Habitat’s Historic Preservation Project

Habitat for Humanity of Greater New Haven and its house sponsor group Sleeping Giant Build/Amity Cares, have embarked on an exciting new venture – the restoration and historic preservation of the Maselli farmhouse located at 390 Gilbert Ave. in Hamden. The Queen Anne-style farmhouse was built in 1892. Apart from a modernization of the kitchen in the 1950s, the house retains its original elements, including interior oak trim, wood floors in remarkable condition, a stained glass window and more.

Hamden officials approached Habitat to take on the home restoration project out of desire to protect the farmstead from development. After granting the home and a half acre to Habitat, the town retained the rest of the original farmstead property – 35 acres that will remain undeveloped. Habitat plans to make application for the house’s nomination to the State Register of Historic Places.

It was at the beginning of 2005 when BEKI became a partner/sponsor in the Amity Cares Habitat for Humanity group, and when Amity Cares merged with the Sleeping Giant Build in 2010, we eagerly jumped at the chance to meet and work with even more wonderful committed community members.

We have been proud of the terrific work of our volunteers over these six years. Sleeping Giant Build/Amity Cares is comprised of businesses, religious congregations, civic organizations, schools and individuals from the Woodbridge, Orange, Bethany, Westville, North Haven, Hamden and Cheshire communities. As one of the last area synagogues to remain actively involved, BEKI is proud that its commitment never wanes. We have greatly appreciated the opportunity provided by Habitat to take part in special Sunday workdays that are scheduled to accommodate our observance of Shabbat.

To date, over 50 people in the BEKI community have helped build 4 houses working in this project. The Maselli farmhouse will be the fifth home that we will help build for a hard working deserving family, and we are excited to be involved in this historic venture.

Join us on Sunday, January 8, for BEKI’s first Sunday workday of this new project. Only the first 12 volunteers of age 16 and above can be accommodated. To put yourself on the schedule, or if you are interested in lending support in some other way (financial or planning), please contact Darryl Kuperstock at kuperst@aol.com, or (203) 387-0304.
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:
- Call the Synagogue office: (203) 389-2108
- Write: 85 Harrison Street, New Haven, CT 06515-1724
- Email: jjtilsen@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 President Carole Bass.

President

For someone approaching her 120th birthday, our friend BEKI in is in pretty darn good shape. But she is beginning to show her age.

She’s covered with wrinkles. Her pace has slowed. And, sadly, the children have moved out.

The wrinkles are in the rubber that covers part of the roof, which developed a serious leak after the October snowstorm and will require a major repair in the spring. The pace of donations to the synagogue has slowed, along with the ability of many of our members to pay full dues: fallout from the difficult economy that continues to challenge so many people. And the children of the Abiyoyo daycare, whose rent payments used to help BEKI’s bottom line, left the building for good in September, as their longtime day care center went out of business.

Each of these symptoms comes, inevitably, with its price tag. Taken together, they add up to a hefty shortfall in the current fiscal year, and a significant financial challenge for the years to come. (Copies of the budget, by the way, are available on request from the synagogue office.)

But BEKI is more than up to the challenge. Beneath the wrinkles – which are, after all, only skin-deep – our congregation is healthy and thriving. New members continue to join. We continue to learn: to read Hebrew, to read Torah, to lead children’s programs, to work the photocopier. We continue to take care of each other, in good times and bad. Our rabbi and staff are still the greatest, and we still have the best qiddush around.

B’nai Israel, aka the Rose Street shul – one of BEKI’s predecessor congregations – was incorporated on July 1, 1892. As we celebrate our first 120 years, we are also planning and building for the next 120.

That will mean many things, including a BEKI 120 fundraising campaign. You’ll hear more about this in the coming months, when we ask your help to plug this year’s budget gap and create reserves for the future.

As the 120th birthday draws near, BEKI’s carefree youth is behind us. Now, in our community’s middle years, let’s work on building that nest egg for our old age.

ACT OUR AGE

Carole Bass

Carole Who?

“...And when they ask who is the president of Ubeki-beki-beki-stan-stan, I’m going to say, ‘You know, I don’t know. Do you know?’”

— Herman Cain, Former Republican Presidential Candidate

“Herman Cohen? Cain-cain-cain-didate? You know, I don’t know.”

