

JANUARY HIGHLIGHTS

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🎵 SHABBAT SHIRA 🎵

Shabbat Shira Friday evening, January 26

Join us for Prayer.

Shabbat Shira is a special name given to the Shabbat on which we read the Torah Portion *B'shalach*. In this portion, the Israelites cross the sea, and once on the other side, sing songs of gratitude.



We mark this Shabbat in Song with accompaniment from Mike Lantowski, the music of Mark Edinberg, the voices of Liz Nigrosh and Ann Kirsch, our junior choir, adult choir, and temple musicians; we'll also be including the music and voice of **Cantor Richard B. Silverman, Cantor Emeritus**, who was the cantor of Temple Israel in Westport, from 1988 until his retirement in June of 2012. Many of his melodies, including "Etz Chayim — Tree of Life and his Mi Chamocha" are sung throughout the world in synagogues and Jewish camps. He has also published a songbook of his music. Cantor Silverman is a member of the URJ Commission on Social Action. Cantor Silverman is married to Batya; has a daughter, Sarit; a son, Elan, married to Heather; and grandchildren Sarah, Emi and Jacob.



Michael Lantowski is currently the organist and director of music at Saint Pius X Catholic Church in Fairfield, CT, and an accompanist at Temple Israel in Westport. Mike graduated from Housatonic Community College in Bridgeport with an AA in Fine Arts Music and a BM in Organ Performance and Choral Music from the Manhattan School of Music. He was one of the accompanists here at B'nai Israel from 1995-2000, and is a composer and arranger of music for both the church and synagogue. His setting of "Yih'yu L'ratzon" for the occasion of Cantor Richard Silverman's 18th year at Temple Israel of Westport was chosen from hundreds of submissions and featured at the 2011 convention for the American Conference of Cantors and Guild of Temple Musicians.

I'll be sharing the bima with the musicians, singers, my colleague and friend for many years Cantor Silverman, and Mike Lantowski, but I especially look forward to seeing and hearing your voices join us as we mark this special moment in our people's history.

If you would like to add your voice to our choirs or your musicianship to our bands, please reach out to me; I'd love to speak with you.

Shabbat Shira continues on January 27. Join us as we mark this Shabbat with the chanting of *Parshat B'shalach* and rejoicing with our adult B'Mitzvah. This Shabbat we are honored to have Marlene Nadeau and Anne Tranquilli-Bausher lead us in prayer and worship, share their love and learning with us, and be called to and chant from Torah. I hope that you'll be there on that Shabbat morning as they mark a very special moment in their Jewish lives.

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.

Ben & Heather Susman and Brooke & Meira
Fairfield, CT

SINCERE SYMPATHY

We extend our sympathy to the bereaved families of:

William Isanberg, father of Samantha Walker

Irving Glazer, father of Cheryl Green, grandfather of Jonathan Green

Norma Alkon, mother of Nancy Oberman, grandmother of Julia Leonard and Melanie Oberman

Alfred Wolfson, Sr., father of Al Wolfson

Karin Gaugler, sister of Dean Gaugler

SHARING OUR JOY

In Celebration of:

Nicole Bobko and Charlie Gilhuly, on the birth of their daughter Chloe Paige, sister to Eliana, Hannah, Grace, and Henry.

BULLETIN BOARD

MITZVAH MORNING

See Hashavua for details on upcoming Mitzvah Morning programs.

Thank you to our December Mitzvah Morning volunteers. On December 10, volunteers helped fulfill gift requests for children in need in our community. B'nai Israel partnered with The Center for Family Justice in Bridgeport to provide gifts to help make a meaningful impact on the lives of some children in our local community. Volunteers wrapped gifts and assembled stockings.



JUDAICA BOUTIQUE

The Judaica Boutique is stocked with beautiful merchandise. It will now be open most Fridays prior to Shabbat services. Please contact Sylvia Neigher to confirm shop hours at sylvianeigher@gmail.com.



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.

AMERICAN RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

Wednesday, January 31
from 1:00-6:00 p.m.



Schedule your appointment by calling the Red Cross at 1-800-448-3543 or visiting www.redcrossblood.org. Walk in appointments are also welcome.



