Hanuka & Shabbat Candles

Hanuka candles are lit beginning on Thursday night 21 December. On Friday night 22 December, the Hanuka candles should be lit at about 4:00, before the Shabbat candles are lit.

The Shabbat candle lighting times listed in every issue of the BEKI Bulletin on the calendar page, and listed at our website at www.beki.org/schedule.html, represent the exact lighting time within one minute for the location of the synagogue. Anyone within a several mile radius of BEKI can use the time table with confidence. The candle lighting times listed are about 18 minutes before the “sunset” as it is defined in Jewish law. It is permitted to light candles before the listed lighting time, but according to Jewish law candles should not be lit after sunset. The 18 minutes serve as a “margin of error” and are a way for us to show our enthusiasm for Shabbat by welcoming it in a timely, but not hurried, fashion.

One purpose of Shabbat candles is to enable us to see during the darkness of night. This was especially important in times and places where artificial lighting was uncommon and people generally were in the dark once night fell. It is permitted to use the Shabbat candles for general lighting, but one should avoid using them for reading or for other uses where one might normally make some adjustment in their brightness or location.

The purpose of Hanuka candles is to “publicize the miracle” of Hanuka. One should not use the Hanuka candles for any other purpose. For this reason, a “shamash” or “utility” candle is added, so that if we need to see in the room with the hanukiya (hanuka menora), we can use the light of the shamash.

Planning a bar- or bat-mitzva at BEKI?
Parents planning a bar- or bat-mitzva observance at BEKI during the next three years are urged to call the BEKI office (389-2108 x14 or beki@snet.net) to reserve a date and to request a copy of the “Guide to Benei Mitzva Observance at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, second edition.” The “Guide” is also available at www.beki.org/bmitzva.pdf.
How to Contact the BEKI Bulletin

Responses to "A Message from Rabbi Tilsen," questions for "Dear Rabbi" and Letters to the Editor can be sent to: Editor, BEKI-Bulletin, 85 Harrison Street, New Haven, CT 06515 or by email to jjtilden@beki.org.

Rabbi Tilsen’s mail and e-mail are opened directly and exclusively by the Rabbi himself and are as secure and confidential as mail and e-mail can be.

Calling BEKI

To call BEKI, dial (203) 389-2108.

When the automated attendant answers, dial any of the numbers below for the desired extension. You don’t have to wait to hear the whole recorded greeting. If you don’t have a “touch-tone” phone (i.e. a phone that dials by sending tones), wait to the end of the greeting and you will then be able to leave a message for the Administrator. A shortcut: To skip to the end of a greeting, press asterisk (*).

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Daily Services

Daily services at BEKI provide an opportunity to learn, pray, reflect, transition and center one’s own spiritual life. Services provide a context for fulfilling the mitzva (religious obligation) of daily worship. Services are held every weekday morning and evening. See the calendar for a schedule. During the winter, there will be a special need for more participants on Tuesday mornings (7:00a), Thursday mornings (8:15a) and Sunday nights (5:45p).

No Parking

Members and visitors are advised that parking is prohibited at all times on the East side of Harrison Street as indicated by the “No Parking” signs. Parking is usually available across Harrison Street, and ample parking is available in the BEKI lot at the rear of the building. When driving in the BEKI parking lot, please observe the 5 miles-per-hour speed limit, which is enforced by random speed bumps.
A Hanuka Message

Not by Might, nor by Power, but by My Spirit, says Adonai Seva’ot.

These words of the prophet Zekharya, read in the haftara of Shabbat Hanuka, express the essence of the message of Hanuka.

The victory we celebrate is the survival of Jewish culture in the face of foreign cultural hegemony. Remarkably, when the Talmud tells us the meaning of Hanuka, it does not even mention, let alone glorify, the military struggle of the Maccabees. Rather, our sages singled out the miracle of the rededication of the Temple as the symbol of all that is good in Hanuka. It is the purification of our society from foreign cultural and religious elements and the regaining of some measure of national autonomy that we are celebrating.