— Carole Bass, BEKI President

Photo Directory


We are updating our BEKI Member Photo Directory. Each participating individual or family member will receive a free directory and one free portrait. Members can also buy extra photos; there is no obligation to purchase anything. Sign-up for appointments can be done on line or on paper. There is a $10 coupon toward purchases for those who sign up on line. Photos will be taken at BEKI on Wednesday Jan. 25 from 2:30 to 8:50 p.m.; Thursday Jan. 26 from 2:30 to 8:50 p.m.; and Sunday Jan. 29 11 a.m. to 4:50 p.m. To help work on this project contact Helene Sapadin at hsapadin@yahoo.com.

Join BEKI as a member and you have the opportunity to be included in the new Member Photo Directory. Sign up at www.beki.org/forms/join.pdf or call Peggy at 203.389.2108 x14.

Notary of Note

BEKI Office Manager Peggy Hackett has been duly appointed as a Notary Public within and for the State of Connecticut.

Visit us at www.beki.org

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What’s Going On in BEKI-BJ USY?
It’s almost that time of year, when Jewish teens from all over the area gather for one of the best BEKI-BJ USY events of the year! On Motse’ei Shabbat (Saturday Night) Feb. 11, paid-up USY members can embark on the annual BEKI-BJ Limousine Scavenger Hunt, searching the towns of New Haven, Woodbridge, Orange, and Milford for themed mystery clues. In addition, participants will be engaging in fun activities such as Israeli dancing and simply meeting or getting to know other Jewish teens, while in a limo. But the fun doesn’t end there! After each limo has finished the scavenger hunt, everyone will return back to one house and munch on food, mingle, and watch videos and see pictures from the night.

This event is a blast, but to make the event even better, the Limos Scavenger Hunt is the first event any 8th grader can attend. So invite your friends, and sign up for a night of fun and mystery. Don’t forget, however, that you must be a paid member of USY to participate in this awesome event. For any questions, feel free to contact the limos chairs, Dana Lew, Kate Shragis, Maya Levine-Ritterman, or our advisor, Lauren Kaufman at bekibjusy5772@gmail.com. Hope to see you there.

Sasha Weitzman
BEKI-BJ USY Co-President

Local USY Chapter Board Gets Trained in Leadership
During the frigid weekend of Nov. 11-13, more than 100 Jewish teenagers from all over New England congregated at Camp Ramah in Palmer, Mass. USY Chapters NERUSY (New England Region USY) and Hanefesh (Connecticut and Western Massachusetts) came together for a kinnus built especially for Chapter Board members and Regional General Board members. This was the first year that Hanefesh combined efforts with NERUSY to hold a leadership Shabbaton.

Representing BEKI-BJ USY were Kate Shragis (Chapter Membership/Kadima Vice President and Regional Social Action/Tikkun Olam Board member), Shayna Weinstein (Chapter Religious Education Vice President), and Sarah Gans (Acting Chapter Communications Vice President and Regional Religious Education Board member). These three teens all learned leadership techniques to bring back to the BEKI-BJ USY chapter board.

The weekend began by bringing in Shabbat, filled with ruach and joy. Throughout Shabbat, following the theme of leadership, participants broke out into groups and activities to discuss techniques and challenges about their leadership positions. Kate Shragis recalls one activity which required groups to invent creative, entertaining activities to bring home to their chapters. “Many people shared their ideas,” says Shragis, “and we all worked off of each other to create different events.” Through engaging activities, the seminars also stressed the importance of communication, creativity, cooperation, and teamwork to better the efficiency of the chapter executive boards.

The weekend was a great chance for USYers to enjoy gathering with old friends, making new friends, and learning how to improve the inner-workings of USY board to increase the success of the chapter. BEKI-BJ attendees, Shragis, Weinstein, and Gans, all commit to applying the lessons learned at the Leadership Retreat to help maximize the potential of the BEKI-BJ USY chapter.

— Sarah Gans
Purim Box Order Form for 2012

Thank you for supporting the Purim Box project! Carefully circle the names you wish to send boxes to. To send boxes to people not on this list, write their names, addresses, phone numbers, and your name, on a separate piece of paper and attach it to this form. The cost for each box is $5, for each non-member.

- If you would like to reciprocate for each box you receive, please mark off this space and sign your name here. The cost for each reciprocation purchase is $5, unless you choose ONLY reciprocity in which case the cost is $6 per box. You will be billed for reciprocity.
- We offer a special rate of $280 to those very generous families wishing to send to the entire BEKI community. If you choose this option, mark off this space and simply send in this form with your check.

