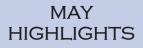


Volume 171, Number 10

Iyar/Sivan 5785



Rabbi Schultz shares his favorite reads from his recent sabbatical. Page 3

Cantor Harris outlines both the acts and reflection that are the foundation of the Counting of the Omer leading up to Shavuot. Page 5

Alexa Cohen shares photos of fun times this past year in the Education. Center Page 6

Learn about the symptoms of psychosis and schizophrenia and how to support those facing these challenges. Page 10

The Reproductive Justice Committee takes action. Page 15



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Run for their LivesP	Page 16



Photo Credit: Evan Smith No one would blame any of the 2025 Annual Gala honorees for bragging a bit about their impact as B'nai Israel presidents:

- Mark Schiff helped lead fundraising and planning for the expansion and revitalization of the temple building.
- Shari Nerreau piloted the congregation through a bomb scare, major rabbinical and cantorial transitions, and the start of the COVID pandemic.
- Larry Levine navigated B'nai Israel through the heart of COVID.

Yet, all three deflect credit to the B'nai Israel community for any success they experienced. Still, the congregation will honor the three at this year's major fundraising event, scheduled for Saturday, June 14.

"We chose to honor three of our past presidents whose tireless efforts have helped bring us successfully through the challenges of each generation, whether dealing with the local impact of national financial crises, rising antisemitism, or a global pandemic," said Richard Walden, the current president. "Quiet and steadfast, we want to thank them for being here for us and taking on the unexpected, something that seems to be what all B'nai Israel leaders must do."

Each honoree seems to have dealt with more than the usual presidential challenges.

Schiff (2004-05 to 2005-06) helped spearhead a \$4 million fundraising effort to revitalize and expand the temple from its 1958 footprint. The resulting

2025 GALA HONOREES MADE A BIG IMPACT

renovations included new classrooms and office space, the chapel, and the pavilion. He also established the temple's website.

"The major accomplishment is that I tackled the Vision Campaign for our congregation," he said. "It was a campaign in order for our congregation to renew and refurbish our facility, and it was a major undertaking."

Nerreau (2018-19 to 2019-20) took on a major bomb scare (luckily, it proved false) and then consecutive transitions of the top clergy.

"My first gala was Jim (Rabbi Prosnit) retiring, and then the next year Sheri (Cantor Blum) retired," she said, noting she previously led the search committee that chose Rabbi Evan Schultz as the next religious leader.

"I was Jim Prosnit's last president and Evan's first president," she said.

The COVID pandemic loomed larger. "I was the president that shut down the temple and went remote," she said. "I refer to (me and Larry Levine) as the COVID couple. I shut us down and got us through the beginning, and he did the opposite."

"The illness and social distancing impacted every aspect of people's lives in general," said Levine (2020-21 to 2021-22). "For the synagogue, how we celebrated, how we mourned, how we prayed, and how we learned were all severely strained."

Still, like Nerreau and Schiff, Levine credits the clergy, staff, lay leaders, and congregation for any success.

"None of the accomplishments were mine alone, and that is the point," Levine said. "Even in the face of COVID, so many congregants stepped up in a wide range of areas," including bringing the Schoke JFS food pantry to B'nai Israel, improving security, refinancing our debt, safely reopening Bonim preschool, and becoming a *Continued on page 3*

SINCERE SYMPATHY

We extend our sympathy to the bereaved families of:

Henry J. Thrower, father of Sherrie Glass Jennifer Duguid Savader, sister of Jed Duguid Steven Levine, son of Harold Levine

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.

Victoria and Aaron Menkin, Joshua & Zachary, Fairfield, CT

Jennifer and Kevin Casey, Trumbull, CT

SHARING OUR JOY

In Celebration of:

Alex and Suzanne Bahary, on the birth of their daughter Liora Rose Bahary Anna and Keith Wellner, on the birth of their daughter Quinn Harmon Wellner, sister of Miles

MITZVAH MORNING

June 8, 2025 10:00 a.m. Congregation B'nai Israel

For our June Mitzvah Morning Project, we will be working with Camp HOPE, a program managed by The Center for Family Justice (www.centerforfamilyjustice.org)

Camp HOPE is a summer camp specifically for children from Fairfield County who are victims of domestic abuse. The camp provides a clinically proven program designed to help these children overcome trauma in order to lead more hopeful and resilient lives. For two weeks during August, Camp HOPE campers will live at Camp Hi-Rock in the Berkshires, enjoying activities in the outdoors while receiving critical counseling and therapeutic services.

On June 8, at 10:00 a.m., we will meet at B'nai Israel to help pack trunks for the campers. Many of the campers are lacking the essential items they need for their time away, so we are looking for B'nai Israel volunteers to help provide them. Some supplies needed include backpacks, batteries, flashlights, fleece blankets, water bottles, laundry bags, and pillowcases.