Some time later, when Israel was again under foreign rule, this time by the Romans, Jews again organized to defend the Temple and all that it stands for. But this time, during the decades before the destruction of the Second Temple, our ancestors organized a creative nonviolence campaign to defend Jewish society. The historians Josephus and Philo both record how our ancestors organized strikes, boycotts, peaceful demonstrations, direct nonviolent confrontations with soldiers, diplomatic maneuvers, and sit-ins. Many of the elements of their struggle closely resemble those of Gandhian Satyagraha. The Jewish nonviolent campaign achieved its immediate goals and helped to preserve Jewish culture and society during a phase of protracted conflict without the cost of armed struggle. In doing so, Israel won the respect of many Romans, bolstering our internal strength.

Today, we too must act to defend and revitalize our culture. Like the Maccabees, we must live according to our own values and traditions without feeling self-conscious or awkward. By playing Jewish music in our homes, learning Hebrew and Jewish dance, studying Torah and supporting Israel, by performing mitzvot, we do more than any army could to promote the well-being of our people and the success of our mission in the world.

We are fortunate that American values validate cultural diversity — to live according to our own ways is now part of the American ideal. By right as Americans we can declare our Jewishness. By living fully as Jews, we get “extra credit” for living the American Way.

When we place our Hanuka lights in our window for all to see, we make a positive statement about our values and identity. “Whoever performs a mitzva,” say our sages, “lights a candle of God and revives their spirit.”

Happy Hanuka

RAVIT AVNI-SINGER, MSW LCSW
214 Amity Road
Woodbridge, CT 06525
(203) 389-9174

Announces the establishment of her practice in child, adolescent, and adult psychotherapy.
Dear Rabbi,

In services, why do we sometimes repeat the Amida in full, sometimes in part, and sometimes not at all?

Signed,
Amida Maven

Dear Maven,

Normally the Amida is repeated during morning, musaf and afternoon services, but never at evening services. It is repeated only in the presence of a minyan (quorum).

There are three ways to repeat the Amida. In a full repetition, each individual recites the entire Amida, and then the shaliach tsibur (prayer leader) recites the entire Amida aloud, with everyone joining in for the Qedusha.

Assuming there is a minyan, if we are not reciting the full repetition, then there are two ways of doing a “partial repetition.” For morning services, we all begin the Amida together aloud, recite the Qedusha together, and then each person continues individually to the end. For musaf and afternoon services, the shaliach tsibur begins the Amida, all join together for the Qedusha, and then the reader continues quietly to the end while the individual worshipers recite the entire Amida from the beginning.

Whether we do a full repetition or a partial repetition depends on available time and the preference and capability of the shaliach tsibur. Generally, we do a partial repetition on Monday and Thursday mornings, since the service otherwise will be somewhat long given that we have Torah readings those days. Most other weekdays we will do a full repetition if the shaliach tsibur so desires.

One of the reasons given for repeating the prayer is that many people are not able to correctly recite
Dear Rabbi,

the Amida on their own. This was especially true before individual copies of prayer books became common. If a worshiper answers “Amen” after the berakhot (the blessings), they get “credit” as if they had said the prayers themselves.

If all that I have said is not clear, I can repeat it. I could do a full repetition or a partial repetition....

Dear Rabbi,

I saw the Pope on television and noticed that he wears a yarmulke. No offense meant, but is the Pope Jewish?

Signed, Bareheaded in Beaver Hill.

Dear Bareheaded,

No, the Pope is not Jewish. The correct word for the Pope’s skullcap is a zucchetto, which is an Italian word that basically means “beanie.” Zucchettos are color-coded skullcaps worn by Catholic clergy: priests wear black, bishops wear purple, cardinals wear red, and the Pope wears white.

The Jewish practice of covering the head dates back to ancient times when the kohanim in the Temple wore special headdresses.

The morning blessing “oter Yisrael betifara,” who crowns Israel with beauty, was originally said before putting on the turban. The Talmud states that a man should not take four steps without his head being covered. We can keep our heads covered by wearing any sort of hat or turban. One choice is the kippa, which in Yiddish is called Yarmulke, in English, skullcap, or in Italian Zucchetto. The kippa has no religious significance in and of itself — it is merely one type of hat. It is nothing more than a beanie.

