהילה בני ישראל

(203) 336-1858 • www.cbibpt.org

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.

SCAM ALERT

If you receive a request from any member of our clergy or board to "do an errand" or "purchase gift cards," this is a scam. Please disregard the request and report it to the Cybersecurity Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) at [CISA.gov](https://www.cisa.gov).

crossroad? Who gets to go first — the joy or the grief? The loss or the celebration? Who gets the right of way?”

The answer, according to the Talmud, is joy. Joy gets to go first. And so, when a wedding and a funeral meet, our sages instruct us to “reroute” those accompanying the deceased. We reroute our grief, and we don’t postpone our celebration, because joy and gladness always get the right of way.

This is why it is our custom to avoid holding funerals on Shabbat. In Judaism, life comes before death...joy takes precedence over loss...gladness is prioritized over grief. In this way, it is as if our tradition is telling us to seize the opportunity for joy, if-ever and when-ever possible.

A few years ago, New York Times columnist Margaret Renkl wrote about her inner struggle to fully appreciate the beauty and joy of the first springtime blossoms, knowing just how much we are damaging and desecrating the Earth.

“We don’t deserve a March like this,” she wrote in early March 2022. “We have tortured the earth so thoroughly and for so long that we deserve only the hungry lions of March. But we are having the exquisite sort of March anyway. I glory in every tiny, iridescent green bee waking to feed on the first vanishing bloodroot flower, the first ephemeral spring beauty, the first woodland violet and cutleaf toothwort. Soon there will be trilliums and trout lilies, too....if you tell me I don’t deserve this joy, you are telling me nothing I don’t already know. The world is on fire, and I’m the one who struck the first match. I did it, and you did it. From the very first hominid to rise up on bare feet and stumble across a field of blooming grass, we have all been burning it down. We are burning it down still, to this very day, to this very hour.”

In between the lines, I hear Margaret asking the same sort of questions that I was asking myself last year on October 8, 2023. Is it right to celebrate the world and

all of its wonders at such a time as this? Is it right to stand in the woods and feel the joy of the sunshine beneath the treetops... at such a time as this? But, ultimately, she comes to the same conclusion as our rabbinic ancestors. Listen as her wisdom echoes theirs: “It’s entirely possible to understand what human beings are doing to the woods — and to one another in this moment of dread and grief and terrible struggle — and still exult in birdsong and tiny blooming flowers peeking out from the dead leaves of autumn. In this troubled world, it would be a crime to snuff out any flicker of happiness that somehow leaps into life. The world is burning, and there is no time to put down the water buckets. But just for an hour, put down the water buckets anyway.”

Just for an hour, put the water buckets down anyway. Just for an hour, let the wedding lead the way. Let the birthday party lead the way. Let the bar mitzvah lead the way. Just for an hour, perhaps we might give ourselves permission to let a little bit of joy lead the way.

But there is still one thing that the Talmud doesn’t get quite right. Joy and grief share a lot more in common than the Talmudic writers seemingly realize. As my colleague Rabbi Jen Gubitz notes, it is not always possible, or even preferable, to separate out joy from loss or gladness from grief. The two, she observes, often go hand in hand — they often share the same road — the same occasion — the same moment, in time. “And so were it up to me,” Rabbi Gubitz writes, “I would rewrite the Talmudic text, and I would do some construction work to widen the way so that when a wedding and a funeral meet on the streets, the two processions could share the road. Because when I stand with congregants at a funeral, there is so much loss and grief, but there is often also joy and gladness. There is often laughter mixed with tears, a deep sense of gratitude and celebration of life. When I stand with congregants at a wedding, there is so much joy and gladness, but there is also often loss and grief. Grief for those whose absence is palpably felt;

sorrow for letting go of children who have grown...and I can’t help but notice the smiles of those who witness with joy, but long for a love of their own.”

And so even though the wedding leads the way, even though the joy leads the way, in the end, there is always room for both. We can always make room for both. We can make room for joy even when our hearts are breaking, and we can make space for sadness even in the midst of our most joyous simchas and celebrations. And we need not feel guilty or beat ourselves up for feeling and experiencing everything, everywhere, all at once. But rather, as Rabbi Gubitz concludes, “Maybe we need the reminder to push ourselves, especially when the world is offering us more grief than gladness, to witness and experience them both.”

