

BEKI Bulletin

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December 2003 Vol. 9 Issue 12

ק"ק בית אל-כתר ישראל

Kislev 5764

Renovations Update

Major construction work for "Phase 2 Lobby Improvements" is set to begin "sometime during 2004," says Renovations Committee Co-Chairperson John Weiser. "Coordinating fundraising, financing, and contractors to fit the synagogue's schedule is no easy matter." The "windows of opportunity" for beginning include January, June, and December. "Plans are ready, but we have to have everything lined up," says John.

Construction will inevitably involve some disruption in synagogue operations. Work will begin on installation of an elevator, creation of an accessible and attractive entryway from the parking area, reconfiguration of the lobby and offices, the necessary replacement of heating and cooling distribution infrastructure, and the relocation of the Rosenkrantz Family Library, Claire Goodwin Youth Room, and George G. Posener Daily Chapel. Please check for updates in the weekly "BEKI Happenings," available in the literature rack (normally located in the lobby – once work begins, you'll have to look for it), and available by email (to subscribe send a message to jjtilsen@beki.org).

Because construction of the elevator entails cutting a large hole in the floor of the lobby, the lobby area will be unusable for some period. Contingency plans have been made for holding Religious School classes, daily and Shabbat services, and other activities, including office functions. Please check doors or entryways for posters with special instructions.

"The good news for me," comments Rabbi Tilsen, "is that I will still be able to use my study during the construction period. The bad news is that I will have to get in and out by crawling through the window."

"This is a very conservative Board," observed President Gila Reinstein, "at least with respect to fiscal matters. There will be no final approval of major construction until we have reached the intermediate goal of \$1 million, in sight of the total of \$1.25 million, to insure that our operations and solvency are not placed at risk." As this issue of the Bulletin went to press, total pledges exceeded \$700,000.

Hanuka

The first night of Hanuka is Friday night 19 December 2003. Hanuka candles or lamps should be lit about 4:00p, followed by Shabbat candles at 4:08p. The blessings for candle lighting are available as audio files at www.beki.org/audio.html and are printed in our prayerbook Siddur Sim Shalom on p. 242 (classic edition) or p. 307 (Shabbat edition and Or Hadash).

Sisterhood Giftshop

**Open Sundays
10:30am to 12:10pm
Through Hanuka**

Gift Certificates Available

Renovations Pledge Payments Welcome

Thanks to those who have already sent in payment on your Renovations Campaign pledge. Your payment now will reduce our expense in carrying a construction loan and other finance charges.

Quit Horsing Around

Members and visitors to BEKI are advised that parking is prohibited at all times on the east side of Harrison Street as indicated by the "No Parking" signs. It is also prohibited to obstruct the residential driveways on either side: "No operator shall stop, stand, or leave any horse or other animal or vehicle, in any of the following places... (d) In front of and so as to obstruct a driveway..." (New Haven Code of General Ordinances §29-35).

Parking is usually available across Harrison Street, and ample parking is available in the BEKI lot at the rear of the building.

Two-Way Traffic

The driveway from Harrison Street to the parking lot supports two-way traffic. (The "exit only" pattern is in force only for High Holy Days.) When exiting via the driveway, be sure to stop before crossing the sidewalk, in compliance with state traffic laws and in compliance with *halakha* (Jewish law) which strictly prohibits running over pedestrians.

Enter Only

The driveway ramp from Whalley Avenue to the parking area is for entrance only.

Stop & Go

The traffic light on Harrison Street at Whalley Avenue is controlled by a microwave sensor. It will detect a vehicle traveling at normal to slow

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BEKI Bulletin

The newsletter is published monthly by Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel for the benefit of its members. Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel is affiliated with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

To contribute articles or for inquiries regarding membership, donations, or special activities, call the Synagogue office (203) 389-2108, or write to 85 Harrison Street, New Haven, CT 06515-1724 or email: jjtilsen@beki.org

or see our web page: www.beki.org

For information about advertising, call the synagogue office. Deadline for submission of ads or articles is the 1st of the month preceding publication.

