

BEKI Bulletin

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January 2004 Vol. 10 Issue 1

ק"ק בית אל-בית ישראל

Tevet 5764

Renovations Update

Major work for "Phase 2B Lobby Improvements" is tentatively scheduled to begin **early February 2004**. Phase 2B will include the installation of an elevator and the creation of an entryway from the parking area to the lobby. It will also complete the parking area renovation. During January, significant preparation work may be undertaken in the lobby and other areas. Careful work is underway to relocate artwork, memorial plaques and furnishings. The construction sequence has been revised so that disruption to Religious School and Shabbat programs will not be as great as earlier anticipated. The Phase 2C work, including replacing heating and cooling elements, relocation of the offices, chapel and library, will follow and complete the project later in the construction period.

Thanks to those who have already sent in payment on your Renovations Campaign pledge. For your tax planning, please consider making your 2003 payment in December 2003 and your 2004 payment in January. Your payment now will substantially reduce our expense in carrying a construction loan and other finance charges. Cash in the bank and in CDs is paying a miniscule interest rate for most deposit holders, but payment now to BEKI would "earn" significant savings for the synagogue.

If you would like to receive weekly updates on the Renovation project and other events, send a message to jjtilsen@beki.org for email updates or check the literature rack for the current "BEKI Happenings."

Purim Is Coming

This year we will again help you celebrate the Purim mitzva of *mishloah manot* - the sending of gifts - and *matanot la-eyyonim* - presents to the poor - with our beautiful BEKI Purim Baskets.

No worry! No fuss! No shopping!

Just send in the order forms you will receive soon.
(Order forms are available at www.beki.org/forms.html.)

Start making your list. There is enough time to check it twice!

Kulanu & Saul's Circle

Kulanu and Saul's Circle have been very active with both programming and community work. We are thrilled to welcome Olivia Wood from Chapel Haven who works with the Day Programs. We raked and bagged the synagogue leaves. The Chapel Haven folks also worked finishing the Book Sale for the Special Education Program. In December they were hosted by Sydney Perry, Director of the Department of Jewish Education, for a luncheon and movie at the JCC in appreciation for all their work at the TTM Book Sale. LK

USY Universe

Thanks to everyone who supported the USY Thanksgiving Pie Sale this year! We hope that our delicious pies were a big hit at your holiday dinner! Because of your support, we will be able to make another significant financial donation to the USY Tikun Olam Fund this year.

Kadima Korner

Order Your USY / Kadima Superbowl Sunday Deli Box Dinner!

Calendar Notes in January

On Thursday 1 January 2004, "New Year's Day," morning services are from 9:00a to 9:30a. The office is closed. The evening service is at the usual time, 5:45p to 6:00p.

On Monday 19 January 2004, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, morning services are from 9:00a to 9:45a; the Rashi Study Group will meet from 9:45a to 10:30a; and the office is closed. Other services are at their usual times.

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. Annual subscription is \$36.00.

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The Better Jew

Are observant Jews better people? If observant people sin, doesn't this prove religion is hypocrisy?

From time to time, I have been asked if traditionally observant Jews are better than other Jews. The question typically arises after the revelation of some heinous crime committed by an "observant" Jew. A fringe-wearing businessman on the take, an educator of children on the make – if a religious Jew acts this way, what good is religion?

I would not know how to go about scientifically testing this question. I really don't know if religious people behave more ethically or kindly than others on average. I am sure that traditional teachings lead some to intolerance and fanaticism and others to love and progressive values.

That said, I am sure that my somewhat observant life style makes me better – not better than anyone else, but better than I would otherwise be. Although I cannot compare myself to some "average" non-observant person, I can compare myself to what I suppose I would be without some measure of Torah and mitzvot.