Boxes will be available for pick-up March 7 after the Megilla reading. Recipients who do not pick up their boxes may receive a card in lieu of a box depending on the availability of volunteer deliverers. Please contact ina silverman to volunteer:
(203) 387-6019 or principal@beki.org. Thanks!

- Return the completed form with your check made out to “BEKI” (and please double-check your math!)
- Mail the order form and check to: BEKI Purim Boxes, 85 Harrison Street, New Haven, CT 06515, or
- Email your order to Peggy Hackett at office@beki.org

This Order Form with Payment Must Be Received By Feb. 29.

Your name: ___________________________ Phone: ___________________________

Your address: ________________________________________________________________

___________________________

Abraham, Libby & Mark
Abromavich, Avital & Sally
Allentuch Simon & Leora Neter
Altman, Bruce & Darcy McGraw
Anisett, Robin & Charles
Auerbach, Hillie & Sara-An
Aurienme, Will & Mike
Aversi-Singer, Joseph & David
Avni, Sivan & Roxy
Back, Iris & Yaron
Baitch, Yaron & Mindy
Bain, Thomas & Elisa
Bender, David & Sharon
Ben, Chitrit, Rosalyn
Benson, William & Deborah Ziskin
Birn, Stephanie & Harold
Black, Harold & Lisa
Blackner, Corinne & Sam
Blanc, Milton & Marcy
Blander, Marc & Goldie
Bogoroff, Esther
Brodie, Amanda & Colin
Bronstein, Bette & Elizabeth
Bromell, Clarence
Brotn, Jay & Lynn
Brown, Jill
Buckman, Kenneth & Linda
Cahn, Sidney & Laura
Carmeli, Asaf & Sivan Doron
Cernoff, Shulamith
Chorney, David & Wendy
Cohen, Aaron & Dina Mayzlin
Cohen, Gloria
Colodner, Gregory & Lisa Stanger
Colen, Roger & Sarah Berry
Consiglio, Ronnie & James
Cooper, Isaac & Lauri
Coville, Lynn
Cummings, Leon
Cushen, Barbara
Daniel, Shlomit
Dimensten, Morton
Dreyfus, Tamar
Dranooff, Jonathan & Rachel
Driessen, Naomi & Nathan Bixby
Duh, Paul
Dumigan, Diane & George
Dunkin, Eric
Edelkind, Tamar
Eisenberg, Richard & Judy
Elimelech, Menachem & Karen
Epstein, Ethel
Feinstein, Miriam
Feldman, Hannah & Matt
Feldman, Marty
Feuerstein, Seth & Sharon
Fiedler, Paul & Susan
Forbes, Robert & Joanne
Fried, Steven & Ellen
Friedman, Jonathan
Friedman, Harriet & Charles Bruce
Friedman, Lloyd & Kai Yang
Friedman, Ralph
Fulop, David & Shannon
Gad, Martin & Lana
Gelbert, Alan & Joan
Gerber, Alan & Rachel
Gilron, Jack & Amy
Glen, Miriam & Ephrem
Gold, Martin & Rena
Chekis-Gold
Goldberg, Anna
Goldberg, Sandy
Goldblum, David & Joanne
Goldblum, Laura
Goldfield, Carl & Gaylord Bourn
Goldstein, Daniel & Grace Jenq
Gott, Robert & Diane
Goodwin, Paul
Goodwin, Richard & Rachel Lampert
Graham, Jim & Melissa Perlak
Gralla, Howard & Linda Schultz
Graz, Rebecca
Gratton, Robert & Janice
Greenfield, Belle
Greenfield, Hyla
Gutierrez, Daniel
Tenenbaum, Elma
Haas, Elisabeth
Hackett, Peggy & Don
Hatkanian, Roya & Ramin Adam
Hausler, Andy
Hayward, Judy
Hehir, Roy & Judy
Herled, Katie
Hoberman, Judith & Dominion Kinsley
Hodes, Elsie
Hubbard, David
Jacobson, Susan
Jacoby, Daniel & Stephanie
Jacoby, Robert & Marcia
Janette, Nathan & Judy
Joy, Stephen & Debby
Kantorowicz, Harriet
Kantorowicz, Richard
Karp, Oliver Ben
Karsif, Ben & Erin
Moulthrop
Karsif, Brian
Kassap, Karen & Cary Caldwell
Katz, Marilyn
Kawali, Hilaire Fink & David
Kempton, Lauren & Brooks Pamelee
Klebenov, Karen
Kligfeld, Cary & Michael