Volunteers can bring these items to Mitzvah Morning or are welcome to drop them off in the B'nai Israel lobby the week before the event. In addition, there is an Amazon Wishlist which will be published in our email

BULLETIN BOARD

communications. Any items purchased on the Amazon wishlist will be delivered directly to B'nai Israel. Gently used items are welcome as well.

For any additional questions, contact Nina Silberman at ninahv@aol.com or Mitch Weinstein at mitchellew@yahoo.com. We look forward to seeing you there.

CARING COMMITTEE

NEED A QUICK PICK-ME-UP OR STRESS REDUCER? DOING A MITZVAH WILL HELP!

Studies show that doing for others brings one happiness, decreases stress, and even increases life expectancy!

Want to get all these benefits while helping your community?

The Caring Committee NEEDS you! Sign up to do a simple Mitzvah such as dropping off a meal to someone in your town. Done on your own schedule and you don't have to cook! Email Rachel Yurdin at rachelyurdin@gmail.com to sign up.

AMERICAN RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

Wednesday, May 7 Noon – 5:00 p.m.

Schedule your appointment by calling the Red Cross at 1-800-448-3543 or visiting www.redcrossblood.org.

AARP DRIVING CLASS

Wednesday, May 14, 9:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. with Ernie Malecki

Please join our congregant, Ernest "Ernie" Malecki, on Wednesday, May 14, from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for this one-day class designed by AARP for senior drivers. Please preregister by calling the Temple office at 203-336-1858 or emailing Ernie directly at enmalecki113@gmail.com. The cost is \$20 for AARP members and \$25 for non-members (checks payable to AARP). Passing this course can save you money on your car insurance. A course will also be offered on June 11.

ADULT EDUCATION UNDERSTANDING ISRAEL PART I: THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF ZIONISM

Thursday, May 15 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Join with Rabbi Schultz for a new monthly series on Understanding Israel. This session will focus on the historical roots of Zionism.





FROM THE RABBI'S DESK/RABBI EVAN SCHULTZ MY FAVORITE SABBATICAL READS

My recent sabbatical was a great opportunity to immerse myself in a variety of books on Jewish thought, Jewish history, and Israel. I wanted to share just a few of my favorite reads and what I learned from some of these incredible authors with you. And thank you all again for the opportunity to spiritually pause over the past few months. It is wonderful to be back at the synagogue!

The World To Come By Dara Horn



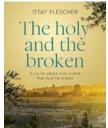
My first Dara Horn book was her most recent, entitled *People Love Dead Jews* (if you haven't yet read that I certainly encourage you to do so). I was so enamored with

Horn's ideas and her writing style, I decided to pick up one of her novels, *The World to Come*, written back in 2006.

The book is centered around a Marc Chagall painting and its journey through generations of one Jewish family. For anyone who is fascinated by Chagall and Yiddish literature, this book will draw you in right away. Horn is a masterful writer and prompted me to think about so many of the lost Yiddish artists and writers,

whose work speaks to the pain, torment, and daily life of their eras. I absolutely loved this novel.

The Holy and the Broken By Ittay Flescher

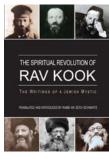


I randomly met Ittay at a Shabbat service in Melbourne. Somehow, we started talking and he mentioned that he was on a book tour throughout Australia. "What is your book?"

I asked. He shared a little about his story — he grew up in Melbourne and now lives in Jerusalem. He is one of the dwindling number of Israelis who still believe that peace is possible between Israelis and Palestinians.

In his book, he talks about the fragility between the two groups and how each group often misreads and misunderstands one another. Flescher looks at peace processes from other points in history and offers lessons for us in believing that peace between the two groups is still a possibility. I appreciated Flescher's stories from life on the ground in Israel and his broader understanding of Israeli and world history to offer context to this moment in history.

The Spiritual Revolution of Rav Kook Translation and introduction by Rabbi Ari Ze'ev Schwartz



Rav Kook was one of the most influential Jewish writers and thinkers of the 20th century. He was the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel and known for his mystical teachings and writings. His

works are not easy to navigate and are often best digested a sentence or two at a time. He was, however, quite profound and a deeply spiritual thinker. This is a great book for a daily mediation or small bite of Jewish wisdom.

For example, on the topic of teshuvah, or repentance, he writes, "The beautiful and profound emotions of teshuvah must be revealed through creative writing. This is in order that our revolutionary generation will understand teshuvah in the depths of their souls in a new and fresh way. People will come back to Judaism and be healed." This is just a tiny sense of his beautiful and deep writing. If you are a more mystical Jewish thinker, I recommend this book for a daily dose of Rav Kook!

2025 GALA HONOREES MADE A BIG IMPACT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

community vaccination site. "All because so many people rose to the occasion during a very challenging period for everyone."

Rabbi Schultz says that selflessness and community spirit are what make the three worthy honorees.

