

## MARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Rabbi Schultz shares his friend Sarah Tuttle-Singer's poignant musing on the necessity of making our time matter by bringing light into the world, even when it feels least possible. Page 3

Learn more from Cantor Harris explains the significance of the four special Torah parashiyot we read this March. Page 5

Alexa Cohen shares highlights of some fun events for adults and young students held at the temple recently. Page 6

Learn more about CBI's new and improved website. Page 9

Physician & congregant George Kelly explains how to recognize two different challenges to our mental health, stress and anxiety, along with some coping strategies and tips on when to seek help. Page 15



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**BANDS FOR  
B'NAI  
4.03.25**

**EVAN SCHULTZ  
AND FRIENDS**  
**3 ROW SUV**  
**@  
PARK CITY  
music hall**



**A  
WICKED  
WICKED SCHPIEL**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 14**

5:00pm-6:00pm: Pizza and Purim Crafts for all ages  
6:00pm-7:00pm: Family-Friendly Shabbat Service, Megillah Reading, and Schpiel

If you will be joining us for pizza dinner, please rsvp to Lisa at [lhurlbert@cibpt.org](mailto:lhurlbert@cibpt.org)

**JOIN US FOR A WICKED PURIM CELEBRATION, MEGILAH AND SCHPIEL!**

## 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.

**Douglas and Naomi Kimmel, Jake & Nathan**  
Fairfield, CT

**Gary and Carolyn Cohen**  
Westport, CT

## SHARING OUR JOY

In Celebration of:

**Lori and Ken Berger**, on the birth of their granddaughter Davis Adele

Gmoser, daughter of Arielle Berger and Justin Gmoser

## SINCERE SYMPATHY

We extend our sympathy to the bereaved family of:

**Susan (Shoshe) Drapin**

## BULLETIN BOARD

### MITZVAH MORNING

**Partnering with the Diaper Bank of Connecticut**

**Sunday, March 9**  
**10:00 a.m.–noon,**  
**B'nai Israel Pavilion**

Please join us to sort and package diapers for people in need within our community, working with the Diaper Bank of Connecticut. You are welcome to just bring yourself, but you can also bring or donate diapers through our Amazon Wishlist, published in Hashavua and on the CBI website. If you have any questions, contact Julie Rosenbaum at jarosenbaum@gmail.com.

We look forward to seeing you there!

### JUDAICA BOUTIQUE

The Judaica Boutique carries a variety of Judaica and gift items. Take a look!!!!



### BIFTY TEEN HANGOUT WITH AMIT!

**Open to all teens in Grades 8-12**

**Thursday, March 20, 7:00–8:30 p.m. (\*note new March date - rescheduled from Thursday, March 6)**

Join us in the BIFTY lounge for a fun teen hang out with Amit Swisa, our Israeli Emissary. Whether you have been to BIFTY in the past or are new to BIFTY this year, all are welcome to join.

### B'NAI ISRAEL'S ANNUAL WOMEN'S SEDER



**Sunday, March 30**  
**In the Pavilion**

*Notice: We have reached capacity, however, if you are still interested in attending, you will be placed on a waitlist.*

**3:00–3:45 p.m. —**  
**Schmoozing & Noshing**

**4:00–6:00 p.m. —**  
**Seder**

This year we are thrilled to share that our keynote speaker is Ruth W. Messinger.

Ruth W. Messinger served as President of American Jewish World Service (AJWS) from 1998 to 2016 and is now the organization's inaugural Global Ambassador. She continues her work advocating for oppressed, persecuted and poor communities worldwide, engaging rabbis and interfaith leaders to learn about global justice issues and speak out for change. Ruth also works as a social justice consultant and facilitates learning for rabbinic students and women social justice entrepreneurs.

Join us for an inspiring and joyous gathering as we celebrate Women of Valor at the annual B'nai Israel Women's Seder. This special event offers a unique opportunity for women of all ages to come together and retell the timeless story of Passover.



FROM THE RABBI'S DESK/RABBI EVAN SCHULTZ

## VOICES FROM ISRAEL

*Sharing the words of my friend, Israeli author Sarah Tuttle-Singer (written on Chanukah 2024):*

I'm looking at an old photo of my daughter, taken literally 8 years ago during Hanukkah. The candlelight dances across her luminous eyes — her cheeks soft and rounded. She was only 8.

Back then, I thought it would always be this way — her hands smaller than mine, her questions tumbling out faster than I could answer them. Back then, I thought I'd always be the one mending her scraped knees, packing her lunches, soothing her tears.

But time passes. Children grow. And the world, indifferent to our wishes, keeps doing its thing and keeps on turning.

Now, she's taller than I am. Stronger, too, in ways that matter more than muscle. She's just a year and a half away from army age — 16.5, already.... And while I look at her soft little face, I think of another family's beloved child killed in battle—a son who was buried today, under the frigid Jerusalem rain.

How do we light our Hanukkah candles after that?

