

DECEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Rabbi Schultz shares eight sources of light to bring hope to the Chanukah season. Page 3

Rabbi Marion explains how our journeys, like Abraham's in the face of uncertainty in the Torah, must be both journeys forward and journeys within. Page 5

Alexa Cohen highlights the community engagement activities of the new Kehilah Kitah Zayin (7th grade) curriculum. Page 6

Rhea Farbman, founder of the Keshet Project, introduces us to the Keshet Songfest. Page 11



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Chanukah at B'nai Israel!



12/12 Guys Night Out The Levees @ FTC



Join with the fellas for a Levees Chanukah concert at Fairfield Theater Company! Buy tickets at www.fairfieldtheater.org



12/20 Chanukah Dinner and Service

Service at 6:00 p.m. and dinner at 7:00 p.m. See Hashavua for RSVP

12/27 Outdoor Menorah Lighting @ 5:30 p.m.

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.

Jacob & Stefanie Bartfield and Asher & Desmond
Trumbull, CT

SHARING OUR JOY

In Celebration of:

Susan and Richard Walden, on the engagement of their daughter Elizabeth to Albert Cortina

Sara Laden, on the birth of her granddaughter Florence Harriet Laden, daughter of Cory and Ernie Laden

Linda and Barry Diamond, on the birth of their great granddaughter Scarlett Jane Diamond, daughter of Michael and Megan Diamond, granddaughter of Robert & Theresa

SINCERE SYMPATHY

We extend our sympathy to the bereaved families of:

Nancy Wettenstein, mother of Bruce Wettenstein

Irving Hochhauser, father of Kenneth Hochhauser

James Grutzmacher, husband of Sara Laden

DECEMBER MITZVAH MORNING

December 15, 2024, 10:00 a.m.

For our December Mitzvah Morning we will be partnering with The Center for Family Justice (CFJ) and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to deliver holiday gifts to families in need. CFJ and DCF both work with many families who do not have the means to buy holiday gifts, so our Mitzvah Morning project will revolve around providing gifts for the children of these families.

Each of our volunteers will be matched with a child who has filled out a request for a specific gift. Volunteers will fulfill the gift request, and then we will all assemble as a community on December 15 at B'nai Israel to wrap our gifts together and present them to the CFJ team.

Volunteers can sign up via the SignUp Genius which will be posted on the B'nai Israel website and published in

BULLETIN BOARD

Hashavua. Volunteers will then be notified of their match and the gift request.

This will be a fun event where volunteers will gather as a community while making a real and meaningful impact on a child's life.

To learn more about The Center for Family Justice please visit centerforfamilyjustice.org and to learn more about DCF visit <https://portal.ct.gov/dcf/1-dcf/about-dcf>. For more information, please reach out to Helaine Greenbaum at helaine.greenbaum@gmail.com.

Here are some photos from last year's volunteer event.



JUDAICA BOUTIQUE

Mark your calendars! On December 8 and 12, the Judaica Shop will be holding special sales events during religious school hours. Get dreidels, candles, nut free gelt, menorahs, toys and more to make the Chanukkah holiday fun and celebratory!



The Temple Office, Bonim, and Kehilah will be closed from
December 25 through January 1.



FROM THE RABBI'S DESK/RABBI EVAN SCHULTZ

EIGHT SOURCES OF LIGHT, 2024 EDITION

Where do I find light these days? Each December, as the days are short and the world feels too filled with darkness, I like to look around and offer eight sources of light, one for each of the candles on the Chanukah menorah.

There is most certainly light around us, both in our community and beyond. This light is what gives me hope and the motivation to get up each day and continue the work of *tikkun olam*, repairing the world.

As we approach the Chanukah season, as we look out on a divided country, war in Israel, and increased attacks on our people, we need to raise up the light more than ever. These are eight sources of light that I've found most nourishing and strengthening over the past year. Wishing you a Happy Chanukah and a very blessed New Year.

Light #1 — Rabbi Hanna Yerushalmi

I have gotten to know poet Hanna Yerushalmi quite well over the past year. She joined our community on Shavuot to share some of her incredible poetry and her two books have been a source of light as war continues in Israel and 101 hostages remain in captivity (at the time of writing this article). You can find her books on Amazon. All proceeds go to support kibbutzim in Israel attacked on October 7, 2023.

Light #2 — Rabbi Sarah Marion

You don't have to go far to be inspired and nourished by the wisdom of our rabbi, Sarah Marion. Sarah's sermons on

Friday nights and Saturday mornings have spoken to the time and place in which we live, with personal stories, deep emotion, and the strength we need to continue living out our values in a world that can feel so immensely challenging some days. I'm so grateful to Rabbi Marion for always seemingly finding the right words to usher in Shabbat.