"Mark, Larry, and Shari are quite dear to me and to this congregation in so many ways," he said. "Each of them has been so impactful in teaching me about the history and culture of Congregation B'nai Israel, and they continue to be my guides in my role as senior rabbi. I have such fond memories of Mark sharing his beautiful art with me, of Larry and his dear father, Harvey, z"l, greeting me each Saturday at Shabbat services, and Shari being the first person to show Jenny and me around Greater Bridgeport way back in 2012. I love each of them, and am so, so happy for them to receive this honor."

Schiff says the real honor was serving the congregation. "I found being president was a very expansive, educational experience that many people should strive to have," he said. "I really enjoyed it."

Spring Celebration Tribute Journal

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The Tribute Journal forms for our Spring Celebration should have arrived in your mailboxes! Please submit your journal entries as soon as possible. Deadline for entries is Friday, May 16.

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CCAR AWARD - AWARD-WINNING B'NAI ISRAEL CONNECTION RUNS DEEP



The Central Conference of American Rabbis recognized Congregation B'nai Israel Senior Rabbi Evan Schultz with its Hakarat HaTov award at the organization's national conference in late March.

The Central Conference of America Rabbis is the principal organization of Reform rabbis in the United States and Canada. Founded in 1889, the CCAR is the largest and oldest rabbinical organization in the world. The Hakarat HaTov (recognition of the good) award honors rabbis "for their dedication and contribution to strengthening the Reform rabbinate," according to the CCAR.

Rabbi Schultz was one of just six Hakarat HaTov honorees this year, earning the nod for his work as co-chair of the CCAR's Worship and Practice Committee. He shared the award with his co-chair, Rabbi Rachel Gurevitz of Congregation B'nai Shalom in Westborough, Mass.

"This was my first time chairing a CCAR committee," Rabbi Schultz said. "It was incredibly special to co-chair the committee with Rabbi Gurevitz, who is a dear colleague, friend and teacher, as well as a former B'nai Israel rabbi. I think our committee accomplished a lot during our time as co-chairs, and it was so special to receive this honor together."

Rabbi Gurevitz served as B'nai Israel's assistant rabbi under Rabbi Jim Prosnit. When she left for B'nai Shalom, Rabbi Schultz succeeded her.

"I loved receiving this honor alongside Rabbi Gurevitz," Rabbi Schultz said. "It's so special to share the B'nai Israel connection, and I know that Rabbi Prosnit is proud of his former assistant rabbis. Rachel is a brilliant thinker, and the two of us complemented one another nicely in leading this committee. We both found the work nourishing and impactful."

Clearly, the CCAR felt the impact they made.

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, May 2 5:30 p.m. 6:00 p.m.	Oneg Teacher Appreciation	8:00 a.m.	Shabbat Service – in person & on Zoom	8:00 a.m.	Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom	
	Shabbat Service & Dinner– in person and on Zoom	9:00 a.m. 9:30 a.m.	Brotherhood Breakfast Torah Study – in person & on Zoom	9:00 a.m. 9:30 a.m.	Brotherhood Breakfast Torah Study – in person and on Zoom	
	Torah Portion – Leviticus 12:1 – 15:33 Haftarah – II Kings 7:3-20	Friday, May 1 5:30 p.m. 6:00 p.m.	6 Oneg Shabbat Service –	11:00 a.m	. Bet Mitzvah of Greta Lazowski, daughter of Andrew & Jacqueline Lazowski	
Saturday, May	y 3	1	in person & on Zoom			
8:00 a.m.	Shabbat Service – in person & on Zoom		Torah Portion – Leviticus 21:1 – 24:23	Friday, May 5:30 p.m.	30 Oneg	
9:00 a.m. 9:30 a.m.	Brotherhood Breakfast Torah Study – in person & on Zoom		Haftarah – Ezekiel 44:15-31	6:00 p.m.	Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom Torah Portion – Numbers	
11:00 a.m.	Bet Mitzvah of Jacob Fridman, son of Abe & Sarah Fridman	Saturday, Ma 8:00 a.m.	y 17 Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom		1:1–4:20 Haftarah – Hosea 2:1-22	
		9:00 a.m.	Brotherhood Breakfast	Saturday, Ma	av 31	
Friday, May 9 5:30 p.m.	Oneg	9:30 a.m.	Torah Study – in person and on Zoom	8:00 a.m.	Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom	
6:00 p.m.	Mental Health Awareness Shabbat Service & Dinner –	11:00 a.m.	Bet Mitzvah of Shelby Becker, daughter of David & Erica Becker	9:00 a.m. 9:30 a.m.	Brotherhood Breakfast Torah Study – in person and on Zoom	
in person and on Zoom Torah Portion – Friday, May 23		23	11:00 a.m.	Bet Mitzvah of Ethan Graf, son of Aaron &		
	Leviticus 16:1 – 20:27 Haftarah – Amos 9:7-15	5:30 p.m. 6:00 p.m.	Oneg Shabbat Service – in person and on Zoom Torah Portion – Leviticus 25:1 – 27:34 Haftarah – Jeremiah 16:19 – 17:14		Pamela Graf	
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.