Daily Torah study, prayer and ritual observance reminds me that I am accountable, that my life has a larger meaning, that I am loved by my Creator, and that I have obligations toward others. Each of the rituals has some specific meaning that reminds me of important values. When I put on my tallit and see the fringes, I recall the words of the Shema: "You shall look at them and remember all the mitzvot of the Almighty and do them..." (Numbers 15). When I wind the tefillin straps on my hand, I commit myself to a relationship with God based on important ideals: "I bind myself to

you forever; I bind myself to you with righteousness, justice, love and compassion. I bind myself to you with faithfulness and thereby know God" (Hosea 2). When I see the mezuzah on a doorpost I am reminded of the Divine Presence in the home and of the value of compromise. When I attend a daily service I see that I have responsibilities toward others and that my presence matters.



Rabbi Tilsen

Study, prayer and ritual provide a structure to my life that helps me be better than I would be otherwise. While I cannot prove this scientifically, I am confident that this is so, because there are so many times that the words of the siddur or a teaching of our sages come to mind and guide me on a good path. It does not work for me 100% of the time, but it works enough to keep me committed.

Some might say that all of this "religion" is really only needed by people who are weak, lost or confused. But I am sure that at least some of the time, this includes most of us.

A limitless love You have shown to the House of Israel Your people in teaching us Torah, Mitzvot, Laws and Rules.... The words of Your Torah and Your Mitzvot are our "life" and our "length of days...." -- Siddur

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What Lesson Can Be Learned in Cutting Pies?

What lesson can be learned in cutting pies? Somewhere in my educational travels, someone taught me that answers are important, but asking a hard question is the sign of true learning and actually the perfect model for Jewish Education.

It was Thanksgiving Eve, a cold and dark night. Seven BEKI Religious School students, accompanied by Liora Lew and Andy Schultz, visited the Food Bank and Community Kitchen at the Parish House on Temple Street.

I had arranged the visit through Interfaith Council of Ministries (ICM), of which BEKI is a member. During the week before, the Religious School children and their parents donated thirty-five pies (which is 280 pieces of pie!)

We walked down old stone steps into the basement of the Parish House and were warmly received by two volunteers. They happily divided us into two work groups. Our children expressed surprise on how nice the tables looked. The public school children had decorated the tables and volunteers had set them.

So we went to our work stations. Liora's group stocked the Food Pantry shelves. The volunteer leader was thrilled to relate that they have a "kosher shelf" for packaged food for Jewish patrons. She shared that daily they feed an eighty-two year old Jewish woman. She showed us a poster she had mounted to identify the various symbols of kashrut supervision.

Herein was the lesson, what we call the "hidden curriculum." Yes, there are poor elderly Jews in New Haven who receive social services. This raised many questions among the children. Consequently, we will learn more about how we can work with Jewish Family Services and other agencies.

The second group cut and bagged pies and set up plasticware for the 180 meals that would be delivered the next morning. As we left, to return to the love of our families and the warmth of our homes, the smells stayed with us: the pumpkin and apple pie, the turkeys, the collard greens. But our minds were also touched by a real need that we can help meet.



Dr. Lauren Kempton

This was the teachable moment. The students shared their experiences with their classmates and families and we will proceed with plans for future projects.

BEKI Religious School

Last month found the children of BEKI Religious School learning many lessons of *tsedaka* and *Tiqun Olam*. The children, after volunteering at the Center Church Parish House for Thanksgiving, were alerted to a need for sample size toiletries so that the homeless may shower. We have established a Collection Box in the coatroom here at BEKI.

The Religious School celebrated Hanuka with a schoolwide celebration. They were joined by their parents and Sahar and Ziv, our Israeli Teen Emissaries from Afula. Each child made a *Hanukia* designed by Rita Sela. The entire school presented a Hanuka Rap that retold the story of Hanuka. They then feasted on latkes and applesauce and played *dreidel* and other games.