Kolitz, Liran & Alexander
Koenig, Kael & Robert Oakes
Kohn, Mark & Renee
Kramer, Richard
Kronick, Charlotte
Krupitsky, David & Daryl
Labowe, Sara
Landau, Eva
Landau, Marcia & Oren Sauberman
Lasher, Shoshana
Lazarus, Illana & Sean
Lebow, Bruce
Lehrer, Paulette & Sam Bobrow
Lemkin, Edward & Rhoda
Lesser, David & Mary
Levick, Robert & Janice
Levin, Baruch & Corinne
Levin, Ilana
Levin, Karen & Daniel
Levin, Sidney & Donna
Levy, Arthur & Betty
Lew, Yaron & Liara
Lipkin, Gladys
Lovins, Alan & Trish Loving
Lovins, Daniel & Keiko Suzuki
Lovins, Rachel & Andrew Hogan
Ludwig, Charles & Violet
Mandelkern, Marshal & Wendy Haskell
Margolis, David
Margolis, Lester & Bernice
Martin, Andres & Stephanie
Martin, Margaret
Marx, Amy & Robert Schnorberger
May, Becky & C.J.
Meir, Moshe
Meisel, Harriet
Michael, Daniel
Migliozzi, Marcia & Louis
Miller, Elinor
Miller, Harold & Bobbie
Minsky, Yair & Ada Fenick
Moscowitz, Mike
Myer, Jennifer & James Kempton
Naiman, Polina
Nargo-Toth, Kathy & Jo Wenschenk
Nash, Esther & Irwin
Natio, Kerryanne & Pat Lornino
Needler, Howard & Willa
Nevo, Lisa
Olmer, Morris
Olmer-Luther, Elaine
Oppenheimer, Mark & Judy
Oren, Bruce & Angela
Ottenstein, David & Rachel
Palumbo, Ghislaine & Joe
Palumbo, Marlo
Papowitz-Markowski, Melinda
Pauker, Bryna
Pauker, Seth
Pizer, Mila
Pollowitz, Ruth
Protas, Sherry & Sharon
Rader, Dennis & Barbara
Ratner, Betsy
Ratner, Miriam
Ravid, Shlomit & Rafi
Reese, Belle
Relave, Debra & Arnold Gans
Resnik, Judith & Dennis Curtis
Ries, Michael & Jennifer
Botwick
Rieper, Paul & Polly
Robbins, Gadiel & Julie
Rose, Tina
Rosenbaum, Stanley
Rothenschild, Helen & Keith Richter
Rosner, Alan
Ross, Richard & Helen
Rosen, Margot
Rothman, Stephen & Sheryl
Rubenstein, Alan & Cindy Kohn
Rubin, Cynthia
Rudin, Deena
Rudof, Stephen & Janne
Sachs, Greg & Lisa
Sachs, Ivan & Rita
Sachs, Louis
Sachs, Mark & Ilene
Sachs, Robert & Betsy
Saltz, Richard & Lynn
Sapir, Sarah
Saslow, Harold & Linda
Saxe, Stanley
Schottenfeld, Richard & Tania Rostain
Schwartz, David
Secchiardini, Dina & Michael
Seigel, Paul
Sel, Nadav & Rita
Serkin, Esther Zahava
Serkin, Sarah
Shapiro, Armdt
Shragis, Bill & Eva
Shutkin, James
Siegel, Debbie & Louis
Silver, Eric & M.J.
Sims, Morton & Ruth
Sklar, Beth
Slishfield, Cory & Averil Azoff
Smeron, Cindy
Smirnoff, Beatrice
Sobel, Suzanne & David Levin
Sokolow, Jay & Ira Sigmund
Spear, Robert & Susan
Spielman, James
Stall, Nahette & William Hallo
Zalman, Sherry & George Anderson
Starr, Monica & Judy Hirshfield
Stein, Peter
Stern, Leonard & Barbara
Stoll, Steven
Stone, Carey & Sue McDonald
Strasserberg, Zach & Karen Jenkins
Stutz, Eleanor
Susin, Alan & Rachel
Tilson, Jon & Yale
Mirenn Benson
Tyson, Adele
van Crevel, Sascha
Vesely, Shira & Julie Cohen
Voigt, Susan
Volain, Bud & Claire
Walsted, Scott & Lisa
Weiner, Rebecca & Mike Rastelli
Weinstein, Andrew & Paige
Weinstein, Suzanne
Weintraub, Beth & Dan
Weitzman, Marc & Carol
Wiener, Marjorie
Wiener, Matt
Wightman, Matthew & Maria Simon
Winner, Herbert & Hannah
Winter, Michael & Ellen Mackler
Wisner, Stephen & Rachel
Woolfson, Roni
Wright, David
Yakerson, Laura & Jack
York Iain & (Ann) Wateck
Younan, Yonit & Zahler, Rhoda & Allen Samuel
Zax, Shoshana & John Weiser
Zeid, Sylvia
Zlotoff, Ronald & Dona Kemper
Zusman, Howard
HaMaqom Yenahem