Light #3 — Rabbi Menachem Creditor

Rabbi Creditor is the scholar-in-residence for UJA Federation of New York. He regularly publishes anthologies of poetry, writings, and sermons from rabbis and Jewish leaders from across the Jewish spectrum. Additionally, he hosts a daily meditation each morning on Facebook and Instagram which I attend regularly. His wisdom and music are an incredible way to start each day.

Light #4 — Rabbi Sharon Brous

Rabbi Brous has become one of the key voices of American Judaism. If you haven't yet read her book, *The Amen Effect*, I certainly encourage you to do so. Additionally, Rabbi Brous posts her sermons and teachings on social media and is a fixture on cable news shows, offering a Jewish perspective of compassion grounded deeply in Jewish texts and teachings.

Light #5 — Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg

Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg writes a blog called *Life is a Sacred Text*, where she offers her takes and thoughts on current events, both in America and Israel. She

is the former scholar-in-residence at the National Council of Jewish Women. I find her teachings both intellectual and attuned to where many of our hearts are these days as Jews in America.

Light #6 — Nefesh Mountain

If you're a bluegrass fan (or even if you're not), I encourage you to check out the music of Nefesh Mountain. Some of you may remember they did a living room concert for our community during the pandemic. They continue to put out some of the most beautiful Jewish music right now and are coming out with two films as well!

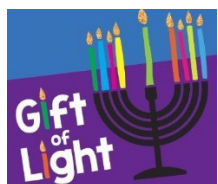
Light #7 — Rabbi Shai Held

Rabbi Shai Held, one of the founders of Hadar, recently published *Judaism is About Love*, which is one of the most important offerings to the Jewish library in recent years. Held is a moral Jewish voice of our time and argues in his book that love is central to our actions and beliefs as Jews. What an important message and read for this moment!

Light #8 — All of You

Our B'nai Israel community is a constant source of light to me and to the entire congregation. The level of love for one another, care for our broader world, and deep compassion and wisdom that exists in our community is a true light to our Greater Bridgeport community. Thank you for always being the light, and may we continue to light the way in 2025.

GIVE THE GIFT OF LIGHT FOR CHANUKAH!



Please share the warmth of Chanukah this year with your fellow congregants by participating in this year's Gift of Light fundraiser! Gift your family and friends at B'nai Israel with beautiful Chanukah candles! By participating, you will make someone's day, spread some happiness, and continue to make our temple community the warm and welcoming place we all know it to be.

The holiday begins on Wednesday, December 25, but now is the time to order beautiful Chanukah candles for your family and friends at B'nai Israel.

Our online system makes placing an order fun and easy! Just click on the personalized link you receive via email. Each of your candle recipients will receive a single box of candles with personalized greetings from every sender. Each box is hand-packaged by a special team of Chanukah helpers.

This year, your recipients will be able to pick-up their candles at the temple between December 15 and December 20.

Plans for wrapping candles are still underway! We hope you will join in the fun! Stay tuned for more information in Hashavua. For more information, please contact Chris Rocha at chris@cbibpt.org or call the Temple office at (203) 336-1858. With your help, we can make this year's Gift of Light more successful than ever!

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, December 6

5:30 p.m. Oneg
6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service –
in person and on Zoom
Torah Portion –
Genesis 28:10-32:3
Haftarah –
Hosea 12:13-14:10

Saturday, December 7

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
11:00 a.m. Bet Mitzvah of Elliot
Nissan, son of Colin &
Emily Nissan

Friday, December 13

5:30 p.m. Oneg
6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service –
in person and on Zoom

Torah Portion –

Genesis 32:4-36:43
Haftarah –
Hosea 11:7-12:12

Saturday, December 14

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

Friday, December 20

5:30 p.m. Oneg
6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service –
in person and on Zoom
Torah Portion –
Genesis 37:1-40:23
Haftarah – Amos 2:6-3:8
Chanukah Dinner

Saturday, December 21

8:00 a.m. Shabbat Service –

9:00 a.m. in person and on Zoom
9:30 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast
Torah Study –
in person and on Zoom
11:00 a.m. Bet Mitzvah of Maxwell
Borofsky, son of Jeffrey
Borofsky & Beth Natt

Friday, December 27

5:30 p.m. Oneg
6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service –
in person and on Zoom
Torah Portion –
Genesis 41:1-44:17
Haftarah – Zechariah 4:1-7

Saturday, December 28

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

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 call the temple office.