BEKI Religious School would like to announce
BARTONS PASSOVER CANDY FUNDRAISER



Coming in January
\$\$\$ Help us to reach our goal \$\$\$
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Watch your mail for order form or pick one up at the BEKI Religious School Office

Mazal Tov to:

- Andres & Rebecca Martin on the birth of Jacob Donald Martin, and to older siblings Max, Ariela and Gabriela
- Steven & Jill Citron-Pousty on the birth of Felix Citron-Pousty, and to older siblings Fay and Tessie
- Irving Weinstein on celebrating a milestone birthday
- Violet Ludwig on celebrating a milestone birthday
- George G. Posener on celebrating a milestone birthday
- Stephen & Rachel Wizner on the birth of Baby Girl Wizner to Jake & Kira Wizner

Births, Baby Event and Benei Mitzva Notices can be found on BEKI's website www.beki.org in the [LifeCycle](#) section.

Death Notices and Yahrzeit Observances listed by name and date can be found on BEKI's website www.beki.org in the [LifeCycle](#) section.

With Sorrow we note the passing of

Belle Sherman Goldberg

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M, T, W, F	8:00-5:30
Thurs.	8:00-7:00
Sat.	8:00-3:00

Rotation Schedule Available

The "Master Rotation List" for Shabbat & Festival service participation was mailed in mid- December to some households on the BEKI membership list. (Additional copies are available from the BEKI office at 389-2108 x14, in the literature rack, or at www.beki.org/rotate.html). The list is the schedule of services and programs to be lead by volunteers. If you would like to lead a children's or adult service, or learn to do so, contact Rabbi Tilsen at 389-2108 x10 (jjtilsen@beki.org).

The "Master Rotation List" offers only a partial picture of the volunteerism at BEKI. Not listed there are the over fifty Torah Readers and the Torah Reading coordinators, the leaders of the Late Friday service and weekday services, those who prepare BEKI mailings, the work of the Board and its committees, the work of the Sisterhood and Religious School, the Renovations Committee and Qiddush Committee, and much more.

BEKI has a long history of volunteerism. Over the past decades, much of the building was built and maintained by its members' own labor. Food preparation for programs and cleanup was done by members. In our day, many have now extended this "Jew-it-yourself" approach to the worship and teaching services as well. This has earned BEKI the epithet of "The People's Temple."

Friendly Face?

If you might like to serve as a "Greeter" on a Shabbat or Festival morning, to welcome guests, direct visitors, and assist those with special needs, please contact Ritual Committee Chairperson Steven Fraade at 397-9430 or steven.fraade@yale.edu, or Rabbi Tilsen at 389-2108 x10 or jjtilsen@beki.org.

Important Tax Information

You can contribute stocks and securities directly to BEKI. For some, significant tax advantages can be realized by contributing appreciated stocks. IRS regulations allow the donor to deduct the appreciated value of the security.

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). For some people, January presents a new opportunity to contribute in a way that is deductible in the new year. It is also helpful to BEKI to receive your payment at an early date. Please consult your tax advisor for more information.

Viruses & Email

BEKI email addresses, like those of many other fine institutions, have been used as the "sender" address in forged messages containing viruses. The "sender" information is easily altered by hackers and there is nothing we can do about it. Email from Rabbi Tilsen always includes a subject beginning "BEKI:" or another meaningful subject line. "If in doubt, throw it out."

Megilla Readers Needed

If you would like to read Megillat Ester (the Book of Esther) on Purim at BEKI, or learn how to, please contact Rabbi Tilsen (389-2108 x10 jjtilsen@beki.org) at your earliest opportunity. Purim is observed on Saturday night 06 March and Sunday morning 07 March 2004 in New Haven and other cities that were not walled in the thirteenth century BCE.

Ari Nathan Levine Children's Library

The following books were purchased through generous donations to the Ari Nathan Levine Fund. The books are housed in the Claire Goodwin Youth Room on a non-lending basis. They are of particular interest to the parent volunteer leaders of our Shabbat Children's Programs.

