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December 2008

Kislev-Tevet 5769
Vol. 14 Issue 11

bulletin

New Siddurim for Shabbat in Daily Chapel – Page 5



THOSE OTHER ELECTIONS: ISRAEL AND ITS POLITICAL FUTURE

BEKI will host an eye-opening discussion about the upcoming Israeli elections on Saturday, Dec. 13, at 1 p.m., featuring visiting Yale scholar Hizky Shoham. The event is free and open to all.

The presentation will follow a Kosher, dairy Kiddush luncheon. This informal, festive meal is held at BEKI every Shabbat, prepared by BEKI volunteers and sponsored by BEKI members to build community. Lay-led Shabbat morning services begin at 9:15, and all are welcome to attend.

**Hizky Shoham**

Hizky Shoham is currently the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Postdoctoral Associate in Judaic Studies and a lecturer in Humanities and Religious Studies at Yale University.

Shoham earned his PhD with highest distinction from Bar-Ilan University in 2006. A book based on his dissertation, *Mordecai is Riding the Horse: Purim Celebrations in Tel-Aviv (1908-1936)* and the *Building of a New Nation*, is slated for publication by Bar-Ilan University Press.

At Bar Ilan, Shoham teaches in the interdisciplinary program for hermeneutics and culture studies and is a research fellow in the institute for advanced studies in Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem. His main fields of research are modern Jewish history, classic Jewish texts, and cultural and social theory.

“Is it Kiddush Yet?”

Orders are now being taken for *Is it Kiddush Yet?*, a collection of recipes from the BEKI Kiddush Committee. Each book costs \$18. Look for order forms in the mid-month mailing, in the office, on the BEKI website at www.beki.org/forms.html, in the literature rack or by E-mailing Darryl (kuperst@aol.com).

**Sukka Setup October 2008**



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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:

- Call the Synagogue office: (203) 389-2108
- Write: 85 Harrison Street, New Haven, CT 06515-1724
- Email: jtilsen@beki.org
- Visit our web page: www.beki.org

For advertising information, call the synagogue office.

Deadline for submission of ads or articles is the first of the month preceding publication.

Annual subscription is \$36

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A Message from Rabbi Tilsen & Dear Rabbi
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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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Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven



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BRS Update

BEKI Religious School celebrated the recent holidays in style! We did a lot of *lulav* and *etrog* shaking, and decorated, snacked, and enjoyed a wonderful Shabbat dinner in the BEKI sukkah. Thank you to everyone who bought a *lulav* and *etrog* and thereby supported BRS



Ina Silverman

while doing a mitzvah. Many thanks to Eric Dunske who helped us prepare for Simhat Torah celebrating by teaching Israeli dances. The night of Simhat Torah I arranged a Torah on a table and listed on cards what was happening in Bereshit and Noah column by column. Students had lots of questions; many had never seen a Torah up close before.

Now that we have a more regular schedule for a few weeks, we began a school-wide colloquial Hebrew vocabulary program by learning the words for body parts and playing Shimon Omer (Simon Says). I started a Learning Circle a few minutes before tefilla (prayer) on Sundays when grades 3-7 talk about God and prayer and learn text skills. All classes began weekly *parasha* (the Bible selection read in synagogue) study and the new Israel curriculum supplemented by visits by Tslil, one of our *shelihim* (Young Emissaries). Come by the kindergarten/first grade room on a Sunday and listen to the kids sing with Mora Helene! It is just beautiful!

The Schwartz/Feldman and Sokolow/Silverman clans hosted BRS for a Shabbat Schmooze after services and qiddush in November. We are all

looking forward to Mora Judy's program for students and families on Erev Chanukah before we say goodbye for vacation. The BRS Parents Group is sponsoring a Chanukah candle sale. Candles are available Wednesdays and Sundays at school and in the office at other times. Other fun events that will help support BRS programming are being planned. Have ideas? Let us know!

Kol tuv, Mora Ina

Children's Library News

We are pleased to announce two new books in the Ari Nathan Levine Children's Library: *Engineer Ari and the Rosh Hashanah Ride* by Deborah Bodin Cohen; *Sarah Laughs* by Jacqueline Jules.