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BEKI-Bulletin

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A Message from Rabbi Tilsen & Dear Rabbi
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Same-Sex Marriage

The Conservative Movement, based on its official pronouncements on gay & lesbian people serving as rabbis and teachers, being welcomed in its congregations, and enjoying legal protection from discrimination in civil society, has been accused of hemming and hawing. I would like to go on record with my position on same-sex marriage, without any hemming, but perhaps with a bit of hawing.

Some in the religious community, particularly Christians, have voiced opposition to same-sex marriage or registered civil unions because it would detract from the sanctity of conventional marriage. As much as I have tried to understand that concern, I must confess that I do not grasp it.

There is a difference between a Jewish marriage (*nisuin* or *qiddushin*) and a civil or other non-Jewish religious marriage. Jewish law has a large set of rules that apply to a Jewish marriage. Among them are prohibitions on adultery (for man and woman) and requirements for and limits on sexual availability. Civil marriages and other religious marriages are governed by another set of rules. These have to do primarily with taxation, inheritance, property rights, medical and pension decisions and benefits, and children. Most states' definitions of marriage do not require exclusivity of sexual or romantic relations or other particulars. While a civil marriage or other religious marriage may truly attain a level of holiness, it is not the same as a Jewish marriage. To be clear, I am not claiming that a Jewish marriage is superior to any other form; I am simply stating that it is *different*.

Connecticut law requires that any "religious" marriage be recorded with the State. This makes a religious marriage subject to the laws of the State, but does not make a State marriage

subject to the laws of any religion. Is this requirement for the benefit of the State, or for the benefit of the couple? What is the State's interest?



Rabbi Tilsen

A Christian or other religious marriage has a set of rules, customs and expectations that defines and governs the marriage, and that goes beyond the civil definition of marriage. Religious marriages are distinct from the civil Las Vegas marriage, which can be licensed, recorded and terminated within a span of days. While the government may recognize all of these as "marriages," they are not quite the same.

Why should the state recognize *any* marriage? Our answer to this question determines our position on same-sex marriage. The state's reason cannot be to help the religious communities enforce their doctrines or value systems. If the state recognizes any marriage, it must have a purpose that helps the broad public without infringing on our liberties or harming a segment of our population.

As far as I can see, the state finds it advantageous to have a conventional set of rules for taxation, inheritance and the like to apply to a "couple." It really does not matter to the state if that couple is living according to Catholic ideals, *halakha*, or their own private set of "commitments" that they have made to each other. For that reason, I have no more objection to the state calling the commitment between a same-sex couple "marriage" as I do to any of the other religious or civil relationships that are called by that name. But if it is found that it harms the religious sentiments of many Americans to share the word "marriage" with a same-sex couple, then perhaps the state should simply stop using the word "marriage" for anyone and instead define "civil partnerships."

Continued on page 12

As an outgrowth from my work with Kulanu and Saul's Circle, I have been working for a year on a conference entitled, "Ministry in Times of Crisis: Integrating Faith, Healing, and Recovery." The conference was co-sponsored by the Yale Program for Recovery and Community Health, Yale Divinity School, and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

There were 200 people in attendance and together we explored ways to link clergy, including rabbis, imams, and ministers, with behavioral health care providers. The conference looked at how to respond to challenges such as terminal illness, death and addiction, and their effect on mental health.

Dr. Arthur Fallot, the keynote speaker, stated that one out of four families in the United States is affected by mental illness. He reminded the conference participants that these people are our brothers and sisters, wives and mothers, fathers and sons. He implored us in our work to think of the myriad abilities of the people we work with, not the disabilities.