FROM THE RABBI'S DESK/RABBI EVAN SCHULTZ

REFLECTING ON THE PAST THREE MONTHS

It has been over three months since the terrorist attack on Israel that left over 1,400 dead and 250 Israelis kidnapped by Hamas. I have been doing a great deal of writing over that time, reflecting on the war and trying to find hope amidst the fighting and rising levels of antisemitism around the world. I wanted to share a few of my pieces with you as we start this new year and pray for peace in the land of Israel. Here's hoping for brighter days ahead in 2024.

we are exhausted

we are tired
we are confused
we are empty
we are hurting
we are scared
we are worried
we are lost
we are afraid
we are wishing
we are on edge
we are waiting
we are praying
we are mourning
we are grieving
we are longing
we are watching
we are scrolling
we are hugging
we are writing
we are calling
we are singing
we are hoping
we are talking
we are crying
we are here.

Written December 5, 2023

last night i saw the messiah in aisle 9

shopping for
optimism
and cans of chicken soup.
will you be coming soon
i asked.
not right now
she replied.
then when
i asked.
and now prayed.
only when you are ready
dear child.
only when you are ready.

Written November 30, 2023

I am a climber.

My ancestors were climbers.
Abraham went up the mountain.
Joseph arose out of the pit.
Moses ascended Sinai.
In my most painful moments,
Esa einai el heharim —
My eyes look to the mountains.
My heart gazes up towards
Jerusalem.
And each time I return,
I climb the mountains
of the desert and the Golan,
and the brittle, steep alleyways
of the Old City.
I climb and I climb and I climb.
A Jew on a perpetual journey
to one day reach the summit
of the highest mountain.
Where I rest my tired heart
at the foot of the divine,
and quietly pray for peace,
before returning back home.

Written November 28, 2023

Hey God.

Looks like I got your voicemail.

Sorry I missed you.
Just wanted to let you know I was
thinking about you this morning.
Must be tough to see the world in
the condition it's in.
Guessing all this isn't what you
intended for us.
But know there's a lot of people
down here doing good.
They don't always make it on the
news.
I know you see them. And cry for
them.
And wish you could do more.
Know I still wake up every day and
thank you.
For the world you created.
Even with all its messiness and
violence.
I still believe in it.
And see its beauty every morning.
And I believe in all us humans to
one day figure it out.
I know you do too.
Until then, we'll keep trying.
And keep hoping.
Sending love.
Shabbat Shalom, God.
Talk to you soon.

Written November 25, 2023

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.

<p>Friday, January 5 6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom Torah Portion – Exodus 1:1-6:1 Haftarah – Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23</p>	<p>Haftarah – Ezekiel 28:25-29:21</p> <p>Saturday, January 13 8:00 a.m. Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom 9:00 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast 9:30 a.m. Torah Study – in person and on Zoom</p>	<p>9:00 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast 9:30 a.m. Torah Study – in person and on Zoom</p> <p>Friday, January 26 6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom Torah Portion – Exodus 13:17-17:16 Haftarah – Judges 4:4-5:31</p>
<p>Saturday, January 6 8:00 a.m. Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom 9:00 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast 9:30 a.m. Torah Study – in person and on Zoom</p>	<p>Friday, January 19 6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom Torah Portion – Exodus 10:1-13:16 Haftarah – Jeremiah 46:13-28</p>	<p>Saturday, January 27 – NO 8:00 a.m. Service 9:00 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast 9:30 a.m. Torah Study – in person and on Zoom 11:00 a.m. Adult B'not Mitzvah Service for Anne Tranquilli-Bausher and Marlene Nadeau</p>
<p>Friday, January 12 6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom Torah Portion – Exodus 6:2-9:35</p>	<p>Saturday, January 20 8:00 a.m. Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom</p>	

HIGH HOLY DAY APPEAL DONATIONS

Pillar of Congregation

Roger Mendes & Eliane Parangaba
Rabbi Arnold & Serena Sher
Alice Siegel
Mindy & Jeffrey Siegel

President's Circle

Linda & Gene Koski
Mark & Liz Nigrosh
Randy & Beth Reich
Silberman-Weisman Family
Marcie & David Slepian
Gail & Peter Weinstein

High Holy Day Appeal Donation

Seth Abbey & Abigail Lorge
Carol Barsky
Lori & Ken Berger
Leonard Braman & Anne Green
Jaclyn & Asher Epstein
Rhea Farbman
Gail & Gary Felberbaum
Dean & Laurie Gaugler
Bennett & Nancy Hersch
Donald & Wendy Hyman
Beryl Kaufman
Carol & Stephen Landsman

Shawn Maerowitz-DeTroy
Jordan & Beth Posner
Amy & Jeffrey Pressman
Barbara Rifkin
Twody & Bob Schless
Amy & Jared Selter
Scott Smith & Susan Zweibaum
Wendy & Bob Swain
Laura Sydney-Pulton
Judy Zeisler

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.