Hanuka Candles for Sale

BEKI Religious School (BRS) is selling Hanuka candles for \$10 per box. Available in the lobby Wednesdays 3:45 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. and Sundays 8:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Made in Israel.

USY Summer

2009 USY Summer Programs in the U.S., Europe, and Israel are now open for registration (for students now in grades 8-12, and for the Parent Pilgrimage). Visit www.usy.org for more information. Apply by Dec. 31 and receive \$100 off teen programs. BEKI Youth Commission subsidies are also available for teens; contact Rena Cheskis-Gold at r.cheskis-gold@snet.net.

USY-Israeli Emissaries Event

On Motse'ei Shabbat (Saturday night) 6 December USYers will be embarking on fantastic voyage to the Sokolow-Silverman's house. From 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. both Israeli

emissaries (Tslil and Oshri) will have an engaging conversation about the political aspects of Israel and how they choose their leader. For more information please contact Avital Sokolow Silverman at drjays@snet.net, or contact our adviser Norianna Cohen at Norianna.Cohen@quinnipiac.edu.

USY Movie Night

Motse'ei Shabbat (Saturday night) Dec. 13 all USYers are invited to the Ben-Chitrit house at 6 p.m. to come and watch a movie with all their friends. End time is unspecified because it will depend on who wants to stay for an additional movie. For more information please contact Daniel B-C at dibol13@gmail.com or our adviser Norianna Cohen at Norianna.Cohen@quinnipiac.edu. -- Carmi Cheskis-Gold, USY Communication Co-VP

BB Scholarship

The B'nai B'rith Career & Counseling Services of New York College Scholarship Committee offers eight college scholarships, totaling almost \$30,000, to high school seniors who demonstrate strong academic performance and financial need. Financial need is considered on a broad basis. Any graduating high school senior who will be attending college next year is eligible to apply. The only restriction is that applicants must live in the five boroughs of New York City, Nassau/Suffolk Counties, New York State or the New England States.

To receive a college scholarship application, send a stamped, self-addressed No. 10 envelope to Bershad College Scholarship Committee, c/o MetroNorth Region B'nai B'rith, 823 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017. Application deadline is Dec. 31, 2008.

Barukh Dayan HaEmet

With sorrow we note the passing of

Carol Tendler,

sister of Elayne (& Morton) Dimenstein

Harold Ziskin,

father of Deborah Ziskin (& William Berson)

Edith Golub,

mother of Robert (& Dianne) Golub

May the Almighty comfort those who mourn

Mazal tov to

- **Susan Voigt** on the birth of her grandson, born to Claudia Eyzaguirre & Daniel Sherwood, in November
- **Rev. Lorraine Hatcher** on the birth of her granddaughter Abigail Cecilia Hatcher, in October
- **Dr. Lauren Kempton & Brooks Parmelee** on the birth of their grandson Cole Patrick Cass in Texas in November
- **Cyd & Mark Oppenheimer**, on the birth of their daughter Elisabeth Adelaide Oppenheimer in November; and mazal tov to big sister Rebekah

News

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

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Hanuka

Hanuka begins Sunday night, Dec. 21. Hanuka candles or lamps should be lit about 4:15 p.m. or 4:30 p.m. or later. The blessings for candle lighting are available as audio files at www.beki.org/audio.html and are printed in our prayer-book, *Siddur Sim Shalom*, on page 192 (weekday edition), page 242 (classic edition) or page 307 (Shabbat edition).

The *Hanukiya* (Hanuka Menora) will be lighted each evening (except Friday) at BEKI at 5:45 p.m., immediately before the Maariv evening service. It is also lighted during the morning for “decorative” purposes, although not in fulfillment of a specific *mitzva*.

Tefillin are worn each day of Hanuka (except, of course, on Shabbat). The passage “Al ha-Nisim – For the Miracles” is added to each *amida*, and Hallel, a collection of celebratory Psalms, is recited each morning. The Torah is read each day of Hanuka. Tahanun, the penitential prayer, is not recited.