HIGH HOLY DAY APPEAL DONATIONS

Pillar of Congregation

James & Lisa Greenberg
Stephen Guss
Stephen & Molli Hourihan
Richard & Joanne Krantz
Robert & Francine Morris
Robert & Helen Natt
Charles & Nancy Needle
Elizabeth and Mark Nigrosh
Rabbi James Prosnit &
Wendy Bloch
Jerry Saunders & Elaine
Appellof
Mark Schiff
Serena Sher
Claire Shumofsky
Richard & Susan Walden

Benefactor of Congregation

Mark & Barbara Edinberg
William & Caren Schwartz
David & Marcie Slepian
Daniel & Debra Viens
Fredric & Ronni Zinn

President's Circle

Jeffrey Ackerman & Andrea
Goodman
Linda & Brian Barlaam
Jeffrey & Wendy Bender
Martin & Alayne Burger
Juda & Elaine Chetrit

Stacy & Robert Giglietti
Ruth and Eric Gross
Robert & Paula Herzlinger
Janet Jurow
George & Alice Kelly
Jeremy & Debra Kortmansky
Andrew & Carol Lubin
Samuel Miller
Jeff & Nancy Oberman
Ellen Sheiman
Peter & Gail Weinstein
Michael & Debora Weisman

High Holy Day Appeal Donation

Bonnie Alterman
Claire Baker
Carol Barsky
Barbara Berkowitz
Nicholas Blondin & Rebecca
Gordon Blondin
Jacob Bogner
Joav & Lisa Burger
Colette Carasso
Robert & Judith Chessin
David & Georgette Chetrit
Jeni Cook-Mack &
Benjamin Mack
Jerome & Dale Demner
Paul & Elizabeth Dengelegi
Barry & Linda Diamond

Rose Dressler
Brett & Tanya Dunne
Michael & Linda Epstein
Rhea Farbman
Dennis & Andrea Feinberg
Gary & Gail Felberbaum
Steven & Natalie Fried
Joann Gelfand
Sarah Gillespie-Heyman &
Philip Heyman
Joel Goldfield & Iris
Bork-Goldfield
Avrum & Donna Goldstein
Laurel Greenberg
Scott & Melissa Halpern
Lynette Helman
Bennett & Nancy Hersch
Judith Hochstadt
Donald & Wendy Hyman
Bernard & Janice Jacobs
Michael Jacobson &
Anne Lampert
Jack Kadden
Marc & Janice Katz
Beryl Kaufman
Sally Kenler
Geoffrey & Melanie Kooris
Barry & Judith Kramer
Stephen & Carol Landsman
Beth Lazar
Aleksy & Raisa Ledvich

Hallie Levine
Richard & Gail Lopatin
Carol Mack
Alice Madwed
Ernest Malecki
Erica & Greg Mason
Perry & Melissa Molinoff
Alan & Joan Newman
Scott & Shari Pearlman
Judith Rankell
Howard & Julie Rosenbaum
Wendy Ruben
George & Lisbeth Ruderman
Gilbert & Barbara Saltman
Naomi Schaffer &
Roger Jackson
Dan & Laurie Schopick
Jeff Schwartz
Martin & Elaine Schwartz
Scott Smith & Susan Zweibaum
Eric Stein & Dyann Ross
Robert & Wendy Swain
Stephen & Ellen Tower
Lauren & Jonathan Tropp
Judy Waldman
Larry & Linda Walker
Marshall & Myra Watnick
Marilyn Weinstein
Artie & Suzanne Weissman
Frederic & Sherry West
Susan & Arnold Zuckman



"LECH LECHA": GO FORTH, GO WITHIN

SHABBAT SERMON FROM FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2024

BY RABBI MARION

As Jews, we are no strangers to uncertainty. We should have known, perhaps, that it would always be this way. Because we've known uncertainty and we've known anxiety, ever since the beginning of time. Ever since Abraham, our founding Jewish father, was called by God to leave everything behind and "go forth" towards an unknown and unfamiliar place.

In Torah this week, Abraham heeds God's call to "*Lech Lecha*" to leave the past behind and venture out to the land that God will show him. With a promise that God will establish a special covenant with him and all of his children, Abraham goes forth, into a future that is yet to be determined. Though he remains hopeful for the future, the moment, for Abraham, is disconcerting and disorienting.

Nothing is as it once was. His journey signifies the end of everything that he once knew and thought to be true. A hazy and uncertain fog has descended upon the road ahead. What will happen? What will come to be?

Our biblical commentators like to play with the Hebrew expression "*Lech Lecha*," which, at its simplest and most basic translation, means "go forth." But some say that the phrase "*Lech Lecha*" has deeper interpretative layers and meaning. "*Lech Lecha*," some say, could also mean "go forth" as in "go into yourself." In this way, they explain, Abraham went on two parallel and simultaneous journeys. He went on an outward physical and geographic journey towards a land he did not know. And, as well, he went on an inner journey – *Lech Lecha* – into himself. He delved into who he was, reflected on who he was capable of becoming, pondered who he was meant to be, and considered the unique value that he might bring to the broader world. And then, from there, he found the courage to step into the unknown... from there, he found the strength to prevail through new and uncertain

terrain. *Lech Lecha*. Go forth. And, *Lech Lecha*. Go within.