Today, we follow a moderate path and make a point to keep our heads covered during prayer, study, meals and other religious acts, such as playing baseball.

Although he wears a kippa, the Pope is not Jewish. And although we wear Zucchettos, we are not the Pope. Once again we see that you don’t have to be Jewish to be Jewish, but it helps.
LifeCycle

With Sorrow we note the passing of
Ellen Slopak Schwartz, wife of David Schwartz
Devora Gekhman, mother of Leonid & Svetlana Gekhman
May the Almighty comfort all who mourn

Additional Death Notices can be found at www.beki.org/deaths.html. Information on Yahrzeit observances can be found at www.beki.org/yz5761.pdf.

Mazal Tov

• To Alan & Joan Gelbert on the birth of their grandson Max Jacob (Mordekhai) Gelbert
• To Matthew & April Lieberman on their father Joseph Lieberman’s reelection to the US Senate and winning the most votes for the office of Vice President of the United States

United Synagogue Youth

BEKI-BJ USY is off to a great start! Our membership is even larger than we’d hoped for and our calendar is chock-full of events. Officers for the chapter are:
• Marlo Palumbo, President
• Danya Cheskis-Gold, Religious Education V.P.
• Rachel Levarek, Social Action Tikkun Olam V.P.
• Verred Hamenachem, Israel Affairs V.P.
• Aliza Kuperstock, Membership and Kadima V.P.
• Karen Nahary, Regional Board
• Mika Larrison, Communications V.P.
• Michael Seltzer will be creating a website for USY!

November events included making and selling pies for tsedaqa (charity), a regional dance with Or Shalom, and a Kinnus (Shabbat sleepover) at a camp in Connecticut. On 9 December our chapter will have a Hanuka celebration featuring a Limousine Scavenger Hunt. In January we’re having a Shabbaton sleepover at B’nai Jacob.

If you or your teenager are interested in USY please e-mail us at BEKIBJUSY@mac.com, or call membership V.P. Aliza at 387-0304.

Letters

To the entire BEKI community:
A deeply felt thank you for the tremendous outpouring of love, kindness and support after the death of Milton Bass, Paul’s father. For building our sukka; for sending food; for coming to a minyan; for sending cards; for offering warm hugs and kind words; for keeping us in your thoughts and prayers — for your countless acts of kindness, large and small, we are incredibly grateful. It is truly a privilege, an inspiration and a comfort to be part of this wonderful community.

Paul, Carole, Annie & Sarah Bass

An Invitation

The congregation is invited to qiddush following Shabbat morning services on 2 December marking Charlie Ludwig’s milestone birthday, sponsored by his wife Violet.

Children’s Books Added to Collection

There are now 12 copies of “Tot Shabbat Siddur” and “Early Childhood Shabbat Service” available to those parents who have generously volunteered their time to prepare for and lead the weekly Children’s Shabbat Havura and K-2 Kehila programs. These siddurim are available in the Resource Center of the Claire Goodwin Youth Room, on a non-lending basis. The “Tot Shabbat Siddur” was acquired thanks to the efforts of parent Amy Pincus, and the “Early Childhood Shabbat Service” was acquired thanks to the efforts of parent Anne Johnston. Copies of each were donated by Miriam Benson.

MEB

Rosenkrantz Family Library News

In honor of Jewish Book Month, the Rosenkrantz Library Committee is asking BEKI members to donate a book to the library. The book should be of Jewish interest, either new or no more than two years old. We will be happy to place a bookplate in the front of the book, in honor of or in memory of a loved one. Please give us the name to be honored and by whom.

Mimi Glenn
What are some of the things you especially value about BEKI? Maybe it is the participatory and egalitarian Conservative services. Possibly, it is the synagogue’s rare breadth of spirit, its strong moral commitment, and the kindness and thoughtfulness of its rabbi. Or perhaps it’s a place where you know you can always find a warm welcome and a spiritual sanctuary. It may be special to you because its children’s school provides an exceptional Jewish education while treating boys and girls equally. Or you may value BEKI because you have found friends, soul mates, and qiddush shmoowers there who share your values.