With sorrow we note the passing of
Louis L. Borick
Dorothy S. Fraade, mother of Steven Fraade (& Ellen Cohen)
Paula Hyman, wife of Stanley Rosenbaum
Cathy Schwartz, wife of Marty Feldman, mother of Hana, Raphael and Abigail

May the Almighty comfort those who mourn

HaNoladim BeMazal Tov
Mazal tov to Kate Jenkins & Zach Strassburger on the birth of Maya in December.
Mazal tov to Leecora Netter & Simon Allentuch and to Atalia on the birth of Nadav and Matan in December.
Mazal tov to Howard & Willa Needler on the birth of a grandson, born to Seth & Ariel Needler in December.

May this be a portend of blessing for our community, the Jewish People and all humanity.

Sisterhood

This year 2011-12, Women’s League and Torah Fund share the theme hiddur mitzva – beautifying or embellishing a mitzvah. Its precise meaning is subject to interpretation; everyone seems to have her own idea about what it means and so this year we will discuss it through some varied approaches.

It is generally accepted that the concept of hiddur mitzva is derived from a midrash on Shirat HaYam, the Song of the Sea (Exodus): “This is my God and I will glorify Him” (Zeh eli veanveihu). In this midrash rabbis discuss: How is it possible for humans to glorify God?

They answered: through praises to God, through ethical and moral behavior that emulates God.

We at BEKI are always in a mitzva mode whether providing food for families of new born babies, or families in mourning. We sing God’s praises every chance we have and we are ethical in our behavior with our community.

Sisterhood will be celebrating BEKI 120 with a qiddush in the spring and a nostalgia book of days gone by.

We are looking for photographs and articles of Sisterhood events of long ago. If you have such material please contact Mimi Glenn with the information (203) 397-3851.

The Marcel Gutman Scholarship Fund is now accepting applications. Please fill out the form which is in the lobby or on line and send it to BEKI office.

Thank you to Donna Kemper, Muriel Banquer, Darcy McGraw and Bruce Altman, Belle Greenberg, Jen Goldberg, Sasha van Crevel, Carole and Paul Bass, Ruth Greenblatt, and Ephrem Glenn for donating to the fund in December.
Greater New Haven Jewish Survey

By Rena Chaskis-Gold and Carmi Chaskis-Gold

Third in an ongoing series based on the 2010 Greater New Haven Jewish Community Population Study.

Synagogue Membership

In May 2010, the Jewish Federation of New Haven completed its first-ever scientific survey of the Jewish population in the Greater New Haven area as the foundation of a strategic planning process. All information collected in this study can be found at the North American Jewish Data Bank public website, www.jewishdatabank.org.

Peshat: Simple Talmudic Meaning

The bar chart shows that 43 percent of all Greater New Haven Jewish households are synagogue members. Other bars refer to synagogue membership by denominational affiliation; for example, 47 percent of Reform affiliated households are synagogue members. The pie chart shows the percentage of households that affiliate with each denomination. “By the Numbers” shows the raw data associated with each category; for example, there are 3,300 New Haven area households who identify with the Conservative movement, of whom 2,333 are synagogue members.