I've been thinking a lot about my father-in-law this past week.

Ken lived with an internal transmitter that kept him continuously and tirelessly attuned to the sounds of human suffering and sorrow. Some of us turn down the dial when the weight of the world becomes too much to bear. But not Ken. Ken thought about prejudice, and injustice, and xenophobia, and racism, and sexism, and homophobia, and antisemitism just about every moment of every day. He agonized over these things when he laid down at night and when he rose up each day. He advocated for the eradication of these things when he sat at home; he talked about these things at the grocery store and at his doctor's appointments and at his granddaughter's gymnastics classes and at lunch dates with friends.

I've been thinking about him this week, because he also knew a thing or two about living with uncertainty and anxiety. He, too, was no stranger to anxious and uncertain times.

Twenty years ago, just shortly after Seth and I had started dating, Ken and my mother-in-law separated after 30 years of marriage. Faced with an unknown and unfamiliar road ahead, Ken ultimately found his own way and carved out a purposeful and meaningful life for himself, despite his sudden solitude and disorientation from the divorce, and despite his chronic illnesses that frustrated him and often slowed him down. Nonetheless, Ken delved deeper into the activities he loved and the pursuits that brought him the greatest amounts of hope, solace, and joy.

He pursued his longtime love and passion for theatre and became a producer for the Broadway run of *Godspell*, through which he developed friendships with cast members and other theatre enthusiasts.

He established weekly meet ups with neighbors in his new apartment complex.

During the pandemic, he attended every Zoom class and online Shabbat service that he could, often going "shul hopping" from one online synagogue program to the next. He trained to answer calls on a crisis hotline for gay and trans youth. And most recently, he reflected on his life story, eventually writing and publishing a memoir about his childhood on West 83rd Street.

Incredibly, even after they separated, my mother and father-in-law remained close and loving friends. And, in my eyes, Ken's outward journey through life as a divorcee also became bearable and palatable because of the simultaneous journeys that he embarked on, within: his musical journeys that made his heart sing, his social journeys that lessened his sense of isolation, his journey into his past that he was proud and excited to share, his advocacy journeys that allowed him to feel like he was making a difference in the small but significant ways that he could. When he found himself navigating a world that no longer looked or felt the same as it once did, this was how he thrived. This was how he survived.

I know that many are deeply shaken by the outcome of this year's presidential election, and I know that others are satisfied with the results. But I also know none of us are strangers to uncertainty. Whether it be from an election, or a divorce, or a job loss, or an illness, or a death...we all know what it is like for the ground beneath us to unexpectedly tremble and quake. We all know what it is like for our lives and our realities to suddenly begin to unravel. We all know what it is like to be forced to adjust to a sudden "new normal." We all have awoken, at one point or another, to a new and unfamiliar world. We all have driven down roads that we did not expect, hope for, or desire.

Continued on page 11



ALEXA COHEN/DIRECTOR OF THE EDUCATION CENTER NEXTGEN SUKKOT MAH JONG NIGHT



NextGen is a new group within our community that aims to bring the next generation of Jewish individuals/couples/families together.

This group is a place to learn, socialize, connect and meet new people, and get the most out of this phase of life together.

Stay tuned for more opportunities to join the NextGen group for fun events at B'nai Israel and out in the local community. On December 15, they will be wrapping

gifts in conjunction with Mitzvah Morning. Please reach out to Rebekah Rosler at rrosler.cbibt@gmail.com for more information.

Here is some participant feedback:

► *I loved getting together with other people in the community, bonding over a game that many of us had never played before. It was a fun, light-hearted evening where we could learn and support each other in a different way! Can't wait to do it again!*

► *Grateful for the opportunity to have events to look forward to both for myself and my family. Bonus that this a community my kids and I feel loved and supported. Both events, Sasco Beach family afternoon and mah jong were great, and I look forward to more.*

► *The mah jong night was great! I was able to connect with new people while playing a new game! I would love to do it again.*