New Siddurim for Shabbat in Daily Chapel

Copies of *Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat & Festivals* have been added to the George G. Posener Daily Chapel for use on Shabbatot and Festival afternoons and evenings. This prayerbook, published by the Rabbinical Assembly and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, incorporates a relatively user-friendly layout, selected translitera-

tions, gender-sensitive language, and intelligible directions, all in a handy volume. Large-print copies of the same volume are also available for those who prefer larger type, and for service leaders.

These volumes are a gift of Willa Cooper Needler & Howard Needler and Family, in memory of their parents Edith Tepper Cooper & Harry Cooper. In making this contribution, Willa and Howard said:

Edith Tepper Cooper and Harry Cooper began their close-to-50-year involvement in the Hartford Jewish community by attending Friday evening Qabbalat Shabbat services at the Emanuel Synagogue. Their rabbi was Morris Silverman, editor of the original Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book for the United Synagogue of America [now the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism]. It therefore seems a fitting tribute to our parents, Edith & Harry, that we are donating new Shabbat siddurim to BEKI in their memories.

Modest, quiet, and dignified, Edith and Harry lived their ideals. The certificates, awards, and testimonials honoring them add up to two lifetimes of hard work, devotion, and enormous love for synagogue and Jewish community.

Both Edith and Harry worked for Jewish causes over the entire spectrum of Judaism.

Copies of the first edition of *Sim Shalom* that are in good condition will be retained for use at *shiva* minyans, at youth and adult retreats, and in other settings. Those wishing their own copies may purchase them at the Sisterhood Giftshop, from Amazon.com, or wherever fine Judaica is sold.



Weekday morning services at BEKI
Begin your day with spiritual renewal and fel-

Continued on **Page 6**

Ritual

Continued from **Page 5**

lowship. The Monday morning service (7 to 7:45) includes a brief Torah service, and is followed by the Rashi Study Group (7:45 to 8:30). Tuesday mornings (7 to 7:30) are attended by a unique mix of people. Wednesday mornings (7 to 7:30) features a continuing group of friends. Thursday mornings (8:15 to 9) 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 to 7:30) 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 at www.beki.org/audio.html.

Liturgical Note

Beginning Thursday night, Dec. 4, in the Maariv service, we use the phrase “*ve-ten tal u-matar li-verakha*” (“give winter dew and rain in proportion”) in each daily *amida*. This blessing is a request for agricultural success and general prosperity. The date December 4 is based on the agricultural cycle in Bavel (Iraq) calculated according to the uncorrected Julian calendar. Although many sages tried to change the date to match that of their local weather needs or to those of the Land of Israel, the general public has refused (thus far) to change from the ways of their ancestors.

NEWS

Monthly Bulletin by E-mail

Members and supporters who wish to receive the monthly BEKI Bulletin (the newsletter of Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel) by email may subscribe by sending an email message to bulletin-subscribe@beki.org from the email account to which the file is to be sent. The email version of the Bulletin is typically about 3MB to 4MB. The Bulletin will *not* be emailed to an address unless the user subscribes.

To subscribe: Send a blank message to bulletin-subscribe@beki.org from the email account you want to receive the monthly Bulletin. A request for confirmation will be sent to that computer within a moment, and they you must replay to that request for confirmation by hitting “reply” and then “send.” To cancel a subscription, send a message to bulletin-unsubscribe@beki.org from the email account you wish to unsubscribe.

The monthly Bulletin is also available at www.beki.org under “News & Events.” Printed copies are available in the literature rack in the lobby. If you would like a single copy mailed to a friend or relative, send a request to Peggy at office@beki.org (389.2108 x14).

Announcements

To request to have your announcement presented on Shabbat, send a message to announcements@beki.org, which is directed to the President or other officer in charge of Shabbat announcements. Announcements may be included, excluded or abbreviated at the President’s discretion.

Publication Deadlines

Submissions for the February **Bulletin** should be sent to jjtilsen@beki.org or office@beki.org and are due 1 January. Submissions for the **mid-month mailing** should be sent to office@beki.org (or delivered to Peggy) and are due by noon on the ninth of the month (or noon of the next business day); please let Peggy know in advance if you plan to submit material. Submissions for **Happenings** (email) should be sent to happenings@beki.org and are due on noon Wednesday (late submissions are included when possible). Submissions for **Shabbat announcements** should be sent to announcements@beki.org and are due at noon on Wednesday (late submissions are included when possible).