COUNTING THE OMER "UP" TO SHAVUOT

BY CANTOR SCOTT HARRIS

The period from Pesach (Passover) to Shavuot is a time of great anticipation. We count each of the days from the second day of Pesach (Passover) to the day before Shavuot, 49 days or 7 full weeks, hence the name of the festival (counting of the Omer). An omer being a unit of measure. On the second day of Pesach (Passover), an omer of barley was cut down as a grain offering and brought to the Temple in Jerusalem. Today, we no longer have the Temple and we no longer physically count out barley to fulfill the mitzvah. So, each night from the second night of Pesach (Passover) to the night before Shavuot, recite a blessing and state the count of the omer in both weeks and days. So, on the 16th day, you would say, "Today is sixteen days, which is two weeks and two days of the Omer."

The counting reminds me of the important connection between *Pesach* (Passover) and *Shavuot*: *Pesach* (Passover) freed us physically from bondage, but 'the Giving of the Torah' on *Shavuot* redeemed us spiritually from our bondage to idolatry and immorality, and is called 'the time of the Giving of the Torah', rather than the time of the receiving of the Torah. Our sages point out that we are constantly in the process of receiving the Torah and that we receive it every day, but it was first given at this time, and it is the giving,

not the receiving, that makes this holiday significant.

The Festival of Shavuot or "Weeks," is the second of the Shalosh Regalim (Shemot [Exodus] 23:14); with both historical and agricultural significance (the other two are *Pesach* (Passover) and *Sukkot*). Only, Shavuot is not assigned to a specific date, but there is no real explanation given in Torah as to the meaning of the day, or how it is to be observed ritually. Agriculturally, it commemorates the time when the first fruits were harvested and brought to the Temple, and is known as Chag ha-Bikkurim (the Festival of the First Fruits). From a religious perspective, it celebrates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, and our sages came too refer to Shavuot as Z'man Matan Torateinu (the Time of the Giving of our Torah). The day is identified as a holy occasion, to be observed as a Sabbath, and specific sacrificial offerings were to be brought to the Temple.

As *Shavuot* evolved, the account of the revelation at Sinai and the Ten Commandments are read. Among Ashkenazic Jews, a custom also developed associating *Megilat* Ruth (the Book of Ruth) with *Shavuot*. There are a number of links that make this an appropriate text. Particularly, the setting of the story is at the harvest time, and Ruth's conversion to Judaism is seen as analogous to the Israelite's acceptance of the covenant at Sinai. In addition, King David, that tradition teaches was born and died on *Shavuot*, is identified in the book as being descended from Ruth.

However, we do still count the days of the *omer*. Rather than just a physical act of counting, it has become a spiritual act that invites us to look inside ourselves and search for ways to reconnect with teachings that have kept our people together since the beginning of Jewish time. Each day of the *omer*, we can rise a little more from enslavement in our world.

Shavuot, beyond custom or history. This festival allows me to remember that Judaism is ultimately based on the concept; that I can see myself in a unique relationship with *Adonai*. A covenant, a sacred partnership between *Adonai* and me. That I am obligated to participate in this process of creating a better world, and that I accept the responsibility of teaching and living a life of justice and righteousness as best as I can, and to continually lift and hold up the message for all - a message clearly laid out in the Torah and that together, we celebrate on *Shavuot*.





ALEXA COHEN/DIRECTOR OF THE EDUCATION CENTER THE EDUCATION CENTER ENDS THE YEAR WITH FUN FOR ALL





Shay proudly points out her family on her family tree



The Q and U Wedding Party



The PreK is busy practicing their Q words in preparation for the Q and U wedding



It's time to make lunch in the Toddler Room



Coby carefully places his items on his Seder Plate



Infant friend Benny practices his crawling



Practicing for the Women's Seder



Yum, charoset and matzah!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Weekend May 2-3!



We will celebrate our teachers from Bonim and Kehillah with our Special Smilow

Friday, May 2

Special Oneg for families with young children 5:30 - 6:00 p.m.

Friday Shabbat Service & Dinner 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Dinner \$25 pp, sign up on link in Hashavua or Website or email Lisa at lhurlbert@cbibpt.org

Teachers, Bonim & Kehilah students no charge.

Saturday, May 3 Morning Service with Peri Smilow 8:00 a.m.

world.

As an international performing artist, composer, educator, and activist, she has the unique ability to move people of all ages using her talent, passion, music, and commitment to community to create social change. Peri's music and message of *tikkun olam* have been heard throughout the U.S., Canada, England, Singapore, and Israel. Her beautiful and uplifting spirit infuses her work, making her one of the most sought-after contemporary Jewish music performers today. Peri's most recent release, BLESSINGS, is intimate and uplifting. It draws on Peri's experiences as cancer survivor, wife, and mother and celebrates the importance of her relationships with loved ones, friends, community, and faith. BLESSINGS was co-produced by Grammy-award winner Ben Wisch.