KEHILAH KITAH ZAYIN (7TH GRADE) VISITS MOZAIC SENIOR LIVING

As part of the new 7th grade curriculum that focuses on Jewish values and traditions, the students (accompanied by Rabbi Evan or Rabbi Sarah) are taking class outside the walls of Kehilah to experience different local organizations. Since we are lucky to have so many students in this grade, we divided them up into cohorts that go

on these field trips in small groups. We ask parent volunteers to drive for — and sometimes participate in—the trips with the 7th graders. The cohorts that stay at B'nai Israel this semester continue to work with Cantor Scott in the sanctuary on prayers and with Miss Renee on mitzvah projects and team building. One very special trip was a

recent visit to Mozaic Senior Living right up the street on Park Avenue. The students got a chance to talk with an amazing group of residents and play games with them. One Mozaic resident brought out his ukulele and the residents and students had a lively song session together.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Navigating the December Dilemma

**A Discussion for Parents
With Rabbi Evan Schultz
Thursday Dec 12, 2024
5:00–6:00 p.m.**

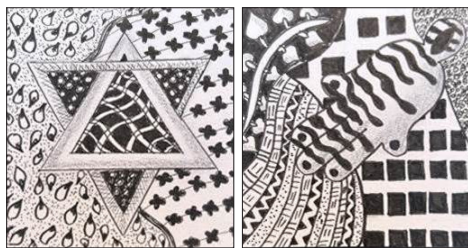
Join Rabbi Evan to chat with other parents and learn of some resources and approaches to navigate the annual December Dilemma! This discussion is about how to navigate being Jewish when there's so much Christmas all around us for the month of December.

Rosh Chodesh December/ Kislev Gathering:

**The Art of Zentangle
Thursday, December 12
7:30–9:00 p.m. at B'nai Israel**



Join us as we engage in the therapeutic art of Zentangle. We will be guided in creating meditative projects based upon repetitive patterns, which is a technique that has been shown to induce calm and relaxation. All materials will be provided. This is a beginner's level workshop, no previous art experience or expertise required. Please RSVP to Ilene at ifeuerberg@cbibpt.org and if you are able, please bring a light dessert or snack to share.



Guys Night Out with the Leevees

**December 12, 2024
Fairfield Theater Company**

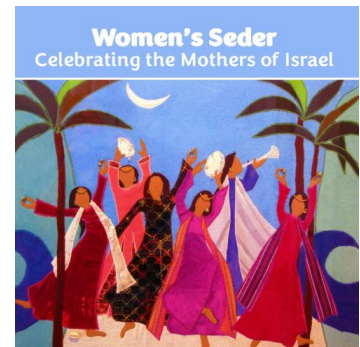
All the B'nai Israel guys are invited to join for a "Guys Night Out" at Fairfield Theater Company, where the Leevees (Adam Gardner from Guster and Dave Schneider from the Zambonis) will be performing

their annual Chanukah concert! Meet up at 7:00 p.m. at FTC for a drink; the show starts at 8:00 p.m.! You can buy your ticket here: https://fairfieldtheatre.org/events/the-warehouse/the-leevees_e216. All invited! Email Rabbi Evan, eschultz@cbibpt.org, to let him know you're coming!

Optional Active Shooter Training

**December 13, 2024
Following Shabbat services**

Join our Community Security Director, Peter Lavelle, for an optional active shooter training. Anyone who wishes to stay after services is encouraged to do so. This training is to prepare congregants in the case of an emergency or active shooter in the building, including how to shelter in place and how to exit the building safely. It is important we are as prepared as possible in the case of an incident or emergency at the synagogue.



**Save the Date!
B'nai Israel
Women's Seder
Sunday, March 30, 2025**

Invite to follow.
If you would like to get involved, please reach out to:
Jodi Mantell
(jmmanatell@gmail.com)
or Liane May
(lianemay@gmail.com).



BANDS FOR B'NAI

04.03.2025
5:30 - 9:30 PM

PARK CITY MUSIC HALL
BRIDGEPORT, CT

EARLY SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES
AVAILABLE, PLEASE EMAIL
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DECEMBER DONATIONS

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

Rabbi Schultz Discretionary Fund

Robert & Stacy Giglietti, in memory of Bernard Lipin, stepfather of Stacy Giglietti.

Barbara Kauders, in honor of the engagement of Jeremy, son of Sylvia & Alan Neigher, to Anne Moriarty.

George & Alice Kelly, in memory of brother, Peter Zimroth.

Justin & Brenda Kreuzer, in loving memory of our fathers, Matthew Furman & Barton Kreuzer.

Beth Lazar, in appreciation to Rabbi Evan Schultz for his leadership during the High Holy Days & year-round.

Alice Madwed, in memory of mother, Frieda Ente.

David & Hillary Ortiz, with gratitude to Rabbi Evan Schultz.

Jane Pressman, in memory of my parents, Grace & Daniel Halpern.

David & Deborah Ross, in appreciation of your thoughtfulness.

Sharon Schacher, in appreciation to Rabbi Evan Schultz.