FINDING REDEMPTION IN THE SPACE BETWEEN

BY RABBI MARION

At the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in Washington D.C., visitors encounter a lofty, 30-foot stone statue of Martin Luther King, himself. There, he towers over us, gazing past the horizon... contemplating a vision, a dream, that we can only begin to imagine.

I've been to the MLK memorial a handful of times, and every time I visit, I am most struck by what lies *behind* that iconic statue. Behind the larger-than-life stone figure of MLK himself are two, towering stone mountains, which are purposefully and flawlessly split apart from one another, as if a giant paper cutter had come down upon one, large mountain and sliced a clean, smooth and even split, right down the middle.

And because those two stone mountains are split apart, there is a space between them — a narrow hallway, wide enough for a dozen or so people to stand together, side by side.

When I look at those two mountains, and the space between them, I am reminded of that decisive moment at the Red Sea, when the Israelites cautiously stepped forward into the swirling, churning waves... and then, just as they were about to get swallowed up by the sea, the waters split apart and ascended upwards — like two towering stone walls, one on either side.

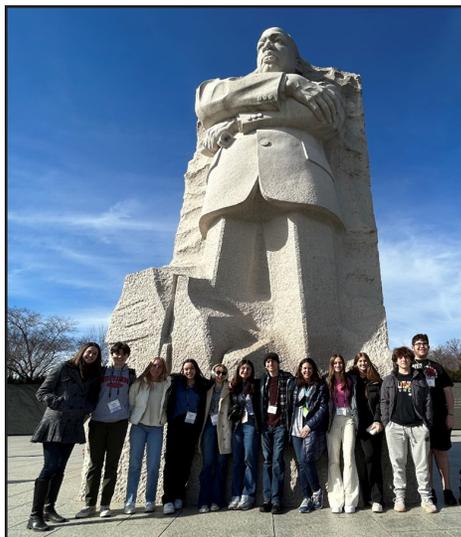
When the waters turned into walls, the Israelites stepped into that safe space between them — the narrow but safe passageway

that allowed men, women and children to pass from slavery, towards freedom. Though the water-walls are often the most striking and the most dramatic aspect of this biblical moment, it was the dry, ground space between the waters that enabled our ultimate redemption. This month, during Shabbat Shirah — our Sabbath of Song — we will read and celebrate this famous passage in Torah, remembering the miracle that occurred when our ancestors decided to leave their past behind, and step into a future of promise, potential and possibility.

Martin Luther King Jr., as well, sought a future of greater promise, potential, and possibility. He sought a future without the kinds of mountains and the kinds of walls that separate, oppress, and divide. Mountains of hatred, and prejudice and intolerance. Mountains that keep some elevated, and others permanently subjugated. Mountains of bias that can convince a person that someone is less “human” than another, simply on account of difference. Today, we too try to break down the deep, mountainous divisions that still exist within our society. Black vs. white. Jew vs. non-Jew. Israeli vs. Palestinian. Sometimes, it seems as though these walls will never cease to exist. But I continue to find hope in the spaces between. Amidst all the divisiveness and pain, I look for the narrow but ever-present spaces between all of the mountains and all of the walls...

The spaces in which people of different backgrounds and cultures join together for interfaith and interracial dialogue...

The spaces in which disagreement and discord give way to unity and commonality... The spaces that cultivate sparks of love, tolerance, and compassion between fellow human beings. Because just as it was at the sea, and, just as it always will be, the space *between* is how we move from one place, to another... the space *between* is where redemption is possible... the space *between* is where empathy and understanding takes root... the space *between* is where our greatest dreams might, finally, become a reality.



With the B'nai Israel Confirmation Class of 2023 at the MLK Memorial in Washington, D.C.



ALEXA COHEN/DIRECTOR OF THE EDUCATION CENTER

PAM KARLIN'S ARTICLE ON THE VALUE OF JEWISH PRESCHOOL.



When I read this article, I immediately reached out to Pam, a colleague through the ECE-RJ and asked if I could share it with all of you. She was thrilled to say “YES.” Pam’s thoughts mirror my own. I truly couldn’t have said it better myself.

Pam said,

“I got to thinking about how much time we were spending talking about the ‘heightened risk’ in our schools, when in fact we offer so much else that is heightened: learning, community, self-esteem, love of what is beautiful in humanity, and Jewish values as part of everyday living. Time to remind everyone that what we do provides security of body, mind, and spirit, too.”