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 501(c)3 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.

You can contribute stocks and securities directly to BEKI. For some, significant tax advantages can be realized by contributing appreciated stocks. IRS regulations usually allow the donor to deduct the appreciated value of the security. Illustration: You bought 100 shares of XYZ at \$10 two years ago and it is now trading at \$20. If you sell your shares, you realize a gain of \$1,000, and pay \$150 in taxes

– net \$850 profit. If you donate the shares directly to BEKI, you pay no taxes on the appreciation, saving \$150 in taxes, and you receive a tax deduction for \$2,000 – which could be worth \$600 if you pay a marginal rate of 30%. That means your \$2,000 donation “costs” you only \$1,250.

Charitable contributions also avoid the penalty of the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT). In addition, special tax advantages were created by Congress for certain contributions for the 2006 or 2007 year only. Please consult your tax or financial advisor for details.

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.

New Tax Law Makes IRA Giving Better

Recent legislation presents a special opportunity to make a gift to BEKI or the BEKI Religious School (or other not-for-profit) from your IRA without adverse tax consequences.

Lisa Stanger, Director of the Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven (387-2424) and BEKI member, explains, “If you are 70½ or older, for a limited time (2008), you can instruct the trustee of your IRA to make a direct distribution of up to \$100,000 per

year to the charity of your choice. A direct distribution counts toward your annual IRA distribution requirement and it is tax neutral for federal and state tax purposes.”

Such a distribution can be used for a Renovations Campaign pledge, Annual Campaign contribution, to create an endowment for the benefit of the synagogue managed by the Jewish Foundation, or for other contributions. Stanger notes that “Unlike a

cash withdrawal from your IRA, your direct contribution will be excluded from income for federal purposes and not taxed. It will not be eligible for a charitable tax deduction, but it will not count toward the percentage limitations on your other deductible gifts.”

Please speak with a qualified advisor before making a charitable IRA rollover gift.



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Miriam Glenn	Ina Silverman

You can also contribute to Torah Fund simply by purchasing cards at \$4 each for all occasions; includes the postage and saves gas too! Just call Barbara Cushen at 407-0314 and your card goes right out.

Thanks to everyone for your continued support.

Barbara Cushen
Torah Fund Chair

Sisterhood News

The day arrived – Sunday, Nov. 2 our new ark in the Daily Chapel was dedicated. It is a very beautiful, free standing wooden piece, handcrafted by Robert Phipps. Take time from your daily routine and attend a morning

or evening minyan and just sit and be amazed at this very impressive work of art that is holding our Torahs. Sisterhood women are very proud to have commissioned this project.

Sisterhood and the Religious School will celebrate Hanuka together at their annual party on Dec. 21 during school hours.

Please patronize our gift shop for Hanuka; we have many new items and special orders are welcome.

The Marcel Gutman Scholarship assists children of Sisterhood members or male associates to attend United Synagogue programs, trips to Israel, camp and other Judaic programs. Please call Mimi Glenn at 397-3851 to obtain an application or for more information.

Join BEKI Sisterhood – we need you. \$25 annual dues can be sent in to the office. Thank you to everyone who has already paid – your support is appreciated.

Adele Tyson
Mimi Glenn
Co-Presidents

SISTERHOOD GIFTSHOP

Open Sundays 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.; By appointment – Adele 389-9599, Mimi 397-3851; and during office hours (see Peggy or call 389-2108 x14).

Calendar

BEKI/BJ Kadima

6th to 8th Graders Winter 2008-2009
Calendar of Events:

- 5th Graders Welcome in January!!
- **Dec. 6:** Game Night (members only)
- **Dec. 14:** Regional Event - Laser Tag (members only)
- **Dec. 25** (Thursday): Hanuka Party
- **Jan. 11 or 18:** Family Shabbat Dinner (Reservations required)
- **Feb. 1:** Superbowl Deli Box Fundraiser for Youth Activities (Parents and kids – help assemble and purchase deli boxes!)
- **Feb. 9** (Monday): Tu BiShevat Event

Contact Advisor Nitzan Stein-Kokin for membership or other information:
steinkokin@yahoo.com, 752-0361

Calendar Notes

Morning services begin at 9 o'clock on federal holidays Dec. 25 and Jan. 1. Evening services are at their usual time, 5:45. The office will close early on the afternoons before those days, and is closed on those federal holidays.