Serena Sher, with gratitude and grateful appreciation to Rabbi Evan Schultz.

Laura Sydney, in memory of Alice Siegel, mother of Jeff Siegel.

Fredric & Ronni Zinn, in memory of father, Hank Silverman.

Rabbi Marion Discretionary Fund

Stacey Berlin, in memory of Philip Lublin, father of Lauren (Jon) Tropp.

Jack & Sondra Germain, in memory of Philip Lublin, father of Lauren (Jon) Tropp.

Laurel Greenberg, in memory of Ken Marion, father of Seth (Sarah) Marion; in loving memory of Rabbi Arnold Sher; with thanks to Chris Rocha for helping me with Zoom on Yom Kippur.

Beth Lazar, in appreciation of Rabbi Sarah Marion inspiring spiritual leadership; in memory of Ken Marion, father of Seth (Sarah), grandfather of Michaela & Levi; in memory of Philip Lublin, father of Lauren Tropp; in loving memory of uncle, Fred Greenberg.

David & Hillary Ortiz, with thanks to Rabbi Marion.

Michael Petshaft & Descera Daigle

with gratitude to Rabbi Marion for being a part of our special day.

Serena Sher, with gratitude and grateful appreciation to Rabbi Sarah Marion.

Laura Sydney, in memory of Arnold Portnoy, father of Sherry Portnoy.

Cantor Scott Harris Discretionary Fund

Barry & Linda Diamond, in memory of Arnold Portnoy, father of Sherry Portnoy.

Barbara Kauders, in appreciation for Cantor Scott Harris.

Beth Lazar, in appreciation to Cantor Scott Harris for leading us in song & prayer during the High Holidays & year-round.

David & Hillary Ortiz, in appreciation for Cantor Scott Harris.

Serena Sher, with gratitude and grateful appreciation to Cantor Scott Harris.

Steve & Leslie Snow, with gratitude to Cantor Scott Harris for officiating our wedding.

Rabbi James Prosnit Legacy Fund

Beth Lazar, in appreciation for the Rosh Hashanah sermon by Rabbi James Prosnit.

Samuel & Patti Rosenberg, in appreciation of Rabbi Prosnit and in memory of Donald Dworken.

Rabbi James Prosnit Discretionary Fund

Serena Sher, with gratitude and grateful appreciation to Rabbi Jim Prosnit; in memory of Mary Brandt, sister of Judy Chessin.

Music Fund

Barry & Linda Diamond, in memory of Karen Cramer, sister of dear friend Marcia Tubin.

Beth Lazar, in appreciation to Ilana Ofgang, Anne Kirsch & Mark Edinberg for sharing their gift of music and to Janet Rosen & the choir.

Sylvia Neigher, with thanks for caring!

William & Caren Schwartz, in memory of Philip Lublin, father of Lauren Tropp.

Enhancement Fund

Annie Block, in memory of my father, Frank M. Sales.

Jerry & Dale Demner, in memory of Steven Slive, cousin of Dale Demner.

Don & Wendy Hyman, in memory of Marshall Simon.

Jeff & Jackie Madwed, in honor of Halley Posner and John McDonald's marriage.

Irving & Alexis Myones, in memory of Alice Siegel, mother of Jeff Siegel; and with appreciation for including us in Rosh Hashanah beach service.

Judy Zeisler, in memory of Olga Mandell (Zeisler).

Bonim Preschool Scholarship Fund

Marc & Joan Levy, in memory of Alice Siegel, mother of Jeff Siegel; Marcia Meyers, mother of Amy Moorin & Debbie Ross; Ruth Barcham, mother of Stew Barcham; and Emily Eastwood, mother of Carson Berkowitz.

Prayer Book Fund

Michael & Linda Epstein, in celebration of the wedding of Jill Epstein to Brian Rosenfeld.

Religious School Scholarship Fund

Jerry Saunders & Elaine Appellof, in memory of Marcia Meyers, mother of Amy Moorin & Debbie Ross; Ruth Barcham, mother of Stew Barcham; and Ken Marion, father of Seth (Sarah) Marion.

Jeff & Jackie Madwed, in memory of Philip Lublin, father of Lauren Tropp.

Rabbi Arnold Sher Social Action Fund

Robert & Elaine Friedman, in memory of Dr. Donald Dworken.

Beth Lazar, in appreciation to Debbie Viens & Evelyn Rubak, High Holy Days committee chairs; in loving memory of my father, Leonard Mosha Lazar; my free spirit aunt, Lea Lazar; and my kind & creative great aunt, Esther Epstein.