Join us for Teacher Appreciation Rosh Chodesh May/Iyar Gathering: Israeli Dance Workshop with Leng Tan*

Monday, May 19, 2025 7:15-8:45 p.m. at B'nai Israel

Artist in Residence, Peri Join us as we celebrate the new Hebrew month of Iyar with an evening of Israeli dance! During the Hebrew month of Iyar, we celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israeli's independence day, and Israeli dancing is a perfect way to celebrate Israel's birthday. We will learn simple, classic Israeli dances. Comfortable clothing recommended. This is a beginner's level class, no previous Israeli dance experience required.

Leng Tan has been dancing for 40 years and teaching for over 30 years. She has taught Israeli dances classes at various locations including the Joseph Slifka Center at Yale University in New Haven, CT, Sephardic Congregation in Fort Lee, NJ, and the East Midwood Jewish Center in Brooklyn, NY. She has taught young children and teenagers at various Hebrew Schools in the tri-state area. She currently teaches Israeli dance at Temple Beth El in Stamford and at the JCC of Peri Smilow uses music to change the Greater New Haven in Woodbridge, CT. Visit her website to learn more at www. ctisraelidance.com.

> If you are able, please bring a light snack or dessert to share with the group.

> RSVP by May 16th with link in Hashavua or Website or email Ilene at ifeuerberg@ cbibpt.org

> *Sponsored by the Women of B'nai Israel

Welcome to our newest group, NextGen!

NextGen is a group of B'nai Israel members in their mid-late 20s/30s/40s+ who are looking to get together with other members to continue to build a strong Jewish Community as this next generation rises through the synagogue.

> Maybe our kids graduated Bonim, maybe they're currently in Kehilah, maybe we moved here during COVID and are still seeking our people, or maybe we simply



realize we want to find our footing in a strong, vibrant, Jewish community during particularly trying times.

This year we have hosted a family pizza at the beach, a couple of women's mah jong evenings, a charity gift giving and wrapping event, a family afternoon at Elicit Brewery, and to close out the year, we are hosting a pizza making event for adults at Italian Kitchen. Next year we hope to start a book club, do some offsite DIY art activities, host a poker evening, winery tour, and continue to teach the Nextgen of Mah Jong players.

This was our first year, and we hope to continue to grow and offer get togethers to strengthen our community. If you would like to help run events, participate in chairing, or be involved in some capacity, please email Rebekah Rosler, Bonim School Social Worker, at rrosler.cbibpt@ gmail.com or Rachel Beitman, longtime Fairfield resident and co-chair to NextGen at beitmanr1@gmail.com.



MAY DONATIONS

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

Rabbi Schultz Discretionary Fund Stacey, Carley & Taylor Berlin, in

loving memory of Duane L. Berlin, on the anniversary of his death.

John & Nancy Jacobson, in memory of Ina Underberger, mother of Dan Underberger.

Martin & Elaine Schwartz, in celebration of the bat mitzvah of Josie Dommu.

Rabbi Daniel & Louise Zemel, in honor of Rabbi Evan Schultz' service to the CCAR.

Rabbi Marion Discretionary Fund Russell & Adina Abrahms, in

appreciation for Rabbi Marion's help and support in preparing our grandson Joey Pearlberg for his bar mitzvah. **Joe & Louise Bobrow,** in honor of Hal Levine's birthday.

Laurel Greenberg, in loving memory of my wonderful husband Hank Greenberg, terrific father of Sue & Andy Greenberg.

Richard & Marci Pearlberg, in appreciation for your kindness and patience helping Joey prepare for his bar mitzvah and for the amazing service. Glen & Kelly Reznikoff, in memory of Ina Underberger, mother of Dan Underberger.

Martin & Elaine Schwartz, wishes for continued good health to Artie Weissman.

Richard Sheiman, in loving memory of my wife Gloria Sheiman.

Jon & Cleo Sonneborn, in memory of Hannah Hofheimer, beloved grandmother.

Cantor Scott Harris Discretionary Fund

Russell & Adina Abrahms, in appreciation for Cantor Harris' help and support in preparing our grandson Joey Pearlberg for his bar mitzvah. **Richard & Marci Pearlberg,** with

gratitude for all your patience and kindness helping Joey prepare for his bar mitzvah.

Music Fund

Ellen Sheiman, wishes to Hal Levine for the happiest birthday ever coming up and a year of good health and happiness.

Enhancement Fund

Bonnie Alterman, in loving memory of Sidney Alterman.

Jerome & Dale Demner, in memory of Dale's family members, uncle Ted Slive, grandparents Anna & David Slive & father Joseph Greenfield; Jerry's brotherin-law Morris Hirsch.

Vernon & Meredith Dommu, in memory of the yahrzeit of my parents Bernard & Beatrice Dommu, falling on 4/3 & 3/23/25.

Robert & Elaine Friedman, in memory of Dorothy (Dotsy) Goldstein.

Jeffrey & Jackie Madwed, in memory of Ina Underberger, mother of Dan Underberger.