There’s Something Special About Jewish Preschool

How lovely to have a time in life when it is just not such a big deal to be Jewish.

By Pam Karlin

As I sit in my office, a song is wafting through the air. Past the bulletin board showing all the discoveries our 4-year-olds have made in their explorations of maps... Past the classroom where children are making rainbow pancakes... The song comes to me from one of our three rooms where they are singing about a dinosaur who wants to celebrate Shabbat. In a few moments, I will head to our sanctuary and lead a rousing, 20-minute school tradition: the All School Shabbat. This moment in time is everything to me — and, in my Jewish community, I believe it is everything to our future selves, too.

As the director of early childhood education at a synagogue in downtown Brooklyn, I spend plenty of time leading tours of prospective parents, and the bulk of my speech is about the learning children do here. We talk about how their feelings and their inspirations are honored in the way our highly-educated teachers address curriculum. We share how well our little ones do when they leave us for kindergarten and beyond.

Only a portion of what I say is specifically about Judaism and its relationship to early childhood. But anyone who has had the distinct honor to run a Jewish preschool knows there is something extra we can offer. What does it mean to have a place that is distinctly Jewish before it even needs to be defined? I think it means a great deal. What does it do for a child to “live Jewish” in her classroom when she is still learning to speak, take turns and listen? It creates a lasting core of well-being for a child who will grow and experience the benefits of carrying what they learned into their lives beyond preschool.

The world has a lot to say about what it is to be Jewish. We all manage input from mainstream media that may treat Judaism as something “other.” If you are like me and grew up outside of New York or another thriving Jewish community, you know what it was to be the kid with the menorah in a sea of jingle bells and Santa suits at Holidays Around the World Day, invited to tout “Jewish Christmas” by (I assume) well-meaning teachers. In recent years, especially, many of us who never experienced overt antisemitism were reminded of what many of our grandparents experienced and never forgot — even as they created wonderful lives in the U.S. And since last month, of course, we’ve all been affected by the terrorist attack on Israel and the ensuing trauma of war. But as the sun goes down every Friday, we fill our sanctuary and join together in community knowing that — now more than ever — we need to continue to live as Jews.

So, when parents ask me about the benefits of a Jewish preschool, I start with the peaceful sensation of having a chance for Jewish living to be “just the water we swim in.” How lovely to have a time in life when it is just not such a big deal to be Jewish. It’s just the way we do it! And what do we do? We live life joyfully and meaningfully.

In a Jewish preschool, the seasons are marked by holidays infused with meaning. In preschool, the message of Yom Kippur

is not exactly one of atonement — rather how to pay attention to what one can learn and to feel empowered to improve. On Hanukkah, we talk about what it means to stand up for oneself and rebuild what is ruined. What can we do with our own desires to knock down a friend’s work and how can we make things right again? As we celebrate Tu Bishvat, we ask how we can best take care of our surroundings — both in a single room and throughout the world. How can we fix what breaks and sustain what lives? And, every Friday, how can we learn to find peace within and help others see what is beautiful in the everyday: some yummy juice, a piece of challah, tracing three circles in the air to bring in the peace of Shabbat, peeking through our fingers to see the glow of the candles. We appreciate life; we savor it. (And then we fingerpaint.)

Jewish early childhood education now has a long tradition of progressive, research-based pedagogy. And those of us who are dedicated to it know that there are many things particularly Jewish about preschool. Judaism’s affection for the everyday happiness we experience through our senses, the encouragement to be mindful with each meal and even with each daily transition, and the sheer relishing of learning as something sweet, important, and joyful — these are all things that preschool teachers strive to create for young children.

The feeling of living Jewish in preschool is a sustained, supported confidence that to be a person who is learning is just right. For parents and students alike, the feeling of life after Jewish preschool is knowledge that their identity as Jewish people is secure and not dependent on what the world may say. Now more than ever, giving children this particular gift is something we can embrace for our children.

Pam Karlin is Director of Early Childhood Education at the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue Preschool in NYC.

TIKKUN OLAM COLUMN

FOOD INSECURITY AND HOW YOU CAN HELP

Calling all B'nai Israel Cooks!