"So God put a baby in Mary?" she asked, her brow furrowed. "Without asking her? Did He even get consent?"

I laughed at the audacity of her question — so honest, so clear and pure. She was so wise beyond her years then, just as she is now. But even her wisdom, as bright as it is, feels fragile in the face of the enormity of what we live with.

Just last month, she sat down to take her first round of tests for military service. Despite the risks, despite the dangers she knows all too well, she wants to serve. "We all need to do our part," she once told me, her voice steady. I was proud of her in that moment. I still am.

Her moral compass is strong and true and she follows it — whether she is asking tough questions of monks by Hanukkah candle light, or preparing to trade her Swiftie bracelets for dog tags in the blink of an eye.

But I also can't stop seeing the little girl from that photo — the one who clung to my hand during thunderstorms, the one who cried when she scraped her knee. How did she grow into this brave young woman?

this, long before we stood here with our own battles to fight. They believed in miracles, in oil that lasted longer than it had any right to. And so, in their honor, we light the flames and pray that the light will last, even if it feels like it won't.

But tonight, I don't feel like praying. I don't feel like celebrating. I only feel the weight of the rain and the grief and the unbearable and obscene truth that there are parents out there burying their children, even as I prepare to light the menorah with friends tonight.

I think of all the moments I've tried to hold onto, and all the ones I let slip by, promising myself there would be more time later. More time to explain her questions about Mary. More time to walk with her through the rain. More time to marvel at the way the candlelight plays in her eyes.

But time doesn't wait. It marches forward, relentless, and we are left to gather the pieces we've managed to hold onto — the photos, the memories, the fleeting seconds of beauty amidst the wild and hungry chaos.

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**"I have no great wisdom to offer, no easy answers to give.**

**Only this: what we do with our time matters. Kindness matters. Justice matters.**

**Lighting the candles, even when it feels impossible, matters."**

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I think about the photo of my daughter again, about the night it was taken. We'd gone to an interfaith gathering at a monastery near Latrun, where Rabbi Miri Gold and Father Franz joined together to celebrate Hanukkah and Christmas. The warmth of that evening lingers always: the smell of rain-soaked earth and pine, the hum of Hebrew prayers blending with the exquisite harmony of the French and German nuns singing in Latin. My daughter had sat beside me, frowning in fierce concentration as she tried to understand the story of Mary and the baby Jesus.

The rain is still coming down hard outside, unrelenting. It feels like the heavens themselves are mourning, as though the earth can't hold all this sorrow on its own. The candles sit waiting in the menorah, their stillness so markedly different against the chaos of the world around us.

And yet, we light them. We light them because we must.

This is what Hanukkah has always been about — defiance in the face of darkness. Kindling light in the places where it feels least possible. The Maccabees fought for

So tonight, I WILL light the menorah. I WILL watch the flames flicker. I WILL think of my daughter, wise and brave and stepping into a world I cannot fully protect her from. And I WILL hold onto her hand for as long as she lets me.

I have no great wisdom to offer, no easy answers to give. Only this: what we do with our time matters. Kindness matters. Justice matters. Lighting the candles, even when it feels impossible, matters.

Because in the end, the light is all we have. Light and love and one another for the sharing.

# 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, March 7

5:30 p.m. Oneg  
6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service, –  
in person & on Zoom  
Torah Portion –  
Exodus 27:20–30:10  
Haftarah –  
Esther 7:1-10; 8:15-17

## Saturday, March 8

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

## Friday, March 14

5:30 p.m. Oneg  
6:00 p.m. Family-Friendly Shabbat  
Service, Megillah Reading,  
& Schpiel – in person &  
on Zoom  
Torah Portion –  
Exodus 30:11–34:35  
Haftarah – I Kings 18:1-39

## Saturday, March 15

8:00 a.m. Shabbat Service –  
in person & on Zoom  
9:00 a.m. Brotherhood Breakfast  
9:30 a.m. Torah Study – in person &  
on Zoom  
11:00 a.m. Bet Mitzvah of Jacqueline  
Glick, daughter of Aaron  
Glick & Laura Sheiman

## Friday, March 21

5:30 p.m. Oneg  
6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service – in  
person & on Zoom  
Torah Portion –  
Exodus 35:1–38:20  
Haftarah – Ezekiel 36:22-36

## Saturday, March 22

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 Zachary  
Fierman, son of Adam &  
Kate Fierman

## Friday, March 28

5:30 p.m. Oneg  
6:00 p.m. Disability Shabbat Service  
& Dinner – in person & on  
Zoom  
Torah Portion –  
Exodus 38:21-40:38  
Haftarah – Ezekiel 45:16-25

## Saturday, March 29

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 Josie  
Dommu, daughter of Aaron  
& Hilary Dommu

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](mailto:crocha@cbibpt.org) or call the temple office.

## BANDS FOR B'NAI – APRIL 3, 2025



Join us on Thursday, April 3 from 5:30–9:30 p.m. for our second annual Bands for B'nai, a fun night at Park City Music Hall to support Congregation B'nai Israel! Enjoy live music, great company, three-hour open bar, all the delicious food you can eat, and a silent auction!