Alan & Sylvia Neigher, best wishes to Barbara Kauders on your special birthday today and always!

David & Deborah Ross, in memory of Ina Underberger, mother of Dan Underberger.

Daniel & Debra Viens, in memory of Ina Underberger, mother of Dan Underberger.

Bonim Preschool Enrichment Fund Donations made in memory of Richard Sher, brother of Gail Weinstein were made by: Arthur & Sheryl Feuerstein Peter & Bonnie Stein Daniel & Debra Viens Michael & Debora Weisman Fredric & Ronni Zinn

John & Nancy Jacobson, in honor of the birth of our granddaughter, Liora Rose, daughter of Alex & Suzanne Bahary. Bill & Cara Kilgallen, to support the Bonim preschool.

Jordan & Beth Posner, in memory of Ina Underberger, mother of Dan Underberger.

Bonim Preschool Scholarship Fund

Michael & Sara Shaw, in memory of Gail Weinstein's brother. Serena Sher, in memory of Richard Sher, brother of Gail Weinstein.

Rabbi Arnold Sher Social Action Fund

Mark Schiff, with thanks, a donation. Daniel & Laurie Schopick, in celebration of the birth of David Abbey & Deborah Goodman's granddaughter Noa.

Martin & Elaine Schwartz, in honor of the birth of Noa, granddaughter of David Abbey & Debbie Goodman. Serena Sher, in memory of Judy Zeisler's beloved sister Betty Rosenthal; in honor of the birth of Lori & Ken Berger's granddaughter, Davis Adele.

Jim and Barbara Abraham Education Fund

Jon & Cleo Sonneborn, in loving memory of Barbara and Jim Abraham.

Kesher Project

Mark & Barbara Edinberg, in appreciation of the Kesher Shabbat. Dorothy Lerner, in honor of the women's seder. Margo Schiff, in honor of Danny Freeman.

The George Markley Chesed Fund Steven & Jill Elbaum, in memory of Ina Underberger, mother of Dan Underberger.

Naomi Schaffer & Roger Jackson, in memory of Ina Underberger, mother of Dan Underberger.

A FUN EVENING OF MUSIC FOR B'NAI ISRAEL WAS HAD AT BANDS FOR B'NAI









Photo Credit: Evan Smith

BANDS FOR B'NAI THANK YOU

Thank you to Evan Schultz & Friends, 3 Row SUV, auction donors, and our generous sponsors for helping to make Bands for B'nai such a fun evening.

Gold Sponsors

Broder Orland Murray & DeMattie LLC Abraham L. Green & Son Funeral Home Mark Schiff Silver Sponsors Fred 06825 Green Acres Landscaping Eric Gross Oliver Nurseries Royal Properties Wofsey, Rosen, Kweskin & Kuriansky

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE RECENT B'NAI ISRAEL WOMEN'S SEDER



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS SHABBAT & DINNER: NAVIGATING THE ANXIETIES OF PARENTING & GRANDPARENTING FRIDAY, MAY 9, 2025

Join us for a special Shabbat Dinner on May 9, hosted by the B'nai Israel Mental Health Awareness Team. We are thrilled to celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month by welcoming two esteemed child psychologists, Dr. Barbara Ward Zimmerman and Dr. Elaine Ducharme, who will address your questions and concerns about children. Bring your questions, or send them in advance to Marj at marjorie. freeman.ms@gmail.com or Beth at ladybeth885@gmail.com.

About Our Speakers:

Dr. Barbara Ward Zimmerman is a child



and adolescent psychologist specializing in the prevention, early detection of and early intervention for behavioral health disorders. She serves on many

statewide and national boards, promoting

healthy child and family development. Event Schedule: Dr. Zimmerman has also trained pediatric providers across the state on conducting universal developmental, behavioral health, and maternal depression screenings.

Dr. Elaine Ducharme is a board-certified licensed clinical psychologist with over 35 years of experience. She specializes in treating trauma, abuse, and interpersonal violence.

Dr. Ducharme is frequently called upon to provide expert testimony in court on issues of domestic violence, custody, and abuse. She has lectured locally and nationally on various topics, including parenting, communication, trauma, cybersex, anxiety disorders, and domestic violence.

5:30 p.m. Oneg—Enjoy light refreshments and explore our literature table with mental health resources.

6:00 p.m. Shabbat Service — Our speakers will provide a brief description of tonight's topics during the service.

7:15 p.m. Dinner (approximate time)— \$25.00 per person, RSVP required.

Speakers' Presentation, Q & A (following dinner) — Engage with our experts and get your questions answered.

Disclaimer: The content discussed during this program is for educational purposes and should not be considered professional medical advice.

To register for dinner by 5/6/25, sign up on link in Hashavua or Website or email Ilene at ifeuerberg@cbibpt.org, or call the office at 203-336-1858.