Rabbi Gubitz’s teaching reminds me that moments of suffering and sorrow are precisely the moments in which we ought to also make space for a little bit of joy...if-ever, and when-ever, we can. She reminds me that oftentimes, joy can be a soothing — and perhaps even lifesaving salve — for the most broken and bleeding of hearts.

October 8, 2023. I watch my daughter run around her birthday party with her friends, thinking with such sadness and heaviness about the children recently torn from their homes, their families, their beds. I think to myself that children belong at birthday parties and not in bomb shelters. I think about how the simple gift of a Pokemon-themed birthday party should not be a luxury that only some children in the world are lucky enough to enjoy.

As these thoughts swirl through my head, I am told that it is time to sing *Happy Birthday*. I take my place next to my sweet girl and feel the joy and pride permeating into the deepest depths of my being as she pauses to make a wish before blowing out her candles. As she makes her birthday wish, I secretly make one, too...for another year of life, laughter, and joy...even in the midst of it all.

KESHER CORNER

May Rosh Hashanah bring a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas and the return of the remaining hostages. May there be peace in Ukraine, and may we all act together to create a world held in love. We all can bring love in every moment with our thoughts, actions, and all our relationships.

The Keshet Project teaches us how love works to heal and elevate our feelings of self-worth and care for others. We feel uplifted in all the activities we do, and that's why we have opportunities to grow. We are grateful to Ellen Ashkins at Mozaic, and we're excited because our drama club will be performing *Our Beautiful World* to Mozaic residents on October 10. Please contact me if you would like to see our performance. We would love to see you there.

Word of mouth is bringing the possibility of new people to us and that is why I am sharing my wish list with you. There is the possibility of bringing more friends from Norwalk to our in-person monthly events. We would have to hire a driver and van from STAR to transport those people living in group homes. The cost of this would be \$100 a month. We are hoping to raise \$1,200 for the annual fee. This money is given to STAR to pay for gas, insurance, and the driver. The van transports 10 people. I am hoping you might ask friends and family members to help sponsor this as all donations are tax deductible.

I want to share a lovely story with you. I've been with the Keshet Project for 26 years, and over time several members have passed away. Last week I made a

shiva call to the family of a dear friend who has left us. At the shiva, I had a conversation with several people and spoke about the Keshet Project. I found out that Mort Berman, one of our Keshet friends who passed away years ago, was the uncle of members of our synagogue who were at the shiva. They thanked me for the program, and I felt it was important to Mort.

You know that nothing is wasted...and the good radiates out and touches people we don't know...so please continue to be positive and reach out to the person in front of you. It will make a difference.

Always Grateful,

Rhea Farbman

keshetdramaclub@gmail.com



BIFTY RETURNS!

Calling all high school students in grades 9–12...BIFTY is back! We are so excited to introduce our new BIFTY advisor, Alex Weisman! See below for a note from Alex introducing himself to our community and for dates for our upcoming October meetings. We will meet upstairs in the BIFTY lounge; all meetings will take place from 7:00–8:30 p.m. Feel free to come join other Jewish high school students in a fun, welcoming program. Whether you have been to BIFTY in the past or are new to BIFTY this year, all are welcome to join! Make sure to tell all your friends to come and bring lots of positive energy for the first meeting of the year! For questions, you can reach out to Alex Weisman, BIFTY advisor, at alexrweisman@gmail.com.

October 3
No meeting (Rosh Hashanah)

October 10
Regular program meeting

October 17
Regular program meeting

October 24
Regular program meeting

October 31
No meeting

November 7
Board Meeting

A note from Alex:



Hello everyone, my name is Alex and I am the new BIFTY advisor! I grew up at B'nai Israel from the preschool, to the Hebrew school, to being a member of BIFTY as well. I recently graduated from Brandeis University with a major in psychology and minors in Jewish studies and anthropology. In my free time I enjoy playing sports, listening to music, playing guitar, and hanging out with friends. I am really excited for BIFTY to get started this year and I can't wait to meet all of you!