The live music starts at 6:30 p.m. and features two bands: 3 ROW SUV and Evan Schultz & Friends. All bands feature members of Congregation B'nai Israel.

This event is open to the public, so please bring lots of friends to come out and support our synagogue! Please share on social media as well. We would love to pack the house!

To purchase tickets go to our website [www.cbibpt.org](http://www.cbibpt.org) or click the link in our weekly Hashavua.

**We are seeking corporate and individual sponsorships to help raise money for the programs at B'nai Israel.** Sponsorships range from \$500 to \$2,000 and include a variety of benefits including recognition at the event and

in the CBI Bulletin and complimentary tickets to the event. To learn more, go to our website [www.cbibpt.org](http://www.cbibpt.org), click the link in our weekly Hashavua, or contact Jennifer Rogin Wallis at [jennifer.rogin.wallis@gmail.com](mailto:jennifer.rogin.wallis@gmail.com).

Do you have a fun item or want to promote a service? We will once again be having our **Bands for B'nai Silent Auction**. Please contact Steve Field at [smfield1@gmail.com](mailto:smfield1@gmail.com) to discuss donations.

See you all on April 3!

Event Committee: Linda Barlaam, Scott Casher, Jen Rogin Wallis, and Steve Field



## "MARCH COMES IN LIKE A LION"

BY CANTOR SCOTT HARRIS

Here's something to think about as we enter March. Who first said: "March comes in like a lion"?

"March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb" is an English proverb of unknown origin. It is first alluded to in print in *A Wife for a Month*, written in 1624 by John Fletcher (1579-1625), who collaborated on many projects with Shakespeare, including *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *King Henry VIII*. In *A Wife for a Month*, one character says, "I would choose March, for I would come in like a lion," and another replies, "But you'd go out like a lamb." The proverb originally appears to have meant simply that the month of March is the bridge between two seasons and begins with bitter cold, winds, and rough weather and winds up with mild breezes and gentle weather. But it has become a weather sign and taken to mean that "If March comes in like a lion it will go out like a lamb."

But there is so much that happens at this time of the year in *Torah*. There are four special readings this month, and each of those four *Shabbatot* have special names. Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin, writes: "The unique importance of these *parashiyot* is found in rabbinic literature. Even before the *parashiyot* of the Torah were divided among the *Shabbatot* of the year, the requirement to read the *arba parshiyot* (4 *Parshiot*) was noted" [Megillah 29a].

The four special readings of the *Torah* from the beginning of *Adar* until *Pesach* are: *Shabbat Shekalim*, *Shabbat Zachor*, *Shabbat Parah*, and *Shabbat HaChodesh*. These *Shabbatot* have additional Torah readings beyond the regular Torah reading of the week. Yes, we have other *Shabbatot* known by special names — such as *Shabbat Nachamu*, *Shabbat Shuvah*, *Shabbat Shirah*, and of course, *Shabbat HaGadol* (April 12–15 of Nisan, *Erev Pesach*), but we don't read any additional *Torah* on these weeks.

The first of the Four *Parshiyot* is *Parshat Shekalim*, (March 1 and the 1st of Adar, 5785) which deals with the half-shekel coin. The

*Torah* (Ki Tisa, Exodus 30:11-16) states that this served two purposes. First, it was to count the Children of Israel in a census, as heads were not to be counted. Instead, they were counted with coins valued at half a shekel. The verse explains that these coins were then to be used for a second purpose — for *kappara*, atonement. Rashi explains that some of that money was used for the communal sacrifices to be offered on the altar throughout the year.

*Shabbat Shekalim* — which takes place the Shabbat prior to Rosh Chodesh for the month of Adar or on Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Adar itself — is named for the *maftir* (concluding reading of the Torah portion), Exodus 30:11. The *maftir* describes a census requiring every Israelite man to contribute a half shekel to support communal sacrifices in the portable tent of meeting and later at the Temple. The equal nature of this contribution is emphasized — "the rich shall not pay more, and the poor shall not pay less than half a shekel." The requirement that all individuals contribute equally to the community helped develop a sense of unity crucial to the society created by the Exodus.

In the special haftarah, 2 Kings 11:17-12:17, King Yehoash commanded that all money brought to the Temple be used for its repairs and renovations — both the required contributions and the free-will offerings. *Shabbat Shekalim* occurs about a month before Passover, serving as a reminder that the "due date" for the half-shekel contributions was approaching on 1st of Nisan, a month later. Consider contributing to our Kehillah or to one of the funds here at Temple that specifically fund Jewish learning in remembrance of the half shekel. As for the *shekalim* collection, it is scheduled for *Rosh Chodesh Nisan*. Did you get your notice? *Rosh Chodesh Adar* occurred on Friday night, February 28. Therefore, *Parshat Shekalim* was read on Shabbat March 1 (1st of Adar).