He told a profoundly moving story of a young woman who stated; "I can't take my disability to Church" (substitute "synagogue"). So as I reflect on my experiences from the conference, I am left with two powerful lessons. The first is just how aware we are at BEKI by creating and supporting Kulanu and Saul's Circle, our unique and nationally-recognized outreach (or "qeruv") programs for people with developmental disabilities and for people with disabilities related to mental illness. We are a caring community and we "Walk our Talk."

This was reinforced this week as I accompanied two groups of Kulanu participants from Chapel Haven to help with the community's Book Sale fundraiser for special education. The Kulanu participants sorted, moved, lifted, and categorized books for two mornings; they turned the tide on the work to be done. They felt needed

and important and part of a community.

My second lesson was just how differently we use words. In Christian theology, the openness of a church and how they help others is called "Hospitality." Perhaps we would say "Tiqun Olam." During the conference I watched how careful we were with language to be inclusive, how we addressed one another and how we concluded our prayers.



Dr. Lauren Kempton

BEKI is certainly on the right path with our operating Kulanu and Saul's Circle. The program participants are growing in their sense of self and in their faith. They tell us serious stories and we listen. Their powerful stories attempt to answer some of Life's eternal questions. At the same time, the general community is enriched by their participation, while we learn to appreciate and happily interact with each person. As a synagogue we help with the regaining and sustaining of hope in their lives, we are genuine and authentic, we take risks, and most importantly, we labor to make BEKI a welcoming place for all.

BEKI Religious School

We have been learning a great deal from Sahar and Ziv, our Teen Emissaries from Afula. Sahar conducted a session with the Religious School students on Israeli Dance. To commemorate the anniversary of Yitzhak Rabin they wrote a program entitled, "How Do You Say Goodbye To A Friend? You Remember." Ziv presented important facts about Rabin's life. Sahar shared her recollections of her feelings as a ten year old in Israel when she heard of the assassination. They played and taught the children two songs, "Cry To You" by Aviv Gefen and "Shir L'shalom." We concluded the program with the book *Shalom Chaver* and lit memorial candles as we sang "Hatikva." LK

Mazal Tov to:

- **Steven & Jill Citron-Pousty** on the birth of Fexlix Citron-Pousty, and to older siblings Fay and Tessie
- **Tillie Horwitz** on the birth of twin great-granddaughters
- **Rhona Bertazzo** on the birth of her grandson to Lisa & David Fichandler
- **Carl Goldfield** on winning re-election to the New Haven Board of Alderman
- **Phil Voigt** on winning re-election to the New Haven Board of Alderman
- **Ina Silverman** on winning election to the New Haven Board of Alderman
- **Janet Golden** on winning election to the Milford School Board

Siddur Cover Workshop

Parents and children from Havura and K-2 Kehila gathered in November for a Siddur Cover Making workshop. The children created covers with their Hebrew name and personalized the covers with their individual art work. K-2 has a new siddur that they are very proud of and Havura has an original siddur created by Ruth Greenblatt, Rita Sela, Amy Pincus and Anne Johnston. *LK*

With Sorrow we note the passing of

- Margaret Heisler, sister of Alex (& Lillian) Heisler
- Filomena Vaccaro, grandmother of Janet (& David) Golden

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Darshanim in December

- **Nanette Stahl** will serve as *darshanit* (Torah commentator) on Shabbat morning 06 December
- **Kathy Rosenbluh** will serve as *darshanit* (Torah commentator) on Shabbat morning 13 December
- **David Kuperstock** will serve as *darshan* (Torah commentator) on 27 December

Laws of Hanuka: Shabbat Afternoon Study

The laws of Hanuka will be studied between *mincha* afternoon service and *maariv* evening services on Shabbat afternoons during December. The sixteenth century law code *Shulhan Arukh* will be the basic texts. The study period is about one-half hour. The Study period begins at about 4:45p each Saturday afternoon.

Rashi Study Group

Each Monday morning from 7:45a to 8:30a adults meet in the Rosenkrantz Family Library to read Rashi's commentary on the Torah. Knowledge of Hebrew is not necessary. Rashi purported to explain the *peshat* of the Biblical text, i.e., the meaning in its historical, literary and linguistic context. Visitors and new participants are welcome. The Rashi Study Group has been meeting weekly since 1994.