The Story of Jonah illustrated by Nadine Wickenden

Eight Candles to Light: A Chanukah Story by Jonny Zucker and Jan Barger Cohen

The Rugrats' Book of Chanukah adapted by Sarah Willson

Shabbat Shalom! by Michelle Shapiro Abraham

Sammy Spider's First Shabbat by Sylvia Rouss

Breishit: In the Beginning adapted by Alison Greengard

Adam & Eve's First Sunset: God's New Day by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

The Tower of Babel: Migdal Bavel adapted by Alison Greengard

When the Chickens Went on Strike: A Rosh Hashanah Tale by Erica Silverman

This is the Dreidel by Abby Levine

The Kids' Cartoon Bible by Chaya Burstein

Big Like Me: A New Baby Story by Ruth Finkelstein

Sammy Spider's First Hanukkah by Sylvia Rouss

Sammy Spider's First Trip to Israel by Sylvia Rouss

Sofer: The Story of a Torah Scroll by Eric Ray

Bagels from Benny by Aubrey Davis

Dream: A Jewish Bedtime Book by Howard Kurtz

The Shabbat Box by Lesley Simpson

Is It Shabbos Yet? by Ellen Emerman

Night Lights: A Sukkot Story by Barbara Diamond Goldin

Sammy Spider's First Tu B'Shevat by Sylvia Rouss

Too Much of a Good Thing by Mira Wasserman

It's Party Time: A Purim Story by Jonny Zucker and Jan Barger Cohen

All About Sukkot by Judyth Groner and Madeline Wikler

A Costume for Noah: A Purim Story by Susan Remick Topek

Apples and Honey: A Rosh Hashanah Story by Jonny Zucker and Jan Barger Cohen

All About Yom Kippur by Judyth Groner and Madeline Wikler

The Mouse in the Matzah Factory by Francine Medoff

Sammy Spider's First Passover by Sylvia Rouss

Sammy Spider's First Purim by Sylvia Rouss

All About Passover by Judyth Groner and Madeline Wikler

The Borrowed Hanukkah Latkes by Linda Glaser

Just Right: The Story of a Jewish Home by Ellen Emerman

The Littlest Candlesticks by Sylvia Rouss

Checks VISA Mastercard Honored

The BEKI office and Sisterhood Giftshop accept checks, VISA and Mastercard for payment of any donation, pledge, fee or purchase. (Checks or cash only for grocery certificates.) Although BEKI pays the usual merchant's fee for the use of the charge cards, we are pleased to offer this convenience to our members and supporters.

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.

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 qeri'at 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.

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 (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.

Children's Shabbat Havura

The Children's Shabbat Havura meets every Shabbat morning at 10:45a in the Claire Goodwin Youth Room. Designed to address the spiritual and social needs of preschool children, the Havura meets concurrently with K-2 Kehila, Junior Congregation, Cosmic Conversations, the Shabbat Shalom Learners' Minyan and the main Sabbath service. Following the half-hour of songs, stories, prayers and dance, the children have their own qiddush refreshments and then enjoy supervised play until they join the adult worship for the Concluding Service and qiddush.

The Havura enjoys strong support from parents and the Synagogue. Currently about 70 children and their parents actively participate in the Havura. Visitors have come from across New England to observe this program as a model for their own synagogues.

Meeting the spiritual and social needs of preschool children is an obligation of the Jewish community and an important part of the Synagogue's mission. The Havura (Friendship Circle) links the children to one another, to other concerned Jewish parents, and to the Synagogue. The Havura enjoys the active participation of parents who themselves are enriched by the experience. For many adults, the Children's Shabbat Havura serves as their introduction to active participation in the Synagogue Community.

If you are interested in learning more about the BEKI Children's Shabbat Havura, come any Shabbat (Saturday) morning at 10:45a and see for yourself. Or contact Miriam Benson at 389-6137 or mirbenson@aol.com, who, along with Ellen Cohen, coordinates the program. You can also contact Education Director Dr. Lauren Kempton at 389-2108 x13 or lkempton@beki.org, the staff person who supports this parent cooperative

Go To Israel!