DECEMBER DONATIONS

(CONTINUED)

Dennis & Janet Magid, mazel tov on the engagement of Abby Miller, daughter of Eric & Meryl Miller, granddaughter of Samuel Miller, to Dan Braunegg, best wishes to all; wishes for a speedy recovery to Silvia Neigher.
Daniel & Laurie Schopick, in celebration of the birth of Samuel Cohn Krantz, grandson of Richard & Joanne Krantz.

Serena Sher, in honor of Samuel Miller's granddaughter Abby's engagement to Dan.

Howard Weisman & Nina Silberman, in memory of Robert Schacher, father of Stephanie Schacher.

CONECT thru Social Action Fund
Marni Neuburger, in honor of Susan Roth's birthday.

Vision Loan Reduction Fund

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There are not enough words to fully express our heartfelt thanks for the love and support that our B'nai Israel community has extended to our family in the wake of the loss of Seth's father. Every phone call, email, text message, meal delivery, condolence card, donation and expression of sympathy has meant so much to us. You have truly lifted us in this time of heartache and loss, and we feel so lucky to be surrounded by so much love, compassion, and care.

With gratitude,
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IDENTITY, MENTAL HEALTH, AND THE REAL HISTORY OF CHANUKAH

BY BETH LAZAR, CO-CHAIR OF THE MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS TEAM

What is my identity? American? Jewish? Jewish American? American Jew? Identity is the notion, substance of self, knowledge of who I am. Social identity is linked to psychological well-being, defined as positive indicators like self-esteem. My chosen identity, Jewish American, is often at odds with the culture of America. Though the USA is officially a secular democracy, it has a Christian culture and operates on "Christian Time." Until recently, and still today in many cases, stores, banks, the lottery, government offices are all closed down on Sundays, the Christian Sabbath. In contrast, the biggest shopping times, going to the movies, concerts, theater, sports events, parties, social group meetings, book clubs, is Friday night and all day Saturday, which happens to conflict with Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath. On the Jews' holiest days of the year, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, it is business as usual in the USA. When I was growing up, public schools did not close down for the High Holy Days. My parents had to obtain special permission from the principal and teacher for an excused absence. In contrast, on the Christian holiday, Christmas, the nation shuts down. No government, financial, or commercial offices, institutions, or stores, are open. Public transportation runs on a limited schedule. There is also

a Christmas season, weeks of Christmas-themed music, movies, concerts, ballets. In the past, the Christmas season started in November, the day after Thanksgiving. Nowadays, stores start selling Christmas merchandise as early as mid-October, even before Halloween!

The first night of Chanukah falls on Christmas day this year. If only all Jewish people knew the true history of the first original Chanukah, we would all know that the values the holiday celebrates are essentially both Jewish and American values.

The Real History of the First Original Chanukah

What I learned from Rabbi James Prosnit:

When the Assyrian Greeks occupied ancient Israel, they tried to annihilate Jewish identity by demanding that all people worship the Greek gods. They trashed the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. Judah the Maccabee and his sons led the Jewish people in revolt against their oppressors by taking to the hills and conducting the first recorded guerilla warfare campaign for religious freedom. The Maccabees were victorious and recaptured the Temple and rededicated it to God. Chanukah means rededication. Since the Jewish people weren't able to celebrate Sukkot that year because they

had been in combat with the Assyrian Greeks, they decided to hold an eight-day celebration, combining the missed Sukkot celebration with a celebration of their military victory and rededication of the Temple. The next year, and for decades afterward, on the anniversary of the rededication of the Temple (Kislev 24), they would have an eight-day celebration. But what about the miracle of the little bit of oil that lasted for eight days? That story/myth/tradition was created many years later when the Romans occupied Israel, and the Jewish leaders were concerned that a celebration of a military victory of the Jews over an occupier nation would not sit well with the occupying Roman rulers. Since Jews for centuries have been second class citizens in many countries throughout the world, the miracle of the oil myth persisted. The first Chanukah was a celebration of the rededication of the holy Temple, a celebration of Jewish self-determination and sovereignty, a preservation and assertion of Jewish identity. It was a celebration of the right to religious freedom. The right to religious freedom is an important American value. It is written into our Constitution/Bill of Rights. The original Chanukah celebrated values that are essentially both Jewish and American. As a proud Jewish American, I say, Happy Chanukah! Love! Light! Laughter! And plenty of latkes.

KESHER CORNER

I want to share something very special that began in 2020, when we were challenged by COVID-19. I was teaching in New Rochelle in March 2020, when the mother of my student complained of a headache and cough. I thought it might be the beginning of a flu and continued teaching because the student felt fine. I found out the next day that her mom had COVID-19. That weekend another New Rochelle student was supposed to become a Bar Mitzvah. He ended up reading Torah in his kitchen on Zoom to family and friends. In the few days between the first and second student, the pandemic had begun and was wreaking havoc, particularly in New Rochelle, which became the epicenter. I was very lucky because I did not get the virus at that time.