AA Meeting

A Thursday night AA meeting is held at BEKI every Thursday night at 8:00p. The weekly Meeting has been held at BEKI since May 1997. Open to any person who can benefit from a recovery program, the meeting is held according to standard AA procedure. This is not a specifically Jewish recovery group, although a

large proportion of participants are Jewish. For information on the weekly meeting call Jay at (203) 387-6019 or email Jay at drjays.nai@rcn.com.

Shabbat Shalom Learners' Minyan

The "Shabbat Shalom Learners' Minyan," which meets every other Saturday morning at 10:45a in BEKI's Rosenkrantz Family 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. Led by **Steven Fraade** and **Rabbi Alan Lovins**, 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. The SSLM meets on the 13th & 27th of this month (December). Everyone is welcome to participate regardless of religious status or background.

Sanhedrin Talmud Study Group

The "Sanhedrin Talmud Study Group" meets weekly on Thursdays during the lunch hour at a downtown New Haven professional office for Talmud study. The Group has met weekly since 1999. For some participants, this is their first direct experience with Talmud text. The Group focuses on the issues raised in the Talmud, with less attention to the technical aspects of the text. Knowledge of Hebrew or Aramaic is helpful but not required. For information contact Marc Schwartz at 562-9873 or mschwartzmd@hotmail.com.

Berakhot Talmud Study Group

A Berakhot Talmud Study Group meets weekly on Wednesday mornings from 7:30a to 8:00a. The Study Group focuses on the original text and the issues that arise from the Mishna and Gemara, with attention to the technical aspects of the text. A knowledge of basic Hebrew is very helpful but not required; the Group is open to all. The study group will meet every Wednesday morning through and including 17 December.

Required Reading & Reference Books on Web

A listing of basic Judaic reference and introductory works is posted on BEKI's website at www.beki.org/books.html with a brief annotation by Rabbi Tilsen.



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Reading Torah at BEKI

Paula Hyman is coordinating the readings for Bereishit (Genesis). If you would like to read Torah, or learn how to read Torah, call Rabbi Jon-Jay at (203) 389-2108 x10 (jjtilsen@beki.org) or Darryl Kuperstock at (203) 387-0304 (kuperst@aol.com).