But first, come to brunch at BEKI.

Curious about programs and organized trips to Israel for students?

Come hear about a wide range of exciting programs, from area students and others who've gone.

Have a nosh, hear some speakers, ask questions. It all starts at 9:30a on Sunday 11 January (right after morning services) in the BEKI social hall.

No reservations required.



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Shabbatot **Darshanim**

- **Rabbi Alan Lovins** will serve as *darshan* (Torah commentator) on Shabbat morning 10 January, *parashat VaYehi*
- **Nanette Stahl** will serve as *darshanit* (Torah commentator) on Shabbat morning 17 January, *parashat Shemot* (Exodus)
- A special guest will serve as *darshan* (Torah commentator) on Shabbat morning 24 January, *parashat VeEra*

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 proficient in the Shaharit (morning) and Torah services in a supportive setting. Expertly led by **Steven Fraade**, **Rabbi Alan Lovins** and others, the Shabbat Shalom Learners' Minyan is a nurturing step-by-step practice in a non-threatening, 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.

The SSLM meets on the 10th & 24th of this month (January). Everyone is welcome to participate regardless of religious status or background.

Laws of Purim: Shabbat Afternoon Study

The laws of Purim will be studied between *mincha* afternoon service and *maariv* evening services on Shabbat afternoons during January. The sixteenth century law code *Shulhan Arukh* will be a basic text along with the Talmud and other works. The study period is about one-half hour. The study period begins at about 4:45p each Saturday afternoon.

Mondays **Rashi Study Group**

Special time: 19 January 9:45a to 10:30a
All other Mondays: 7:45a to 8:30a

Each Monday morning from 7:45a to 8:30a adults meets in the [Rosenkrantz Family Library](#) to read Rashi's commentary on 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. 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 at a special time, 9:45a to 10:30a, on Monday 19 January 2004, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, immediately following the 9:00a morning service.

Wednesdays **Berakhot Talmud Study Group**

Back by popular demand: 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 in January.

Rabbis' Study Group

Wednesdays with Murray is a weekly study group exclusively for rabbis, facilitated by Rabbi Murray Levine. The Wednesday study group affords local rabbis an opportunity to pursue their own *talmud torah* (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 (203) 397-2513.

Torah Reading Technique: An Introduction

Responding to members' requests, we will offer a program in January and February on Torah reading. The class will be taught by Andy Schultz, our Benei Mitzva Program Director. The program will run on Wednesday evenings from 7:00p to 8:00p in the BEKI Library. The dates for the program are 14, 21 and 28 January and 4 and 11 February. To register, please contact Dr. Lauren Kempton at 389-2108 x13 or lkempton@beki.org. LK

Thursdays

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.

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.

Every Day

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.

Torah Readers Wanted

Marsha Beller is coordinating Shabbat Morning Torah Readings for Shemot (Exodus), the reading of which we begin on 17 January. If you would like to read Torah on a Shabbat morning during the winter, or would like to learn how to read Torah, please contact Marsha (387-4657 or mbellereco@aol.com). Many thanks to Paula Hyman for coordinating the readings for Bereshit (Genesis). If you would like to plan to read Torah on a Shabbat afternoon or Monday morning, please contact Rabbi Tilsen (389-2108 x10 jjtilsen@beki.org) or Andy Schultz at aschultz@beki.org.

Audio Library on Web

Various blessings and prayers are recorded for educational purposes on BEKI's web site. Shabbat, Hanuka, and daily liturgical selections are presented. To hear the selections, go to www.beki.org/audio.html.

Members' Divrei Torah on Web

Bar Mitzva [Jonah Cooper's Devar Torah](#) is available at www.beki.org under "Adult Studies" along with those of other members and special guests.