According to research, more than 380,000 Connecticut residents experience some level of food insecurity, characterized by insufficient access to adequate quantity and/or quality of food. This issue in our local community continues to be addressed by B'nai Israel, with close to 30 congregants as well as Kehilah students, led by teacher Renee Hull, participating in the St. John's Community Supper/Operation Hope programs. St. John's Family Center in Bridgeport receives 75 hot meals from B'nai Israel on the second Tuesday of each month and Operation Hope in Fairfield receives dinner for 50 every other month.

There are multiple ways to contribute to improving food security through our congregation. Join a small group of volunteers for "cooking and conversation" each month in the temple

kitchen while producing delectable chicken and pasta salad for 75! However, if weekday or small group cooking isn't your thing, it's possible to cook an assigned dish from home, which is then part of B'nai Israel's meal for 50 for Operation Hope. And, for those who would prefer to avoid cooking altogether, there's always the possibility of putting together a garden salad for 20, or picking up store bought cookies for either program. It's important to note that volunteering does not need to be done on a long-term basis...it can occur once, or more often, depending on preference.

"It takes a village" to contribute 1,200 meals a year to local residents in Bridgeport and Fairfield. Much gratitude to B'nai Israel's volunteers who have made this happen, including: Betsy Aldridge, Diane Bader, Carson Berkowitz, Karen Blau, Wendy Bloch, Rebecca Blondin, Judy Blumenthal,

Olivia Cohen, Shelley Dreizen, Jill Elbaum, Gail Felberbaum, Kate Fierman, Emily Nissan Franks, Andrea Goodman, Wendy Hyman, Adele Josovitz, Kathleen Juvilere, Barbara Kauders, Cristie Krauss, Joanne Lipman, Karen Montagna, Shari Nerreau, Dyann Ross, Laurie Schopick, Marcy Shinbaum, Marcie Slepian and Kehilah student bakers.

All have played a part in reducing local food insecurity.

If you are interested in learning more about participation in either program, please contact Deborah Goodman at Deborah.goodman7@gmail.com or Barbara Gersen at babsng1013@gmail.com.

Thank you,
Deborah Goodman and Barbara Gersen



JANUARY DONATIONS

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

Rabbi Schultz Discretionary Fund

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

Jonathan & Shelley Dreizen, with thanks to Rabbi Schultz for the beautiful Bat Mitzvah service and for your help in preparing Sammi for this special day.

Andrew & Shelley Karlen, in memory of William Isanberg, father of Samantha Walker and Ian Isanberg.

Barbara Kauders, in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz for his strength and leadership during these difficult times.

Kehilah Parent Committee, in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz; we are all so thankful for the time and love you pour into our children. May your holiday be filled with light and love!

Chris & Todd Markley, in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz.

Ellen Sheiman, in loving memory of my father, Dr. Milton Unger; mother, Sylvia Breiner Unger; brother, Martin Unger and nephew, Alan Unger.

Steven Soberman & Suzanne

Phillip, in appreciation to Gary & Gail Felberbaum and in appreciation of Rabbi Evan Schultz.

Kathy Spiegel, in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz for his kind words and presence at my mothers' unveiling.

Laura Sydney-Pulton, in memory of Susan Walden's father, Melvyn Rosenzweig.

Kenneth & Rita Weinstein, in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz, Ken and I wanted to thank you for all you have done during this difficult time.

Fredric & Ronni Zinn, in memory of brother, Joel Zinn.

Rabbi Marion Discretionary Fund

Lynn Blueweiss, in honor of the baby naming for grandchildren Jaren & Reiss Ruskin.

Barbara Kauders, with thanks to Rabbi Marion for her strength and leadership through these difficult times.

Kehilah Parent Committee, in appreciation to Rabbi Marion; we are all so thankful for the time and love you pour into our children. May your holiday be filled with light and love!

Geoffrey & Melanie Kooris, in memory of fathers Dom Correnti and Joe Kooris.

Beth Lazar, in loving memory of my father Leonard Mosha Lazar; my uncle Fred Greenberg and my aunt Lea Lazar, may she rest in peace.

David & Marcie Slepian, in memory of David Sydney, father of Laura Sydney-Pulton.

Cantor Scott Harris Discretionary Fund

Jonathan & Shelley Dreizen, in appreciation to Cantor Harris for all your help and dedication to prepare Sammi for her Bat Mitzvah.

Barbara Kauders, in appreciation to Cantor Harris for your leadership and strength through these difficult times.

Kehilah Parent Committee, in appreciation to Cantor Harris; we are all so thankful for the time and love you pour into our children. May your holiday be filled with light and love!

Beth Lazar, mazel tov to Cantor Scott Harris & family on the birth of his two granddaughters, Abigail Wren & Stella Maeve.