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December 2003

6 Kislev 5764 - 6 Tevet 5764

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<p>1 7a Shaharit 7:45a Rashi Study Group 5:45p Maariv</p> <p>6 Kislev</p>	<p>2 7a Shaharit 5:45p Minha-Maariv 7p Put the Ah in Shabbat</p> <p>7 Kislev</p>	<p>3 7a Shaharit 7:30a Talmud Study Group 8:30a Rabbi's Study Group 4p Religious School & Benei Mitzva Prgrm 5:45 Maariv</p> <p>8 Kislev</p>	<p>4 8:15a Shaharit 12:30pm Talmud study (off-site) 5:45p Maariv 8p A.A.</p> <p>9 Kislev</p>	<p>5 7a Shaharit 4:06p Candle Lighting 6p Maariv</p> <p>10 Kislev</p>	<p>6 9:15a Shaharit Darshanit: Nanette Stahl Qiddush Sponsor: Violet & Charles Ludwig 10:45a Children's Prgrm 4:05p Minha, Hilkhoh Hanuka, Maariv, Havdala</p> <p>11 Kislev</p>
<p>7 9a Shaharit 9a Religious School 10:30a-12:15p Sisterhood Giftshop Open 5:45p Maariv</p> <p>12 Kislev</p>	<p>8 7a Shaharit 7:45a Rashi Study Group 5:45p Maariv 7:30p Exec. Board Meeting</p> <p>13 Kislev</p>	<p>9 7a Shaharit 5:45p Maariv</p> <p>14 Kislev</p>	<p>10 7a Shaharit 7:30a Talmud Berakhot Study Group 8:30a Rabbi's Study Group 4p Religious School & Benei Mitzva Prgrm 5:45p Maariv</p> <p>15 Kislev</p>	<p>11 8:15a Shaharit 12:30p Talmud Study (off-site) 5:45p Maariv 8p A.A.</p> <p>16 Kislev</p>	<p>12 7a Shaharit 4:06p Candle Lighting 6p Maariv</p> <p>17 Kislev</p>	<p>13 9:15a Shaharit Darshanit: Kathy Rosenbluh BRS Shabbat (Grade 4) Aleynu 10:45a Children's Prgrm 10:45a Learner's Minyan 4:05p Minha, Hilkhoh Hanuka, Maariv, Havdala</p> <p>18 Kislev</p>
<p>14 9a Shaharit 9a Religious School 10:30a-12:15p Sisterhood Giftshop Open 5:45p Maariv Board Retreat</p> <p>19 Kislev</p>	<p>15 7a Shaharit 7:45a Rashi Study Group 5:45p Maariv</p> <p>20 Kislev</p>	<p>16 7a Shaharit 5:45p Maariv</p> <p>21 Kislev</p>	<p>17 7a Shaharit 7:30a Talmud Berakhot Study Group 8:30a Rabbis' Study Group 4p Religious School & Benei Mitzva Prgrm 5:45p Maariv</p> <p>22 Kislev</p>	<p>18 8:15a Shaharit 12:30p Talmud Study (off-site) 5:45p Maariv 8p A.A.</p> <p>23 Kislev</p>	<p>19 Erev Hanuka 7a Shaharit 4:08 Candle Lighting (Hanuka Candles First) 6p Maariv</p> <p>24 Kislev</p>	<p>20 Hanuka I 9:15a Shaharit Birthday Qiddush 10:45 Children's Prgrm 4:05p Minha, Hilkhoh Hanuka, Maariv, Havdala</p> <p>25 Kislev</p>
<p>21 Hanuka II 9a Shaharit 9a Religious School Hanuka Party 10:30a-12:15p Sisterhood Giftshop Open 5:45p Maariv</p> <p>26 Kislev</p>	<p>22 Hanuka III 7a Shaharit 7:45a Rashi Study Group 5:45p Maariv 7:30p General Board Meeting</p> <p>27 Kislev</p>	<p>23 Hanuka IV 7a Shaharit 5:45p Maariv</p> <p>28 Kislev</p>	<p>24 Hanuka V 7a Shaharit NO Study Groups NO Religious School 5:45p Maariv</p> <p>29 Kislev</p>	<p>25 Rosh Hodesh - Hanuka VI Office Closed 8:15a Shaharit NO Study Group 5:45p Maariv NO A.A.</p> <p>30 Kislev</p>	<p>26 Rosh Hodesh - Hanuka VII Office Closed 7a Shaharit 4:12p Candle Lighting 6p Maariv</p> <p>1 Tevet</p>	<p>27 Hanuka VIII 9:15a Shaharit Darshan:David Kuperstock 10:45a Children's Prgrm 10:45a Learner's Minyan 4:10p Minha, Hilkhoh Hanuka, Maariv, Havdala</p> <p>2 Tevet</p>
<p>28 9a Shaharit NO Religious School 5:45p Maariv</p> <p>3 Tevet</p>	<p>29 7a Shaharit 7:45a Rashi Study Group 5:45p Maariv</p> <p>4 Tevet</p>	<p>30 7a Shaharit 5:45 Maariv</p> <p>5 Tevet</p>	<p>31 7a Shaharit NO Study Groups 4p Religious School & Benei Mitzva Prgrm</p> <p>6 Tevet</p>			

BEKI Events

Weekday morning services at BEKI

Begin your day with spiritual renewal and fellowship. The Monday morning service (7:00a to 7:45a) includes a brief Torah service, and is followed by the Rashi Study Group (7:45a to 8:30a). Tuesday mornings (7:00a to 7:30a) are attended by a unique mix of people. Wednesday mornings (7:00a to 7:30a) features a continuing group of friends, followed by a 30-minute period of Talmud Study (7:30a to 8:00a). Thursday mornings (8:15a to 9:00a) are ideal for people who may not wish to rise earlier or who bring children to school, and includes a brief Torah service. It is perfect for those who wish to avoid crowds. Friday mornings (7:00a to 7:30a) present an ideal setting for someone wishing to help develop a cadre of dedicated daily *daveners*.