Second on the calendar of the *Arba Parashiyot* is *Shabbat Zachor*, (March 8 and the 8th of Adar, 5785); and the *maftir* reading, Deuteronomy 25:17-19, "Remember what *Amalek* did to you on the way as you were leaving Egypt." The verses go on, "How he

met you on the way, and he struck those of you who were in the rear, all the weak ones at your rear, when you were faint and exhausted, and he did not fear *Adonai*." The Israelites constituted no military threat, leading some Jewish commentators to view the Amalekites as rebels against God, because they were trying to destroy the Israelites. God commands the Israelites, that when safely settled in the land, "You shall blot out the memory of *Amalek* from under heaven."

The *Torah* instructs to "remember *Amalek*," a commandment fulfilled each year by publicly reading this passage on the *Shabbat* before Purim, because *Haman*, the villain of the Scroll of Esther [*Megillat Esther*], is an Amalekite. Hope that you'll join us on for *Chag Purim* and the reading of the *Megillat Esther* and a *Wicked Purim* on; (Friday, March 14 and the 15th of Adar, 5785). We'll be remembering to blot out his name. The Shabbat morning haftarah reading is I Samuel 15:2-34, which describes Saul's war with Amalek.

Why was Amalek deserving of such unique and severe punishment? Amalek, a grandson of Edom [Esau], had no need to attack us. We had been forewarned that Edom, Moab, and Ammon were not to be conquered or harmed in any way as they are the children of Esau [Abraham's grandson] and Lot [Abraham's nephew], and their lands are their inheritances by right. Nevertheless, Amalek came out to battle with Israel.

Rashi wrote, "*Umafsikin le'shabbat haba'ah*" explaining that we read *Parshat Zachor*

on the Sabbath just before *Purim* in order to connect the eradication of *Amalek* with the downfall of *Haman*. This serves to strengthen the connection between *Parshat Zachor* to this time of year.

The third of the *Arba Parshiyot* is *Parshat Parah*, (March 22 and the 22nd of Adar, 5785) and its reading is the section found at the beginning of *Parshat Chukat* (Numbers 19:1-22), which discusses the unblemished red heifer, the "*para aduma*," that Moses was commanded to hand to Eleazar the priest for sacrificial purposes. The verses

*Continued on page 15*



## ALEXA COHEN/DIRECTOR OF THE EDUCATION CENTER NEXTGEN & WINE-TASTING



### NextGen joins Women of B'nai Israel Mahjong Night

On January 23, the B'nai Israel NextGen group joined the Women of B'nai Israel's mahjong night. The following are thoughts on the evening from two of the participants.



“Learning to play mahjong made me feel closer to my cultural heritage, while being not only mentally stimulating but also socially engaging. I felt connected to my fellow players and had a great time!”  
— Susie Hallman

“Being taught mahjong by women who have been playing for years felt like more than just learning the rules of the game. It was so meaningful to be part of the passing down of traditions in our community. And it was really fun! I can't wait to play again and hopefully host a mahjong night in the future.”

— Emily Gerdner

### The B'nai Israel Drive-in Movie had Something for Everyone

With yet another snowstorm on our doorstep, the Bonim and Havurah families braved the cold to join us at the B'nai Israel Drive-in. The featured film was *Paw Patrol: Ready, Race, Rescue!*, and while the kids enjoyed their movie treats in their homemade cardboard box cars, the parents were treated to an informative and fun wine tasting with our very own president, Rich Walden. As soon as the lights went down in the social hall and everyone was safely secured in their cars with their popcorn, gummy snacks, veggie straws, and chicken nuggets, the adults slowly slipped out to the pavilion for a flight of six wines that Rich named “Value and Versatility” along with the appropriate adult snack of cheese and crackers. As the parents listened to a short talk about each wine, their children were enthralled by the movie all snuggled in their cars (for the most part). It was a great way to end Shabbat together before we were all stuck in our houses due to the snow. I am so thankful to Rich for generously donating his time on a Saturday afternoon to meet the families and school them on a subject that he knows so much about: wine.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Voting & Reproductive Justice Teams

The Voting and Reproductive Justice Teams will sponsor the next postcarding event on **Monday, March 3, from 7:00–8:30 p.m. in the Pavilion**. We will be writing nonpartisan postcards to get out the vote for the special Supreme Court Justice election in Wisconsin.

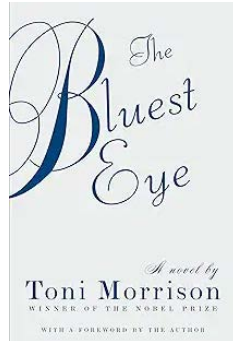
### Banned Book Meetings

#### 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 Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison

\*#6 on the American Library Association's 2023 Most Banned and Challenged Book List



**Monday, March 10  
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.*

*Continued on page 10*

## Oct 7th Survivor Testimony

Join us to bear witness to the massacre as we hear the harrowing but ultimately empowering story of a brave father who defended his family and home from Hamas for 30 hours, and how he has persevered ever since.