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REDUCING STIGMA ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

BY CHATGBT AND MARJ FREEMAN, CO-CHAIR OF THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE

Happy New Year from the Mental Health Awareness Team! We are heartened by the recent improvements in attitudes toward mental illness, and hope understanding and support for those affected will continue to advance this year.

In recent years, the stigma surrounding mental illness has seen a significant shift towards greater acceptance and understanding. This change has been influenced by various factors, including high-profile advocates who have used their platforms to challenge outdated perceptions. Among these influential figures is Simone Biles, whose openness about her mental health struggles has played a pivotal role in reshaping the conversation around mental illness.

Historically, mental illness was often hidden away or stigmatized, with individuals facing social exclusion and discrimination. However, the past decade has witnessed a transformative shift. Increasingly, mental health is being recognized as a crucial aspect of overall well-being, with efforts to normalize conversations and provide support for those affected.

One of the most impactful moments in this shift came from the world of sports. Simone Biles, an Olympic gymnast celebrated for her extraordinary achievements, made headlines in 2021 when she withdrew from several events at the Tokyo Olympics, citing her mental health as a primary concern. This decision was a landmark moment, as it was one of the most visible instances of a top athlete publicly prioritizing mental health over competition.

Biles's decision to step back was met with a mixture of support and criticism. However, her willingness to be transparent about her mental health challenges opened a broader dialogue about the pressures faced by elite athletes and the importance of mental well-being. This bold move underscored the idea that mental health is just as crucial as physical health and that acknowledging one's

limitations is not a sign of weakness but of strength and self-awareness.

The influence of Biles extends beyond her individual actions. Her visibility and candor have contributed to a broader cultural shift, encouraging others to speak out about their own mental health experiences. Her impact has also spurred discussions about mental health within sports organizations and beyond, prompting initiatives aimed at providing better mental health resources and support for athletes.

This change in the narrative around mental illness can be attributed to several key factors. First, the growing influence of social media has significantly increased both awareness of mental illness and acknowledgement of the need to help affected individuals. This result comes in large part from the disastrous influence of social media on bullying and encouraging children and teens to harm themselves to "fit in."

On the positive, but less publicized side, social media has enabled individuals to share their experiences more openly, creating communities of support and reducing feelings of isolation. Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have become spaces where children torment each other, but also where mental health discussions are increasingly normalized, allowing people to connect and share resources.

In addition, media representation has played a significant role in this transformation. Public figures, celebrities, and influencers who openly discuss their mental health challenges help to break down stereotypes and encourage a more compassionate understanding. Their stories humanize mental illness, making it easier for the general public to relate to and empathize with those affected.

Educational initiatives have also contributed to this shift. Schools, workplaces, and community organizations are increasingly incorporating mental

health education into their programs, helping to dismantle stigma in children as well as in adults. These efforts aim to foster an environment where mental health is viewed with the same importance as physical health, promoting early intervention and support.

The legal and policy landscape has also evolved to support mental health. Many countries are enhancing mental health services and enacting laws to protect individuals from discrimination based on mental health conditions. In the U.S. there has been stronger enforcement of the 2008 Mental Health Parity Act, expansion of Telehealth services, establishment of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and in 2022, passage of both the Federal Crisis Mental Health Response Act and the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. These legal advancements help to create a more inclusive society, where mental health issues are recognized and addressed with greater sensitivity and support.

Despite these positive developments, challenges remain. Stigma can persist in various forms, and access to mental health care is still limited in many areas. However, the ongoing efforts to reduce stigma and improve mental health support are paving the way for a more understanding and empathetic society.

In summary, the recent reduction in stigma surrounding mental illness can be attributed to a combination of high-profile advocates like Simone Biles, the influence of social media, evolving media representation, educational initiatives, and legal advancements. Biles's courageous decision to prioritize her mental health has been a significant catalyst in this shift, highlighting the importance of mental well-being and encouraging others to embrace a more compassionate perspective. As society continues to delve deeper into these conversations, the ultimate goal remains to create a world where mental health is openly discussed and adequately supported for everyone.



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