Derash: Talmudic Comparative Meaning

Forty-three percent of our households are synagogue members. Across the country, synagogue membership ranges from 14 percent in Las Vegas to 60 percent in Cincinnati. A positive way to look at our data is that there are many potential synagogue members in the Greater New Haven area. But, as a previous Survey article has shown, many of the community’s potential members are younger persons or elderly who may find the cost of synagogue membership difficult. There are many others who may identify as Jews, but yet are not interested in the religious and community activities a synagogue has to offer. Thus, while the new members are there to recruit, a successful recruiting strategy will need to be very specific to attract new members. To aid with the cost of synagogue membership, for the past four years, the Jewish Federation has given more than $100,000 to local synagogues to offset cost for new members, and, in addition, children in religious schools are supported through the community-wide Jewish Scholarship Initiative.

Visit us at www.beki.org
Shabbatot (Saturdays)

Darshanim

Dustin Gad, bar mitzva, son of Martin & Lana Gad, will serve as darshan on Shabbat parashat VaYehi, Jan. 7.

Rabbi Yonatan Yussman will serve as darshan on Shabbat parashat Shemot, Jan. 14. Yonatan, Ed. D., is the Head of School of the Jewish High School of Connecticut. Dr. Yussman received his Bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Boston University and later migrated and studied in Israel, receiving a Master’s degree in Jewish Education from Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Rabbinic Ordination from The Pardes Institute in Jerusalem. While in Israel he served in the Israel Defense Forces. His Doctorate in Educational Leadership is from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Steven Stoll will serve as darshan for parashat Bo, Jan. 28.

Shabbat Shalom Learners’ Minyan

The “Shabbat Shalom Learners’ Minyan,” which meets every other Saturday morning at 10:45 in the office, 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, 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 of the services. Everyone is welcome to participate regardless of religious status or background.

New: Parasha Preview

Preview Parashat haShavua (the weekly Torah portion) on Shabbat afternoons following mincha service with Nadav Sela in January and February. Mincha service on Shabbat (Saturday) afternoon begins at the same hour as was candle lighting the day before; the study begins about 30 minutes after that, or about ten minutes after sunset.

Sundays

New: Torah Hand Signals Workshop

An introduction and practicum on hand signs for major trope sequences, with Tova Benson-Tilsen and Jon-Jay Tilsen, Sunday Jan. 8, 6 to 6:45 p.m. Ideal for beginning, intermediate and advanced Torah readers, gabbaim, and those interested in the history or linguistic aspects of text and tradition.

New: Bible Footnotes

A survey of Masoretic and other notes included in popular printings of the Humash (Pentateuch), with Jon-Jay Tilsen, Sunday night Jan. 22, 6 to 6:45 p.m. For Torah readers, gabbaim and Torah scholars of all levels. What are those asterisked notes, dots, odd letters and symbols scattered about the page?

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 Book of Joshua. 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 o’clock shaharit morning service. With Jon-Jay Tilsen.

Wednesdays

Hebrew Word of the Week

The Wednesday morning service (shaharit) features a 90-second “Hebrew word of the Week” to promote the learning of Hebrew. The Hebrew language is highly structured. Most words are based on three-letter roots,Continued on Page 9
and are made with a limited set of verb or noun forms. By learning a few dozen roots and a small set of word-forms, it is possible to roughly translate Hebrew words isolated from any context, something not normally possible in English. The Word of the Week often relates to the weekly scriptural readings, enhancing personal study and public Torah discussion.

**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. The study group meets Wednesday mornings in the Rosenkrantz Family Library. For more information, call Rabbi Murray Levine at (203) 397-2513.

**Thursdays**

**Mini Morning Learning Service**

The Thursday morning services are supplemented with commentary and teaching relating to the history, themes, choreography and language of the daily morning service. Shaharit service is from 8:15 to 9:11 on Thursdays; on other weekdays, the service begins at 7 a.m.

**No Beginning, New Beginning: Sanhedrin Talmud Study Group**

The *Sanhedrin Talmud Study Group* meets weekly on Thursdays during the lunch hour (12:30 to 1:30). The Group has met weekly since 1999. For some participants, this is their first direct experience with Talmud text; for others, it is a continuation of a long journey. 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.

The Talmud, based on an oral text, has no real beginning or end. One can begin study at any point; now is the best time.

The Sanhedrin Study Group meets in BEnk’s Rosenkrantz Family Library. For information, contact Isaiah Cooper at his law office icooper@cooperlaw.net.