### MARCH 11

### 7:00 PM

Venue Location  
Provided Upon Registration  
Fairfield, CT

No Fee Thanks To Our Sponsors

Advanced registration is required  
No walk-ins will be permitted

Email [FJAC203@gmail.com](mailto:FJAC203@gmail.com) for more information

TO REGISTER  
Scan the QR Code



**Gal Cohen-Solal**  
Kibbutz Reim



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# MARCH DONATIONS

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

## Rabbi Schultz Discretionary Fund

**Spruille & Jamie Braden**, with gratitude for Emma Braden's bat mitzvah and with heartfelt appreciation for your guidance, mentorship, and dedication to the bat mitzvah community.

**Aleksey & Raisa Ledvich**, with thanks for the Chanukah candles from the temple families.

**Richard & Carol Offenbach**, in loving memory of our parents Sidney Loewith Goldstein & Helene Cohn Offenbach.

## Cantor Scott Harris Discretionary Fund

**Spruille & Jamie Braden**, in celebration of Emma Braden's bat mitzvah and with heartfelt appreciation for your guidance, mentorship, and dedication to the bat mitzvah community.

## Music Fund

**Colette Carasso**, in loving memory of Brenda Hershkowitz, mother of Naomi Schaffer.

## Enhancement Fund

**Barbara Berkowitz**, in loving memory of my sister, Carole Toss.

**Charles & Carol Hemenway**, with gratitude, a donation.

**Mark & Liz Nigrosh**, in appreciation of Marcia Cohen and her crew for their successful efforts with Gift of Light.

## Rabbi Martin Library Fund

**Samuel Miller**, in memory of Harriet Miller, from her loving family.

## Rabbi Arnold Sher Social Action Fund

**Dennis & Jan Magid**, in loving memory of the yearzeit of Harriett Miller.

**Samuel Miller & family**, in memory of Zelda Miller.

**Mark & Liz Nigrosh**, in appreciation of Anat Shiloach for studying and playing one of the Violins of Hope so beautifully.

**Randy & Beth Reich**, in memory of our fathers Sidney Loewith Goldstein, Harry Burchman & Stanley Reich.

## CONNECT thru Social Action Fund

**Nicholas & Rebecca Blondin**, in appreciation of Jeff Schwartz & Laura Stern.

**Michael Soltz & Laura Stern**, in celebration of the bat mitzvah of Calla Soltz — thank you to Rabbi Schultz, Rabbi Marion, Cantor Harris, and everyone at Congregation B'nai Israel for helping us reach this wonderful milestone!

## Keshet Project

**Marjorie Freeman**, in honor of Danny Freeman.

## The George Markley Chesed Fund

**Marilyn Weinstein**, in loving memory of my husband, Norman Weinstein, M.D.

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## TIKKUN OLAM

Mitzvah Morning volunteers meet once a month (or sometimes twice a month) to perform works of charity and philanthropy in the greater Bridgeport community. The program is founded on the principles of Tikkun Olam — repairing the world, making it a more just, peaceful, and tolerant place through acts of charity and kindness.

Mitzvah Mornings are a wonderful opportunity for congregants to meet and bond and get to know each other better while performing important tasks that go a long way to helping those in our community. Mitzvah Mornings represent a light commitment — volunteers are welcome to join every month, or they can attend as often as fits their schedules.

Mitzvah Morning has had a very successful year, establishing new community partnerships, reinforcing existing ones, and teaming up with other groups within B'nai Israel. Our recent activities have included:



- Cleaning and preserving headstones at the B'nai Israel cemetery
- Preparing meals for military veterans at Homes for the Brave
- Sorting and bottling spices and cooking supplies for JFS Schoke Food Truck
- Wrapping gifts for underprivileged children with the Center For Family Justice
- Baking pies to accompany Thanksgiving meals for Nourish Bridgeport
- Creating opportunities for recent immigrants to sell their products with Our Woven Community



- Supplying hygiene and feminine care products to Dignity Grows
- Planting a pollinator garden with the CBI Eco Team
- Providing supplies to campers at Camp Hope who are victims of domestic abuse

All congregants are invited to join future events. Details are published in the monthly bulletin, in Hashavua emails, and on the temple website.

Mitzvah Morning is always open to new ideas, programs, and partnerships. We welcome suggestions from the B'nai Israel community and hope to see you all at future events.



# THE NEW CBI WEBSITE

## NEW TEMPLE WEBSITE GIVES YOU A BETTER EXPERIENCE

Perhaps you have noticed the major renovation taking place at Congregation B'nai Israel over the past several months. There is a brighter, more colorful look. It is easier to navigate, less cluttered. There are more modern amenities and updated features.

We are talking about the new and improved B'nai Israel website ([www.cbibpt.org](http://www.cbibpt.org)).