Like so many others, I was concerned about how I was going to work...and particularly worried about the Keshet Project. Many Keshet friends live in group homes and were quarantined. Even those living in private homes would not come to an in-person event. Suddenly I said to

my daughter Michele, "I'm going to create an online Songfest." I wanted to bring people together online who would share their feelings and sing together...to create an online family.

I'm so grateful because the Keshet Songfest has been ongoing since 2020. We Zoom into private residences and group homes, even to people driving in their cars and some who cannot get out of bed.

Friends and family join from Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Long Island, even California and Utah. Everyone feels comfortable sharing their innermost thoughts and celebrating Jewish holidays. The Keshet Songfest is inclusive and diverse. You don't have to be Jewish to join us.

If you know of anyone who is homebound or just wants to sing and make new friends, please let them know about our wonderful family. It's very sweet when an online participant comes to an in-person event and recognizes someone from the Songfest. This has happened several times and the joy is evident.

We meet on one or two Sunday afternoons each month. Come join us at 3:00 p.m.

Please contact me if you or someone you know would like to participate.

Happy Chanukah to all,
Rhea
rheasmusic@icloud.com
Like us on Facebook



"LECH LECHA": GO FORTH, GO WITHIN.....CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Abraham's journey of *Lech Lecha* is a timeless tale that all of us will continue to experience and endure, time and time again. *Lech Lecha*, for Abraham and for us, is a journey outside and it is a journey within. *Lech Lecha* is a story about facing and accepting the world, as is...and *Lech Lecha* is a story about developing and fortifying our own inner resources so that we might find the strength to persist and prevail.

I hear echoes of *Lech Lecha* in this beautiful quote from the French author, Albert Camus.

Listen as he imagines the strength of the human soul and the resilience of the human spirit. He writes,

My dear,

In the midst of hate, I found there was, within me, an invincible love.

In the midst of tears, I found there was, within me, an invincible smile.

In the midst of chaos, I found there was, within me, an invincible calm.

I realized, through it all, that in the midst of winter, there was, within me, an invincible summer. And that makes me happy.

For it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me,

within me, there is something stronger, something better,

pushing right back.

Indeed, life as we know it can change in an instant. Without warning, the world can take away so much of what we knew or thought to be true. But when our inner spirit becomes invincible, nothing can take away our ability to keep smiling, nonetheless; nothing can take away our ability to cope, and find hope, nonetheless. Even in the midst of it all.

I've been thinking a lot about my father-in-law this past week. What he would say. How sad and how shattered he would feel. But I also know that his legacy contains a precious and ancient blueprint for how to go forward, especially when we aren't sure

what it is that we are heading towards.

Lech Lecha. Go into yourself. Find the things that bring you solace and joy and dig into them even deeper. Focus on the people that bring you comfort and love and love them even harder.

Turn towards the pursuits that matter to you and pursue them even more. Find and foster within yourself an invincible smile, an invincible calm, an invincible joy so that you can keep putting one foot in front of the other. Cultivate invincible kindness so that you can be the change that you wish to see in the world.

And then, at the same time, *Lech Lecha.* Go forth. Go forth into this world, as troublesome and as painful as it may be. Go forth, because the world out there is waiting for you...Go forth, because the world needs you more than you could ever begin to imagine...Go forth, because the world needs you more than you could ever begin to know.

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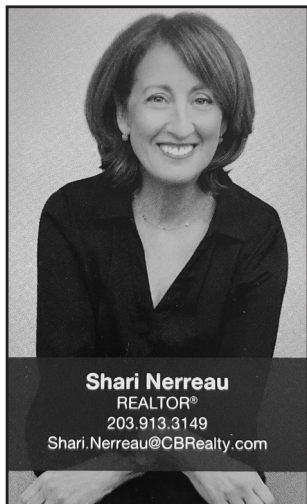
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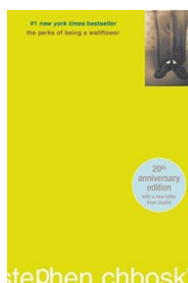
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BANNED BOOK MEETINGS

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 the meeting. Save the dates and happy reading!

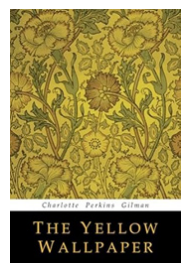


***The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky**

#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.

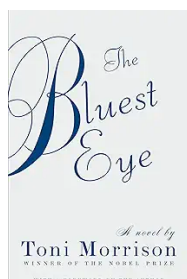


***The Yellow Wallpaper*, a short story by Charlotte Perkins Gilman**

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.



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