MUSIC THERAPY PRESENTATION AND EXPERIENCE SPONSORED BY THE MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS TEAM

Saturday, May 3, 2025 1:00 –3:00 p.m. Southern CT State University

Heather J. Wagner, PhD, MT-BC, FAMI, a Board-Certified Music Therapist and assistant professor, who heads the Music Therapy Department at SCSU, is creating this program especially for us.

Heather earned her PhD in Music Therapy from Temple University. She is a past president of the New England Region of the American Music Therapy Association and a Fellow of the Association for Music and Imagery. She also holds a CT teacher certification in music and is a freelance musician playing with a

variety of ensembles on flute, piccolo, and We will meet in the B'nai Israel parking lot at bass. She also sings and plays guitar and piano.

People can benefit from one music therapy session or engage in a series of sessions, either in person or via virtual visits. Heather specializes in an integrative approach to health and wellness, using music to help people build inner resources to improve well-being. She believes anyone can benefit from music therapy. No musical experience or training is necessary, just a relationship with music. All kinds of music can be used, as well as all kinds of engagement with music (listening, improvising, songwriting, creating, learning, moving, singing, and/or playing instruments).

10:45 a.m., right after Torah Study on Saturday, May 3, to carpool to SCSU. We will have a quick lunch together before our music therapy experience. We need to be on time, because Heather will be playing in an ensemble later that day and needs to leave promptly at 3:00 p.m.

Please let Marj Freeman know if you would like to come at marjorie.freeman.ms@gmail. com, and if it turns out later that you can't, please cancel so someone else can take your place. We are very excited about this field trip! Please join us!

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH. LET'S LEARN ABOUT PSYCHOSIS AND SCHIZOPHRENIA. BY NINA LEVINE, LMSW, MPH & STEWART LEVINE, MD

Saturday, May 24, 2025, is World Schizophrenia Day. One of the goals of the day is to reduce stigma and dispel common myths associated with the diagnosis.

The media often sensationalizes and misrepresents psychosis. It's important that we understand what psychosis is, what it is not, and how we can help individuals, and encourage help.

Let's start with the basics. Psychosis is a recognizable medical syndrome or collection of unusual experiences (symptoms) and observable changes in speech or behavior . (signs). It is characterized by changes in thinking, feeling, and behavior.

families, and our community to dispel myths Common signs and symptoms may include

- Confused Thinking
- Fixed false beliefs (delusions)
- Hallucinations
 - **Changed Feelings**
- Changed Behavior

Continued on page 11

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MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH......CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

During an episode of psychosis, individuals can struggle to differentiate what is real from what is not. Individuals experiencing psychosis may come to believe false explanations for their experiences. This can be scary to the person experiencing the symptoms. The people around them may not be able to make sense of what is happening either.

Psychosis can happen for several reasons including certain medical conditions (e.g. infection) or drugs (e.g. stimulants). Once medical causes are ruled out, the most likely reason for psychosis in a young adult is the emergence of schizophrenia spectrum disorder or other mental illnesses like bipolar disorder or depression.

We don't fully understand the exact cause of schizophrenia spectrum disorders. However, a combination of genes, environment, hand vulnerability of an individual puts them at greater risk.

How common is it? Is it treatable?

Psychosis is common. About 3 out of every 100 young people will experience a psychotic episode. More importantly, psychosis and schizophrenia are treatable, and it is widely accepted that the earlier people get help, the better the outcome. Unfortunately, many individuals with psychosis do not wish to seek help or know where to go for assistance. Individuals with psychosis may have unnecessary interactions with the criminal justice system or involuntary admissions to psychiatric hospitals. These can be painful and distressing to them.

What about Cannabis Use?

You may have heard that cannabis use can induce psychotic symptoms. Not all people who use cannabis will develop psychosis; however, the risk is substantial if someone has a family history of psychosis. Using more cannabis, using more frequently, using for longer periods of time, age of first use, and potency of cannabis are all factors in significantly increasing the risk of developing psychosis.

Health, Social, and Economic Burden of Schizophrenia

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), schizophrenia is one of the top 15 leading causes of disability in the world. There is an increased risk of premature death, cooccurring medical conditions, and an increased risk of suicide.

Studies have cited that "direct" costs of healthcare and "indirect" costs (such as lost productivity, criminal justice involvement, etc.) are significantly higher in individuals with schizophrenia compared to other chronic physical and mental health conditions. We all have a stake in understanding and improving the lives of individuals with schizophrenia.

What can we do to help?

Family, friends, and other community

members can help by learning about the common signs and symptoms and assisting the person with psychosis to access care. Psychosis and schizophrenia are no one's "fault."

In Judaism, our beliefs are guided by core values. These values include justice, belonging, learning, evolving, and Israel and Jewish Peoplehood. Among these values is *B'tzelem Elohim*, meaning "In the Image of G-d," which enforces the idea of treating everyone with respect, dignity, and kindness. Among these people are those living with serious mental illnesses. They too are included in our community.

If you or someone you know may be struggling with symptoms of psychosis, there is help. You do not need to navigate symptoms alone. If you live anywhere in the state of Connecticut, call the STEP Learning Collaborative at 203-200-0140.