Mark Your Calendar

- Dec. 6:** USY – Israeli Emissaries Event
- Dec. 13:** Darshan: Jay Sokolow
- Dec. 13:** Shabbat Schmooze: Hizky Shoham on Israel's Election
- Dec. 13:** USY Movie Night
- Jan. 10:** Endowment & Bequest Kiddush
- Feb. 14:** Darshan: Bob Oakes
- Feb. 28:** JTS Shabbat with Rabbi Catharine Clark
- March 4:** Women of Vision – Ruth Messenger at BEKI
- March 27-28:** Bat Mitzva: Anna Golub
- May 15-16:** Bar Mitzva: Ben Lebow
- May 17:** Tribute Dinner

Shabbatot

Darshanim in December

Jay Sokolow, President of BEKI, will serve as *darshan* on Shabbat morning Dec. 13, *parashat VaYishlah*.

A mini-derash will be presented on Shabbat Rosh Hodesh Hanuka morning Dec. 27, *parashat Miqetz*.

Shabbat Shalom Learners' Minyan

The "Shabbat Shalom Learners' Minyan," which meets every other Saturday morning at 10:45 in BEKI's Library Chapel, is an ideal setting for veteran and novice shul-goers alike to become more comfortable and proficient in the Shaharit (morning) and Torah services in a supportive setting. Expertly led by **Steven Fraade, Rabbi Alan Lovins, Rabbi Murray Levine, Isaiah Cooper, Nadav Sela** and others, the Shabbat Shalom Learners' Minyan is a nurturing exploration of practice and theory presented in a participatory, non-threatening and multi-generational setting. Many members who take advantage of this unique offering feel a deeper sense of awe born of increased understanding and appreciation for the services. Everyone is welcome to participate regardless of religious status or background.

Kulanu Discussion Group

Adults who take part in the Kulanu Friendship Circle and the Saul's Circle outreach programs are invited to participate in a Shabbat morning discussion group which meets on selected Shabbat mornings from 10:45 to 11:45 with Dr. Lauren Kempton. For information, contact Lauren at 389-2108 x33 or lkempton@beki.org.

Shabbat Minha Study Break

Each Shabbat afternoon following the Minha afternoon service during

the autumn and winter, there will be a 30-minute study of Maimonides' *Mishne Torah: Laws of Kings and Their Wars*, before the Maariv evening service and havdala. All are welcome.

Sundays

Talmud for Teens with Moshe Meiri

Serious high school students are invited to delve into the depths of Talmud with Moshe Meiri on Sunday mornings this autumn and winter. In this semester, the class is exploring chapter two of *Masekhet Ketubot*, "HaIsha She-Nitarmela." Students are expected to have studied some Mishna and be familiar with the Hebrew alphabet. An acquaintance with Rashi's commentaries is helpful. Texts are vocalized for easy reading and are accompanied by an English commentary and translation. The classes meet Sunday mornings from 10 to noon. Instructor's permission required; students wishing to enroll should speak with Moshe and should register with the office (office@beki.org). The class is open only to students in grades 8-12. This class is taught in an academic Jewish Studies style. Disciplined attendance is expected. Registration and materials fee is \$100 for the semester. Moshe may be reached at moshe@snet.net.

Mondays

Rashi Study Group

Each Monday morning from 7:45 to 8:30 adults meet in the Library Chapel to read Rashi's commentary on the Torah. It is possible to join the study group for a single meeting or to begin at any time. Knowledge of Hebrew is not necessary. Rashi purported to explain the *peshat* of the text, i.e., the meaning in its historical, literary and linguistic context. Visitors and new

participants are welcome. The Rashi Study Group meets immediately following the 7 a.m. *shaharit* service.

Wednesdays

Rabbis' Study Group

Wednesdays with Murray is a weekly study group exclusively for rabbis and clergy, facilitated by Rabbi Murray Levine. The Wednesday study group affords local rabbis an opportunity to pursue their own *talmud torah*



Murray Levine

(Torah study) in a "safe" setting and with opportunities to learn from each other's experience and insight. For more information, call Rabbi Murray Levine at 397-2513.