While BEKI has retained its wonder and excitement, for many years it had slowly fallen behind on the funds necessary to meet its religious and administrative needs and to maintain the building in a reasonable state. At the same time, BEKI has always upheld a strong commitment to maintain a dues structure that allowed people to belong to the synagogue regardless of their financial situation and, at the same time, to provide a warm and rich home for Conservative Judaism.

If this commitment to an inclusive dues structure is to succeed, it is essential that those who can afford more than their dues contribute generously to BEKI. Until last year, BEKI members had not been asked to contribute the amount of money to the shul that would allow BEKI to live by this inclusive philosophy and support its basic needs. Last year, a serious question was raised: would the members of the congregation accept the challenge to increase their contributions and make BEKI more secure and vital?

As you know, BEKI members responded with an enthusiastic yes! With the generous support of members like you, more money was raised last year than ever before, exceeding the Renaissance Campaign’s goals. We thank you and other members of the congregation for your strong expression of confidence, which allowed the shul to begin to stand more firmly on its financial feet.

But last year was just the first step in a significant transition for BEKI. With confidence in the membership borne of last year’s experience, our goals for this year have been raised somewhat. Our current goal is to fully address the synagogues’ basic needs, which include reasonable support for the rabbi’s and staff salaries, for the New Hebrew School and youth programs, for religious activities, for a growing selection of Jewish cultural activities, and to restore and care for the physical plant in which all this takes place.

Our Executive Committee and Board of Directors have carefully examined the synagogue’s situation and concluded that BEKI needs to raise $143,000 above dues and other sources of income in order to continue its renaissance.

The fund raising effort, begun with a spirit of optimism and excitement, has met with a remarkable outpouring of financial support. Already almost $100,000 has been pledged.

For all the reasons you value BEKI, now is the time for you to play an important role in its continuing revitalization by making your contribution to the Renaissance Campaign. We hope that your contribution will reflect your commitment to BEKI’s values and your desire to make a difference. BEKI needs and appreciates your help.

Members of the Renaissance Committee may be calling you over the next month or so to explore with you how you might be able to help BEKI through the Renaissance Campaign. We know you will give as generously as you can.

Robert Forbes
Stephen Pincus
Marc D. Schwartz, MD
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<td>5:45p Maariv</td>
<td>8:00a-3:00p KISS</td>
<td>5:45p Maariv</td>
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<td>10:45a Children's Programs</td>
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<td>6:00p Rambam Class</td>
<td>5:30p-7:00p Family Education</td>
<td>7:00p-9:00p Midrasha</td>
<td>5:45p Maariv</td>
<td>6:00p Chess Club</td>
<td>10:45a Minha</td>
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**Shaharit=Morning**

**Minha =Afternoon**

**Maariv=Evening**

**SSLM=Shabbat Shalom**

**Learners’ Minyan**

**TNS=The New [Religious School]**

**KISS=Kids in Shul when there's no School**

**KISS=KIDS IN SHUL WHEN THERE’S NO SCHOOL**
Robert Goodwin Memorial Program

A Sunday morning brunch on 17 December at 9:30a (following the 9:00a morning service) is presented in Memory of Robert Goodwin. All are welcome to the brunch; reservations are not required.

Chess Club meeting

The BEKI Chess Club for kids and adults will meet on Thursday evenings from 6:00p to 8:00p on 7, 14 and 21 December. There is no charge. Players at all levels are welcome, and players may invite friends. For more information contact Rabbi Tilsen at 389-2108 x10 jjtilsen@beki.org).

Adult Ed Classes

The class on Rambam’s “Laws of Kings,” which began in November, continues to meet on Sunday nights from 6:00p to 7:20p on 3, 10 and 17 December. Midrasha classes will continue on Monday nights from 7:00p to 9:00p.

Mishna Avot

Mishna Avot, also known as Pirqe Avot or Ethics of the Fathers is studied at BEKI each Shabbat afternoon between the minha and maariv services during the winter months. Everyone is welcome.