Judith Lessler, in memory of my mother Sophie Bretholtz.

Rabbi James Prosnit Discretionary Fund

Amanda Gotie, Erin Palian, Lauren Genato, Marissa Sullivan, Marni Vassallo, Stephanie Tighe and families, in memory of and in honor of William Isanberg, father of Samantha (Jonathan) Walker.

Music Fund

Arnold & Serena Sher, in memory of Thelma Schreiber, mother of Andrea Rudolph; in honor of Scott & Sharon Harris on the birth of their granddaughter Abigail Wren.

Enhancement Fund

Barbara Berkowitz, in memory of my husband Barry Berkowitz whose yahrzeit was November 11, 2023.

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

Michael Jacobson, in memory of my father's yahrzeit.

Barbara Kauders, in memory of Herman Cohen.

Judith Stern, in memory of my dearest mother, Sylvia Edelson.

Bonim Preschool Enrichment Fund

Arnold & Serena Sher, in memory of David Sydney, father of Laura Sydney-Pulton.

Religious School Enrichment Fund

Ken & Rita Weinstein, in memory of Albert Weinstein's yahrzeit.

Rabbi Arnold Sher Social Action Fund

Brian & Linda Barlaam, in memory of Laura Sydney-Pulton's father, David Sydney.

Carol Barsky, in memory of my daughter Lynn Barsky Ryalls and my brother Donald Quint.

Michael & Judy Blumenthal, in memory of David Sydney, father of Laura Sydney-Pulton.

Arnold & Serena Sher, in memory of Irving Glazer, father of Cheryl Green.

Kathy Spiegel, in honor of my sister Rhea's 75th birthday.

Marshall & Myra Watnick, in memory of Bobby Miller, brother of Samuel Miller.

Michael & Debora Weisman, in appreciation to and in memory of Jerry Pressman, husband of Jane Pressman.

Vision Loan Reduction Fund

Ellen Sheiman, in memory of my husband and best friend, Dr. Robert Sheiman.

Samuel & Patti Rosenberg, in appreciation to Lisa Greenberg for giving the Szyk exhibition tour, and in appreciation to Nancy & Irv Silverman.

The George Markley Chesed Fund

Martin & Alayne Burger, in memory of David Sydney, father of Laura Sydney-Pulton.

JANUARY DONATIONS

(CONTINUED)

Mark & Barbara Edinberg, in memory of David Sydney, father of Laura Sydney-Pulton.

Jim & Lisa Greenberg, in memory of my mother, Doba Mazo.

Geoffrey & Melanie Kooris, in memory of George Markley.

Yakhani Caring Fund

Gary & Gail Felberbaum, in appreciation to Rabbi Schultz, Rabbi Marion, Cantor Harris for their guidance and support during the Israeli war.

Robert & Paula Herzlinger, mazel tov to Jack Kadden on the marriage of his daughter Sarah to Josh Sabel.

GRATITUDE, MENTAL HEALTH, AND JUDAISM

BY CONGREGANT BETH LAZAR

In the book *Gratitude Works! A 21 Day Program for Creating Emotional Prosperity*, psychology professor and author Robert A. Emmons states, “Gratitude is important, not only because it helps us feel good...(it) heals, energizes, and transforms lives. Gratitude has one of the strongest links to mental health and satisfaction of life of any personality trait, more so than optimism, hope, or compassion.” Emmons urges the readers to keep a gratitude journal for 21 days. He gives you seven separate sets of exercises, one for each day of the week. One exercise is to write a letter of gratitude to someone whom you have never properly taken the time to thank: a parent, teacher, friend, or coach.

I am really grateful for all my dad has done for me, but he passed away without me formally thanking him. My mom is alive and 84. I thought I should write her a gratitude letter while I still have the opportunity. This was a difficult exercise because our relationship was cool and distant due to conflicts that started when I was in junior high school. We disagreed on my choice of dress, boyfriend, and politics.

My dad married my (step)mom after my biological mother died of pneumonia when I was 4. My new mom was 21 years old when she took on the care of my brother, sister, and me, three pre-school aged children. At 21, I could barely take care of myself, let alone three small children. My dad and (step)mom also had four children together. Mom cooked a hot dinner every night for nine people. On holidays with grandparents and cousins visiting, there were twenty

people or more. My mom took us kids to the library, bookstores, the zoo, the beach, Boy and Girl Scout meetings, and the movies. She played games with us and helped us study for spelling, vocabulary, and history tests. She was elected to be Town Treasurer and served for eight years. I wrote a letter to thank Mom for raising me and my 6 siblings and being a leader in the community. Mom called when she got the letter and said it meant a lot to her. We talk often now, and our relationship has grown to be more than mother and daughter; we’re also good friends. Gratitude improves relationships, which leads to better mental health.