In addition to fulfilling the daily mitzvot of *qeriat shema* (recitation of the Shema), *tefila* (prayer), *Talmud Torah* (study) and *Tzedaka* (charity), attendance also affords those in mourning a Minyan so that they can recite *qaddish*. Audio recordings of some of the prayers are available at the BEKI website under "Audio Library." Regular participants in these services are always glad to welcome additional worshipers. Call our office at 389-2108 x14 or see www.beki.org/schedule.html for a complete schedule.

Maariv Evening Service

The daily *maariv* evening service comprises the recitation of the Shema and its accompanying blessings, as well as the individual recitation of the Amida. The *maariv* service (also known as *arvit*) provides an opportunity to fulfill the Biblical commandment of reciting the Shema at night as well as fulfilling the rabbinically

mandated recitation of the Amida. An audio recording of the Shema is available in BEKI's web Audio Library

Important Tax Information

Taxpayers are reminded that synagogue dues, pledges and contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. BEKI is recognized as a 501c3 organization by the US Treasury. 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.



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Same-Sex Marriage

continued from page 3

Let the battle over the word “marriage” be fought on the battlegrounds of the religious communities (including our own), where the symbolism is of utmost importance, not in the civic arena, where tax policy, inheritance and medical benefits are at stake.

In 1950, 80% of American households contained a married couple; today, 50% of households contain a man and woman married to each other. Many adults are choosing not to marry by anyone’s definition. For some, marriage means losing a deceased spouse’s pension, medical or Social Security benefits. For others, marriage risks compromising their tax status or estate plan. For some, marriage represents a commitment fraught with obligations, expectations, conventions and entanglements that are not worth the effort, or represents a social order they do not support. For others, marriage is prohibited by church rule or *halakhic* requirement, or is simply unavailable for reasons of state or federal law. Others would like to get married, but have not found a suitable partner. As the Talmud says, “Finding a suitable marriage partner makes splitting the Red Sea look easy.”

While there are many gay and lesbian people who would like the conventional status of “marriage,” there are also many who do not want their relationship associated with any of the various relationships called “marriage” in America. Still others do not feel safe having their names in what would constitute a government registry of gay and lesbian people. But they should be able to decide that for themselves.

I for one am very happy to be married, and find that the many benefits outweigh the liabilities. For me, the advantages accrue primarily from the framework of Jewish marriage, not from the state’s recognition of our relationship. Perhaps

someday my beloved wife will benefit from Social Security survivor benefits based on my contribution, but I’m not counting on it. That is a reflection of my lack of confidence in my government, not in my wife. Nevertheless, I believe that others should enjoy the same state-backed benefits of marriage that we do, and that it should be a matter of their own choice.

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Stop & Go

continued from page 2

(but not very slow) speed in the driving lane and will give Harrison Street a green light within two minutes and seventeen seconds. It may not detect a vehicle that approaches at less than 3 mph.

Missing Since Yom Kippur

A ladies gold ring with two small opals is missing and was last seen on the sink counter in the upstairs ladies room. Please return it to the office and collect a reward. Parents please ask children if they might have found it. It is a great *mitzva* to return a lost item.

New to New Haven?

If you have a friend, colleague or neighbor who is new to New Haven or who is not yet a synagogue member, please let our office know (office@beki.org) so we can send them a welcome and invitation to visit and join BEKI.

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