Thursdays

Sanhedrin Talmud Study Group

The *Sanhedrin Talmud Study Group* meets weekly on Thursdays during the lunch hour (12:30 to 1:30) at the downtown New Haven professional office of attorney Isaiah Cooper 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 location or information, contact Isaiah Cooper at 233-4547 or icooper@cooperlaw.net.

The Sanhedrin Study Group is reading chapter eight of Sanhedrin, "The Rebellious and Obnoxious Boy." It is a perfect time for new participants to join.

THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH

Seeking truth, as opposed to *imposing* truth, is an essential and characteristic endeavor of Jewish civilization. Learning is a fundamental and honored religious obligation – “*Talmud Torah keneged kulam*, study stands out from all the other mitzvot” (Talmud, Shabbat 127a and Siddur). The “Four Questions,” and the “Four Children” who ask questions, along with storytelling and reviewing rabbinic interpretation, express the essential nature of the Pesah seder as a quest for understanding.

In the classic rabbinic period, and until recently, rabbis and scholars were permitted to teach whatever they believed, even if it was contrary to accepted practice, as long as they complied with the law outside the classroom; they enjoyed what today is called “academic freedom.” The Talmud, if anything, is a record of divergent opinions on important matters and a source-book for re-creating great debates on law, politics and philosophy.

As a school of thought, as distinct from an institutionalized network of organizations, Conservative Judaism represents the continuation of mainstream traditional Judaism. Called “Historical Judaism” or “the Historical School” in the 19th century, today we might call it “Scientific Judaism,” inasmuch as it represents the trend in Jewish thought that embraces the social and natural sciences.

There have always been people who suspected that the creation stories in Genesis were “historical” accounts of the origin of the universe and of humanity. We now know that their suspicions were false. Practical implications? None. The lessons derived from the stories in Genesis – which are to some extent inconsistent with one another – were never premised on historicity. Rather, the brilliant and sublime lessons are based on the “story” or the “text” and its symbolic (or “ethical” or “political”) ideas, not the “history.”

Torah study is not so much about *what* to think, as *how* to think; or, at least, to *think* at all. As much as Jewish culture values labor, it also values intellect – and makes the radical claim that both can and should coexist and be valued in each individual and in society.

This is in contrast to classical Greek culture which, like other elite cultures, devalued labor. It is also in contrast to part of American society which derides scholarship, devalues science and ridicules the intellect in general. There is a set that prefers “faith” to “fact,” that prefers simplistic slogans to thoughtful analysis, a set that just won’t go past the one-page summary. In the view of some of our neighbors,



universities are just day-care centers for overgrown infants. The laws of evolution and workings of human biology are forbidden knowledge to be suppressed. The measure of our leaders is their theatrical skills, their sex appeal, or their willingness to shoot a moose or other innocent creature such as their hunting partner.

Tevya the Milkman studied Talmud in the beit midrash. Yes, the great sages all had real jobs as shoemakers, farmers or merchants; and yes, we honor people who have accomplishments and talents in many fields; and yes, it is often the businesspeople and merchants who have leadership roles in Jewish communities. But none of that need be at all contrary to honoring study, learning, and the search for truth.

Most importantly, knowledge is not the property of rabbis and scholars, but rather, it is for the people. One of the worst distortions of Jewish life has come about because too many people have to depend on rabbis for their understanding and interpretation of Jewish law and tradition. Specialists have their place,

but a functioning Jewish society depends on a broadly-educated public, just as a democracy depends on a public knowledgeable in matters of public health, law, science and politics.

Our traditional Jewish cultural outlook, while having idealistic tendencies, is ultimately “reality based.” Science and education are honored because they are so in accord with our traditional epistemology. A judge is exhorted to rule based on the evidence, not conjecture or “belief.” Law is determined by vote, not divine fiat. Our sacred texts should shine in the light of knowledge and science, and not obscure or overshadow them.