Based on the site's traffic statistics, it has probably been a long time since you last checked out our digital entity, but we want it to become your go-to destination for information about the temple. Now, congregants can more easily find the information they need and want. The features are more streamlined and far more obvious to locate.

The landing page features an extended list of upcoming services and events, so you always know what is happening at B'nai Israel. An emphasis on graphics makes the site more welcoming and visually appealing. Right at the top you will find links to the calendar and the latest issue of the temple bulletin.

"The website was long overdue for an update, both for its look, its maneuverability,

and the information there," says CBI Vice President Scott Smith, who helped oversee the renovation. "We wanted to make the site a friendlier place for congregants to visit. We sought to make it more appealing and more informative so congregants will use it more often to stay connected to B'nai Israel."

You can find a wealth of information on every aspect of our temple community:

- Jewish Life — Details on holidays and life ceremonies.
- Learning — Our education offerings from preschool to adult.
- Community — The various groups for congregants of any age to find like-minded people.
- Tikkun Olam — The many ways you can get involved to better our community.
- Donate — All the ways you can support your favorite causes at B'nai Israel.

Of course, there is easy access to your member login for ShulCloud, where you can get your up-to-date personal account information and address it in the most secure manner.

The temple worked with Hirsch Fishman of Addicot Web to develop the new site. "It was a team effort, with our office staff playing an invaluable role and board members, clergy and staff offering their insights and guidance," Scott Smith says.


This is just phase one of the efforts. "We have plans for new features and greater functionality for congregants," Scott says. "We want this to be your main resource for temple information and activities."

So, make sure to visit the site ([www.cbibpt.org](http://www.cbibpt.org)) often. We welcome your feedback as we continue to expand and upgrade our offerings. If you see areas that you believe could be improved or have ideas for new features, please reach out to Scott at [ssmith@cbibpt.org](mailto:ssmith@cbibpt.org).

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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](mailto:apressman@cbibpt.org) or Lauren Tropp at [ltropp@cbibpt.org](mailto: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.

# UPCOMING EVENTS.....CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

## Lunch with Amit

**Tuesday, March 11  
1:00–2:00 p.m. in the Pavilion**

*Please RSVP to [amit@shalomct.org](mailto:amit@shalomct.org)*

Join for an informal monthly lunch session with our Israeli Emissary, Amit Swisa. Bring your lunch and your questions about Israel. This is a great opportunity to connect with Israel and ask about current events, life in Israel, and everything in between!

## Lunch & Learn at B'nai Israel: Songs of Healing, Hope & Peace with Special Guest, Cantor Jeffrey Shiovitz



**Thursday, March 20  
Noon–1:30 p.m.**

*RSVP to: Temple  
office: 203-336-1858  
Or contact Cantor  
Harris: [sharris@cbibpt.org](mailto:sharris@cbibpt.org)*

The Music of Israel Post October 7: Songs of Healing, Hope and Peace. With recordings and discussion, we will talk about and listen to the music giving us some healing and hope for peace in Israel and for Jews around the world.

Cantor Jeffrey Shiovitz has served as hazzan at Congregation Sons of Israel (CSI) since 1988. His broad knowledge of both traditional and modern melodies, combined with his enthusiastic service leadership, helps provide our members with a strong musical and ritual atmosphere. As chairman of Publications for the Cantors Assembly since 1993, he has edited some of the most widely used song books in the Conservative Movement, including *B'Kol Echad: In One Voice*, *Roni V'Simchi: Rejoice and Sing, Holidays in Song*, and the three-volume series of *Zamru Lo: The Next Generation*, and *B'chol Dor Vador: In Every Generation*. His latest publication is *Shira Chadasha: The Music of the Independent Minyan*. He is currently working on a new book of synagogue music from Israel tentatively titled *Shirei Masorti* in conjunction with the Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center.

A native of Detroit, Cantor Shiovitz graduated from the Cantor's Institute of

the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1981. He is especially proud to have received the prestigious Solomon Schechter Award from the United Synagogue for his work with seniors' *HaMishpacha* program. Cantor Shiovitz is thrilled to have been awarded an honorary Doctorate of Music from JTS. He is surrounded by his loving family: his wife, Robyn; and his children, Rachel and Yonah Lemonik and children Miriam Abigail and Maya Rose; David and Gina Hotz; Sarah and Drew Mahrt and Jamie Robert, and Talia.

## Lunch & Learn at B'nai Israel



**Friday, April 4  
12:30–1:30 p.m.**

*Please check  
Hashavua to confirm  
logistics as the event  
approaches.*

Join visiting professor, Joseph Angel, as he discusses the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and how they have shaped our understanding of biblical studies.

The spectacular discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the middle of the 20th century brought to light dozens of the oldest biblical manuscripts in the world. In conversation with an assortment of specific textual examples, this talk will examine how these discoveries have revolutionized our understanding of a number of key areas in biblical studies, including the transmission history of the scriptural text, the development of individual books, and the formation of the scriptural canon as we know it.