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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

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Co-Editors, Amy Pressman at **apressman@cbibpt.org** or Lauren Tropp at **ltropp@cbibpt.org**. Submissions are due by the first day of the month preceding the publication month. We reserve the right to edit all submissions for length or style.

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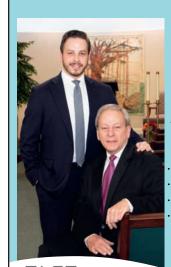
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The Kesher Project is an all-inclusive program based on Jewish values. It is diverse and serves adults of all abilities. We offer three programs, The Kesher Project, the Songfest, and the Lee and David Lester Kesher Drama Club.

The Kesher Project meets in person on the third Thursday of each month. We begin with a craft, continue with singing and dancing to live music, and end with a hearty snack.

THE KESHER PROJECT

Some of these meetings are devoted to our drama club. We create props, learn improvisation, and rehearse the original show we are currently working on. We are planning three performances from June through August 2025.

We're accepting new members and are looking for volunteers of all ages to join us at our in-person events.

Donations are always welcome. They can be made online at the Congregation B'nai Israel website, in person or by phone through the temple office, (203) 336-1858. We are grateful for financial support from the Jewish Federation of Greater Fairfield County and private donors.

Please email us with any questions or suggestions. rheasmusic@icloud.com kesherdramaclub@gmail.com

TIKKUN OLAM – REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE COMMITTEE Barbara Edinberg and Beth Posner, co-chairs, Reproductive Justice Committee

Our faith tells us that a fetus does not become a person until the moment of birth and the health and well-being of the pregnant person is a priority. Choice and bodily autonomy are paramount. Abortion is permitted. Taking away that right is an infringement on our religious freedom.

Our committee was formed in 2022 in response to the fall of Roe and a national climate threatening reproductive rights with the goals of educating ourselves and advocating for reproductive rights and healthcare in accordance with our Jewish principles.

Taking Action

We have focused on impacting what happens nationally. The legislative process has always been integral to reproductive justice. Many of us wanted to take positive, effective action to protect our rights and the rights of those living in states with severe abortion restrictions.

We worked in partnership with the CBI Voting Committee's postcarding campaign through the URJ Religious Action Center, Every Voice Every Vote Campaign to encourage voter participation. Two of the four postcarding events focused on supporting an abortion rights amendment in Florida. Unfortunately, due to the high bar of 60% in the affirmative, this measure just failed with a vote of 57%.

In 2022, Connecticut passed the Reproductive Freedom Defense Act, which expanded access to abortion care

and protected patients and providers. In 2024, we met via Zoom with Representative Cristin McCarthy Vahey, co-chair of the State Legislature's Public Health Committee, to better understand upcoming reproductive rights bills and how we could support them. Unfortunately, during last year's "short" session, these bills saw little action.

As part of the annual Tikkun Olam summer film series, we sponsored the showing of the poignant and relevant documentary, Under G-d — about national Jewish advocacy efforts to support abortion rights and the accompanying lawsuits based on religious freedom — followed by a Zoom session with the director and writing postcards to Florida, where the movie was filmed.

During the 2025 state legislative session, some of us submitted written public testimony in support of a bill to enshrine reproductive, abortion, and genderaffirming care through an amendment to the State Constitution. We will continue to follow this and other reproductive rights bills this session, which ends in early June.

We supported the Jewish value of reproductive freedom and abortion rights during Repro Shabbat weekend, February 21-22. Rabbi Leah Berkowitz, through her sermon, after-dinner teaching, and Torah study, helped us dive deeper into the complexities of Jewish thinking related to reproductive health, rights, and justice.

What comes next?

Our work is not done. This year, we will continue to educate ourselves and advocate for reproductive freedom in CT and across the country. We'll be following national organizations, including the National Council of Jewish Women and the URJ's Religious Action Center, to track what's happening around pro-choice advocacy to see if there are actions we can take.

We will continue to collaborate with the CBI Voting Team on post carding events and other actions, like phone banking, to advocate for abortion rights across the country. We will stay informed about relevant CT legislative initiatives and other state law changes impacting reproductive healthcare, and will again sponsor a reproductive themed movie for the Summer Film Series. Please send the titles of any good movies with a reproductive justice theme our way.

We thank our current members for their commitment and dedication. We have been privileged to have a committee of "doers" guided by Rabbi Marion's leadership, which has resulted in tangible successes.

This has been a team effort. We need to work together to protect what we have in Connecticut and to help restore what has been lost in so many other states. Join us! Send Barbara an email (bedinberg@ gmail.com), to be added to our list so you can be a part of this critical work.



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Join us to support the innocent civilians and families being held in Gaza. We meet each week at the Fairfield Theater Company, (FTC), located on the northbound side of the Fairfield Train Station at 70 Sanford Street. Kids and dogs welcome. If you have signs, feel free to bring them, too!