Emmons writes, “The link between spiritual practice and the practice of gratitude is long and historic. Gratitude is a universal religious sentiment.” This is certainly true of Judaism. At every Saturday morning 8 a.m. service, we thank God for the daily miracles of waking up, vision, and physical mobility (p. 198-200 in our prayerbook). We also thank God “for the finely balanced network of veins, arteries, and vital organs” (p. 195) and “pure soul” (p. 196). Observant Jews say these prayers every morning, not just on Saturday. The Hebrew doesn’t speak to me, so I say in English my own personal gratitude for daily miracles every morning. My prayer changes with the times. With the advent of the COVID pandemic, I have added, “Thank you for my ability to breathe, and healthy lungs. Thank you for my ability to smell and taste.” I highly recommend the book, *Gratitude Works*, to help you develop your own daily practice of gratitude for the benefit of your mental and spiritual health.

Gratitude for Daily Miracles By Beth Lazar

Thank you God,
For awakening me to the new day
To You and only You I pray
Thank you for enabling me to speak
Please accept these words of praise from
your servant so meek
Your Holy acceptance I do seek.

Thank you God,
For my eyes and the ability to see.
The faces of loving friends and family
And the beauty of your creativity.

Thank you God,
For my ears and the ability to hear birds
chirping,
The wind and music.
Words of wisdom and words of good
cheer.

Thank you God,
For my strong arms and legs,
That enable me to work and play.
And get me where I want to go,
And enable me to reap and sow.

Thank you God,
For the clothing on my back,
Food, shelter and clothing
There is nothing that I lack.

Thank you God,
For these miracles you perform each day
To You and only You I pray
Please accept these words of praise from
your servant so meek
Your Holy acceptance I do seek.

GETTING A LITTLE GREENER

SUGGESTIONS FROM THE CONGREGATION B'NAI ISRAEL GREEN TEAM

Trying to find new ways to decrease waste and otherwise help the planet? There are many simple things to try at home that might create a new habit for you and your family. Perhaps pick one this month to see how it works for you. Every little change adds up!

- Already recycling? Did you know that you can also recycle several household items which unfortunately cannot go into the town recycling pickups? You can drop off many kinds of plastic bags, including produce, Ziploc, and dry cleaning bags at many of our local larger grocery stores. Usually, these bins are in the front of the store. They also take bubble wrap, plastic mailers, and newspaper sleeves. We keep a

separate recycling bin in our kitchen for these. Remember to avoid tossing these items into regular recycling bins as they interfere with the normal recycling process. A helpful list of these products can be found at: <https://documents.trex.com/is/content/Trex/trex-recycling-posterpdf.pdf>.

- Decrease your use of paper napkins at

home. Get some cloth cotton napkins that are easily machine washable. Purchase things that last!

- Instead of paper towels, try Swedish dishcloths. These are very absorbent, durable, and machine washable. You can keep a few around the house and one in your car. Use one to wash dishes, spills, counters, dog paws, actually, almost anything! Suggested uses can be found at: <https://www.thepurposefullyou.com/blog/10-ways-we-use-swedish-dish-cloths>.



Please send your favorite successful change made in your home so that we can share these ideas in future Green Team communications to Julie Rosenbaum (jarosenbaum@gmail.com).



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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.

JANUARY EVENTS

Resilience Amidst Adversity: Coping with the Impacts of Current Challenges in College Life,

Monday, January 8, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

Join us — at the Schoke JFS office, 196 Greyrock Place, Stamford, CT. Reserve your seat at www.ctjfs.org. We welcome high school seniors, college students, recent college graduates, and parents who may be facing concerns regarding safety, social pressures, or lack of balance.

Adult Education

How the World Turned Against Israel January 11, 2024, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

During the Six Day War of 1967, polls showed that Americans supported the Israelis over the Arab countries by overwhelming margins. In Europe, support for Israel ran even higher. In the United Nations Security Council, a British resolution essentially gave Israel the terms of peace it sought. Fast forward and Israel has become perhaps the most reviled country in the world. What happened?