Joseph Angel is Professor of Bible and Jewish History at Yeshiva University, where he has taught courses related to ancient Judaism and biblical studies since 2008. His research focuses on Jewish literature and history in the Greco-Roman world, with a special interest in the religious milieu and themes of the Dead Sea Scrolls. He is the author of a number of publications exploring topics related to ancient Judaism, including prayer, messianism, demonology and magic, the Second Temple of Jerusalem, and the Jewish context of nascent Christianity. His most recent book, *The Songs of the Sage (4Q510-511)* (Brill, 2023), provides a material reconstruction, critical edition,

and commentary on two ancient Hebrew prayer manuscripts discovered at Qumran. He has held research fellowships at the University of Göttingen, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and, most recently, the University of Michigan and currently serves on the editorial boards of the Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha and Brill's Online Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

## Disability Awareness Shabbat

**Friday, March 28**

**6:00 p.m. — Shabbat Service**

**7:00 p.m. — Congregational Dinner**

*RSVP to: [ifeuerberg@cbibpt.org](mailto:ifeuerberg@cbibpt.org) or  
sign up on ShulCloud*

Join us for a Shabbat service and dinner with members of our Keshet community. Keshet participants will help to lead the service along with our clergy. All are welcome, we hope you will join us as we celebrate the wonderful diversity that exists within our community! During services, guest speaker and author Mary Harrison will speak about her book, *Autism Grows Up*, which serves as a practical resource and source of wisdom and support for families raising children with autism spectrum disorder.

The cost of the dinner for is \$25/person. If you would like to join us for dinner, please RSVP to [ifeuerberg@cbibpt.org](mailto:ifeuerberg@cbibpt.org) or sign up on ShulCloud.

## Request for Questions for the Upcoming Mental Health Shabbat Speakers

**Friday, May 9**

What children's and grandchildren's conditions or situations do you most want to learn about?

The two child psychologists who will speak at the Mental Health Shabbat on May 9 would like to know your concerns and what you would like to know.

A schedule will be posted in next month's bulletin. Please send questions or topics for them to Marj Freeman at [marjorie.freeman.ms@gmail.com](mailto:marjorie.freeman.ms@gmail.com).

Thanks for your help in ensuring their talk will be relevant to B'nai Israel congregants.

# MARCH COMES IN LIKE A LION.....CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

detail the entire procedure, which the Torah refers to as a "*chok*," a law for which we do not know the reason.

The *maftir* reading, Numbers 19:1-22, deals with the red heifer whose ashes were combined with water to ritually purify anyone who had been in contact with a dead person. Because only people who were pure could eat from the Passover sacrifice, a public announcement right before Nisan reminded anyone who had become impure to purify themselves before making the Passover pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Rashi (Megillah 29a) explains that the "*para aduma*," the red heifer was sacrificed to warn the Jews to purify themselves of any ritual defilement in order to be able to participate in the upcoming paschal sacrifice in a ritually pure state.

The haftarah, Ezekiel 36:16-38, also deals with issues of being cleansed. In Ezekiel 36:25, 26: Adonai says, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: I will cleanse you from all your

uncleanness and from all your idolatrous practices. And I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit into you." I see this as a renewal of one's self and our people, and mirrors Passover's theme of redemption.

Finally, the last of the *Arba Parshiyot* is *Parshat HaChodesh* (March 29 and the 29th of Adar, 5785), Exodus 12:1-20. This reading contains the idea of *Rosh Chodesh*, the first commandment given to the Children of Israel, which our Jewish calendar is based, including the festivals. The first festival celebrated as a nation was Passover. This section also contains the commandment of the paschal sacrifice and its laws, and is read on the *Shabbat* preceding *Rosh Chodesh Nisan*. Rashi (Megillah 29a) notes that since this section contains the laws of *Pesach*, the *Mishna* instructs us to read it at this time. Oh yes, 2 weeks until *Shabbat Ha-Gadol* and *Erev Pesach* (April 12–15 of Nisan).

The *Arba Parshiyot*, (4 Parshiot) as outlined in the *Mishna* (Megillah 29a), are

suitably designated to be read on these four specific *Shabbatot*.

Remember, as we move swiftly from one "let's eat" holiday to another, that the key to the balance is close at hand. Each week, we celebrate a holiday with significance to the Jewish people, and is not about the fight. *Shabbat* is a reminder that being Jewish is being in rhythm with the world, our past, and our future. Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote, "The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to holiness in time. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world."

"More than the Jewish people has kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jewish people."

— Attributed to Achcad ha-Am.

## KESHER CORNER

We're excited as we rehearse to lead the March 28 Kabbalat Shabbat service. We all know how special it is to go to any synagogue in the world and hear familiar, haunting melodies of Hebrew prayers and songs that we learned as kids. They become a subtle imprint on our very being, and this quality unites all Jewish people regardless of whether one follows the Orthodox, Modern Orthodox, Conservative or Reform tradition. When we were kids, the melodies and words were always a warm reminder of our Judaic heritage for which we are so grateful and proud.