Because Judaism is as much about a *process* as it is *content*, the specifics of generally-held beliefs are bound to change, develop and evolve. It is truly extraordinary that we honor and sanctify our three-thousand five-hundred year old literary history, instead of repressing it. The existence of that record, and the progress that it shows, is a great tribute to the efficacy of our approach. We should take pride in realizing that some of our beliefs are different from those of our ancestors, just as much as we take pride in upholding their essential values and practices. In compliance with natural laws, it is our ability to evolve and develop that has enabled us to survive and thrive as a people. Free inquiry, academic freedom, popular and specialized study, and the legitimacy of dissenting viewpoints are the genetic material and process that enables this evolution.

December 2008

4 Kislev 5769 - 4 Tevet 5769

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 7:45am Rashi Study Group	2	3 8:30am Rabbi's Study Group 4:00pm Religious School 5:00pm Benei Mitzva Program	4 12:30pm Talmud Study Group (off-site)	5 4:05pm Candle Lighting	6 10:45am Children's Programs 10:45am Learner's Minyan Qiddush: Koenig/Oakes 4:05pm Minha-Maariv
	4 Kislev	5 Kislev	6 Kislev	7 Kislev	8 Kislev	9 Kislev
7 9:00am Religious School 10:00am Tamud for Teens with Moshe 11:00am Renovation Tour for Members	8 7:45am Rashi Study Group 7:30pm Executive Board Meeting (off-site)	9	10 8:30am Rabbi's Study Group 4:00pm Religious School 5:00pm Benei Mitzva Program	11 12:30pm Talmud Study Group (off-site) 5:30pm Kulunu/Saul's Circle Hanukkah Party 7:00pm Ritual Committee Meeting	12 4:05pm Candle Lighting	13 Darshan: Jay Sokolow 10:45am Children's Program 10:45pm Kulunu Havura Qiddush: Colten/Berry 1:00pm Israeli Election Program featuring Hizky Shoham 4:05pm Minha-Maariv
10 Kislev	11 Kislev	12 Kislev	13 Kislev	14 Kislev	15 Kislev	16 Kislev
14 No Religious School 10:00am Talmud for Teens with Moshe Meiri	15 7:45am Rashi Study Group 7:30pm General Board Meeting	16	17 8:45am Rabbi's Study Group 4:00pm Religious School 5:00pm Benei Mitzva Program 7:30pm Finance Committee Meeting	18 12:30pm Talmud Study Group	19 4:07pm Candle Lighting	20 10:45am Children's Programs 10:45am Learner's Minyan Qiddush: Posener 4:05pm Minha-Maariv
17 Kislev	18 Kislev	19 Kislev	20 Kislev	21 Kislev	22 Kislev	23 Kislev
21 Erev Hanuka 9:00am Religious School - Hanukah Party with Sisterhood 10:00am Talmud for Teens with Moshe	22 Hanuka I 7:45am Rashi Study Group	23 Hanuka II	24 Hanuka III Office Closing Half Day (1:00pm) No Religious School No Benei Mitzva Program	25 Hanuka IV Office Closed 9:00am Shaharit Service	26 Hanuka V Office Closed 4:11pm Candle Lighting	27 Rosh Hodesh - Hanuka VI 10:45am Children's Programs Qiddush: TBA 4:10pm Minha-Maariv
24 Kislev	25 Kislev	26 Kislev	27 Kislev	28 Kislev	29 Kislev	30 Kislev
28 Rosh Hodesh - Hanuka VII No Religious School No Talmud for Teens	29 Hanuka VIII 7:45am Rashi Study Group	30	31 Office Closing Half Day (1:00pm) No Religious School No Benei Mitzva Program			
1 Tevet	2 Tevet	3 Tevet	4 Tevet			

Service Times for Winter

Sundays	Mondays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Thursdays	Fridays	Saturdays
9 a.m. Shaharit 5:45 p.m. Minha-Maariv	7 a.m. Shaharit 5:45 p.m. Minha-Maariv	7 a.m. Shaharit 5:45 p.m. Minha-Maariv	7 a.m. Shaharit 5:45 p.m. Minha-Maariv	8:15 a.m. Shaharit 5:45 p.m. Minha-Maariv	7 a.m. Shaharit 6 p.m. Minha-Maariv	9:15 a.m. Shaharit 5:45 Minha