Join with Rabbi Schultz for an exploration of how the world turned against Israel. We'll examine the past fifty years and discuss how a myriad of factors shifted

JANUARY EVENTS (CONTINUED)

much of the world's opinion against Israel. The class will be based on the book *Making David into Goliath* by Joshua Muravchik. Open to all.

Caregiving Support Group Sunday, January 28, 10:30 a.m.–noon 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.

Save the Date

Repro Shabbat — February 9, 2024

We are thrilled to welcome Alannah Boyle from the National Council of Jewish Women as our guest speaker for Repro Shabbat. Alannah will speak at Shabbat services and host a talk following Shabbat dinner. More information to follow in Hashavua.

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.

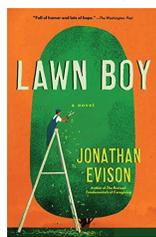


Out of Darkness by Ashley Hope Perez Thursday, January 18, 7:00 p.m.

Discussion led by Susan Walden and Caren Schwartz

The 9th most challenged book of 2022 according to the ALA

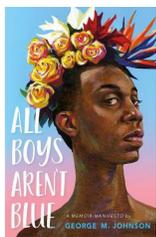
Lawn Boy by Jonathan Evison Thursday, March 28, 7:00 p.m.



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, 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

"What's Jewish about *The Twilight Zone*" with Rabbi Marion on Zoom



Class will meet monthly on the following Sundays, from 8:00-9:15 p.m.:

Sunday, January 21

Sunday, February 11

Join us in the Twilight Zone this winter! At each class, we'll watch an episode over zoom together and then discuss the rich Jewish themes and values that we can glean from it. So plopp down on your couch, grab your computer and BYOP (bring your own popcorn!)

Zoom link for January 21 Session:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88241513459?pwd=YnJXUIRHRy8xcFINcHNNLlFhZlBudz09>

Meeting ID: 882 4151 3459

Passcode: 0au2A5



Upcoming 5784 Rosh Chodesh programs and events, save the date!

Monday, January 22: Tu Bishvat Tasting
Monday, February 12: Game Night, co-sponsored by Women of B'nai Israel
Sunday, April 7: Women's Passover Seder, co-sponsored by Women of B'nai Israel

Rosh Chodesh Shevat/January Gathering: Join us for a Potluck Tu Bishvat Tasting!

Monday, January 22, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

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

- Category #1: Fruits/nuts with an inedible outer covering and edible inside (melons, nuts, pomegranates, coconuts, citrus, bananas, etc.)
- Category #2: Fruits with an edible outside but inedible pit inside (dates, olives, plums, peaches, apples, avocados, nectarines, pears, etc.)
- Category #3: Fruits that are entirely edible (berries, figs, grapes, etc.)

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

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

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KESHER CORNER

January 2024 is upon us and The Keshet Project and Lee and David Lester Drama Club have many events to share.

We're looking forward to February 23, when we'll be on the bima for a Disability Awareness Shabbat service to pray and sing with you. This will be followed by a delicious joint Keshet/congregational dinner.

March brings us to the Purim Schpiel, when several Keshet members will participate in the celebration and entertain you. We're looking for people of all ages to join us in performing at this lively event.

There's more to share. We've been making props and rehearsing for a wonderful original play called *Our Beautiful World*, which we will perform in May. It's an uplifting musical with many of your favorite songs.

We hope you can join us at these fun events.

We're always looking for volunteers, and donations are always welcome. Please contact me or Sherry if you have any questions or would just like to say hi!

rheasmusic@icloud.com
sherrysmeow@optonline.net
keshetdramaclub@gmail.com



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Wednesday, January 17, 7:00PM

TCS - 30 Hillspoint Rd, Westport

A Conversation with Amanda Berman:
Founder and Executive Director of Zioness, a multiracial coalition of Jewish activists and allies who are committed to the inclusion of Zionists in social justice spaces.



RSVP Here!



To register, please visit:
https://www.tcs-westport.org/form/Amanda_Berman_1-17-24.html



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BIFTY



We had fun playing Kahoot and doing a scavenger hunt with the 8th graders!

BIFTY is excited to kick off the new year! We had fun taking over Hebrew school for the 8th graders a few weeks ago. All B'nai Israel 8th graders are now invited to attend BIFTY programs! We meet on Thursdays from 7:00–8:30 p.m. in the BIFTY lounge. Stay up to date on events by following us on Instagram @cbi.bifty and asking to join our text group. Our January dates are:

- January 11
- January 18
- January 25

We look forward to seeing you there!