Yet there is a tremendous difference in how a challenged child learns these prayers and songs. Some hear them inaccurately, while others can match a perfect pitch...Still the learning is slower and requires many repetitions... and it may not come out as "perfect" as we would hope... And still there is joy in the effort and the presentation, knowing we are part of a larger extended family because these children became adults and still remember *Bim Bam*.

So, the Keshet Project is preparing for the March 28 Shabbat by learning new songs to add to our repertoire. We're working hard and hope you will join us in prayer and song. Our speaker, Mary Elizabeth Harrison, will energize you and share the challenges

in raising her son, Jewels, to become the amazing young man he is. We hope you will join us to celebrate this Shabbat service followed by a delicious dinner. And if you can read Mary's book, *Autism Grows Up Then What?*, you will begin to understand the challenges of raising a child with autism. Like us on Facebook @ The Keshet Project and Keshet Project Songfest. [rheasmusic@icloud.com](mailto:rheasmusic@icloud.com) [keshetdramaclub@gmail.com](mailto:keshetdramaclub@gmail.com)



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# UNDERSTANDING STRESS AND ANXIETY: A PSYCHIATRIST'S PERSPECTIVE

BY GEORGE KELLY, MD

Stress is as common as the common cold. It's everywhere, both inside of us and outside. No one can escape it. It's interesting that some people thrive on stress, for example, Top Gun fighter pilots or Wall Street day traders, although most people find it unpleasant. Some people believe that stress and anxiety are the same, but they are not.

## What Are Stress and Anxiety?

Stress is a response to changes in our lives — deadlines, financial demands, relationship conflicts or an unwelcome medical diagnosis. It can manifest as physical symptoms like headaches, muscle tension, or fatigue. Stress can be acute, such as when giving a big presentation, or chronic, like caregiving or job insecurity.

Anxiety, on the other hand, is a persistent worry or fear that is out of proportion to the actual threat. It's not always linked to a specific obvious situation and may occur without a conscious trigger. Anxiety can present as restlessness, difficulty concentrating, or physical symptoms like a racing heart or sweating.

Both stress and anxiety are involved in the body's fight-flight-or-freeze response, an evolved survival mechanism designed to protect us from danger. Stress encourages us to do something to return to our usual homeostatic balance. One way of understanding anxiety is that it is fear out of control. When we lived in caves, fear kept us out of the jungle at night. We needed to avoid the saber-toothed tigers that roamed there. If we acted on our fear, we survived and didn't become cat food. However, if we experience this unpleasant emotion when we are trying to get into an elevator, we are experiencing anxiety, a miserable, unwelcome relative of fear.

## The Science Behind the Feelings

Stress and anxiety involve complex interactions between the brain, body, and environment. The amygdala, an almond-shaped mass of brain cells located in each hemisphere, is associated with fear and emotions. When faced with a threat, it signals the release of stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. These chemicals prepare us to act, but we evolved to best deal with short-term stresses, not chronic ones.

Cortisol can kill brain cells and adrenaline can raise blood pressure. Chronic flooding of these hormones can affect memory, learning, and sleep, weaken the immune system, and increase the risk of conditions like depression, hypertension, and heart disease.

## Recognizing the Signs

The signs of stress and anxiety are varied and can be emotional, physical, or behavioral. Some common ones include:

- *Emotional*: Irritability, feeling overwhelmed, excessive worry
- *Physical*: Fatigue, headaches, chest pain, digestive problems
- *Behavioral*: Avoidance, difficulty completing tasks, changes in appetite or sleep patterns

If you notice these symptoms interfering with daily life, it may be time to seek help.

## Healthy Coping Strategies

While stress and anxiety are part of life, managing them effectively is key to maintaining balance. The best stress-reducers are exercise, relationships, and relaxation techniques.

There are simple strategies to neutralize stress: mindfulness, Transcendental Meditation, diaphragmatic breathing, guided imagery, exercise, deepening relationships (including with the B'nai Israel community), decreasing stimulants (I love coffee, but sometimes I drink too much). We can spend more time on these in a subsequent column.

## When To Seek Help

There are people who say that life is full of unhappiness and adversity, which might be true. Eastern philosophers opine that desire makes life painful. Rather than philosophize, the criteria I use to treat people in my practice is whether they have pain (intra-psychic pain) or a disability. The pain is misery, and the disability is the inability to do the things that they want to and are otherwise able to do, but can't.

For these individuals, seeing an expert in the field can help. Psychotherapy and/or medication can work to alleviate these symptoms.

If you see colleagues, friends or relatives who look distressed, approach them. Many people are afraid to "bother" people by asking, "Are you OK?" It's actually a loving thing we can do for our brothers and sisters.

*Dr. George Kelly, MD, is a psychiatrist in private practice in Fairfield. He and his wife Alice, an LCSW, joined B'nai Israel in 1986, and raised three (now adult) children in the synagogue.*

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**While stress and anxiety are part of life, managing them effectively is key to maintaining balance.**

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