Shabbat Shalom Learners’ Minyan

The “Shabbat Shalom Learners’ Minyan,” which meets every other Saturday morning at 10:45a in BEKI’s Rosenkrantz Library, is an ideal setting for veteran and novice shul-goers alike to become more comfortable and expert in the Shaharit (morning) and Torah services in a supportive setting. Lead by Steven Fraade, Rabbi Alan Lovins and others, the Shabbat Shalom Learners’ Minyan has helped many feel a deeper sense of awe born of greater understanding while increasing the level of comfort through nurturing step-by-step practice in a non-threatening multi-generational setting.

Darshanim

Jay Sokolow will be the Darshan (Torah Discussion Leader) on Shabbat morning 16 December 2000, parashat VaYishlah. During November, Jay participated in a UJC Solidarity Mission to Israel, which may serve as part of the inspiration for his presentation.

Alan Lovins will be the Darshan (Torah Discussion Leader) on Shabbat morning 30 December 2000, parashat Miqetz.

20s-30s Havura at BEKI

Jewish singles and couples in their 20s and 30s are invited to contact BEKI member Valerie Sandler (777-4784 or valerie.sandler@yale.edu) or Mary Ellen Mack (389-2108 x14 or beki@snet.net) for information on special events of interest. The 20s-30s Havura is primarily for adults without children. People with children are encouraged to contact Anne Johnston (389-2108 x33 or anne@beki.org) or Mary Ellen Mack (389-2108 x14 or beki@snet.net) for information on the Children’s Shabbat Havura and other activities of special interest.

Rashi Study Group

Each Monday morning from 7:45a to 8:30a a small group of adults meets in the Rosenkrantz Family Library to read Rashi’s commentary to the Torah. It is possible to join the study for a single meeting or to begin at any time. Knowledge of Hebrew is not necessary. For more information, don’t call; just come once and find out what it is about.
Thank You For Your Generous Contributions

Where There’s A Will...

Tradition recommends that one bequeath at least 10% of their estate to Tzedaqa (charity) such as to Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel. Financial advisers and estate lawyers have shown how such gifts can be increased through careful planning that takes tax policies into account. Willing a proportion of one’s estate to the Congregation is a concrete way to demonstrate commitment to Judaism and model a moral example for others.

For many, particularly senior citizens, it is possible to earn a guaranteed 8% or more annual return for life on a secured investment and help the Synagogue at the same time. With as little as $10,000 you can make a charitable remainder gift that allows you and your spouse or other loved one to receive a guaranteed annual interest payment for the rest of your life, all or much of which is tax-free.

If you would like more information on how to make a bequest or a charitable remainder gift for the benefit of BEKI, contact your own attorney or financial consultant, or call estate planning attorney Donna Levine at 787-1633 (sdsjj@aol.com) for a confidential consultation. Attorney Levine will donate her time to help you establish a will or trust for the benefit of the Congregation. You may also contact Rabbi Tilsen at 389-2108 x10 (jjtilsen@beki.org) for more information on bequests and endowment opportunities, or call Deborah Kaplan Polivy at The Jewish Foundation at 387-2424 ext. 304 (dpolivy@jewishnewhaven.org) for a confidential discussion.

BEKI can also accept stocks and securities as gifts during a donor’s lifetime or as part of an estate. Please speak with your financial advisor or broker about the potential tax advantages of giving stock and securities. To arrange a transfer, call Mary Ellen Mack at 389-2108 x14 (beki@snet.net).

Important Tax Information

Taxpayers are reminded that synagogue dues, pledges and contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. For many people it is advantageous to pay dues, pledges and contributions before the end of the tax year (for most people 31 December). It is also helpful to BEKI to receive your payment at an early date. Please consult your tax advisor for more information.

Torah Fund Contributions


Buying Books?

Buying books, music, software, or electronics on the internet? BEKI earns a small referral fee for purchases made from Amazon.com when the purchaser accesses Amazon from the Amazon icon at the bottom of www.beki.org/links.html. From November 1999 to October 2000, BEKI earned $208.29 in referral fees on sales of $4,169. There is no added charge to the purchaser.