**Every Day**

**Divrei Torah on the Web**

A collection of Divrei Torah (Torah commentaries) and essays by members and Rabbi Tilsen is posted on BEnk’s website under “Adult Studies” and “Meet Rabbi Tilsen.”
Contributions

Rabbi’s Tzedaka Fund (minimum $25)
• Cynthia Beth Rubin in memory of Paula Hyman
• Lester & Bernice Margolis in memory of Melvin Stanger
• Natan & Lori Weinstein honoring Ben Gerber, Bar Mitzva
• Natan & Lori Weinstein honoring David & Darryl Kuperstock at their 60th Birthdays
• Natan & Lori Weinstein marking the yahrzeit of father Berel Weinstein
• Alan Lovins & Trish Loving in memory of Paula Hyman
• Sara J. Labowe to Steven Fraade & Ellen Cohen and family in memory of Dorothy S. Fraade
• Alan Lovins & Trish Loving in memory of Raphael Zabler

Qiddush Sponsors (minimum $280)
• The Gerber Family
• The Duhl Family
• The Mohr-Hayward Family
• Amy Marx & Rob Schomberger
• Steve & Sherry Rothman

Chai Fund (minimum $18) to support synagouge operations
• To Stephen Saslafsky with sympathy on the passing of Esther Silverman Saslafsky by David & Rayna Belowsky
• To David & Darryl Kuperstock in honor of their birthdays by Steve & Rachel Wizner
• To Paula Hyman in honor of her birthday by Steve & Rachel Wizner
• To Lisa Stanger, Greg Colodner and family with sympathy on the passing of Melvin Stanger by Steve & Rachel Wizner
• To Lisa Stanger, Greg Colodner and family with sympathy on the passing of Melvin Stanger by Joanne Foodim & Rob Forbes

Synagogue Fund (minimum $10) to support synagouge operations
• To Lisa Stanger, Greg Colodner and family with sympathy on the passing of Melvin Stanger by Ina Silverman & Jay Sokolow

Benei Mitzva Qiddush Committee
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by the Colodner family
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by the Wizner family

Morton Dimenstein with sympathy on the passing of Elyane Dimenstein by Jesse & Joe Palumbo
• To Lisa Stanger, Greg Colodner and family with sympathy on the passing of Melvin Stanger by Bobbie & Harold Miller
• To Sherry & Steve Rothman with prayers for healing and wellness by Bobbie & Harold Miller
• To Morton Dimenstein with sympathy on the passing of Elyane Dimenstein by George Spera
• To BEKI in memory of George Posener by Howard & Rhoda Herman
• To Coby Ben-Chitrit with sympathy on the passing of Moshe Ben-Chitrit by Sherry & Steve Rothman
• To Joe Fleischman with sympathy on the passing of his mother by Sherry & Steve Rothman
• To Lisa Stanger, Greg Colodner and family with sympathy on the passing of Melvin Stanger by Rachel & Alan Gerber
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Jen Goldberg & Marc Blander
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Sherry Kent and Harriet & Richard Kantrowitz
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Dennis & Barbara Rader
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Evelyn R. Benson
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Jody Ellant & Howard Reiter
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Michael Spiro & Nicole Wilson-Spiro
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Steve & Rachel Wizner
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Charlie & Violet Ludwig
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Marjorie & Jay Hirshfield
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Linda Schultz & Howard Gralla
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Howard & Willa Needler
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Lyne Landry & Kelly McWilliams
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Ryan Hunt
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by the Colodner family
• To Alex Friedman in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Joanne Foodim & Rob Forbes
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by the Wizner family
• To Jonathan Hayward in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Sherry & Steve Banquer

Hesed Committee
• To Muriel Banquer with sympathy on the passing of Daniel Banquer by Shirley K. Stephson
• To David & Darryl Kuperstock in honor of their birthdays by the Nabatoff Lew family
• To Muriel Banquer with sympathy on the passing of Daniel Banquer by Betsy & Glenn Schulman and family
• To Ben Gerber in honor of his Bar Mitzva by the Wachsmann & Mowerman family
• To Alex Friedman in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Joanne Foodim & Rob Forbes
• To Muriel Banquer with sympathy on the passing of Daniel Banquer by Evelyn R. Benson
• To Muriel Banquer with sympathy on the passing of Daniel Banquer by Sherry & Steve Banquer

Social Action/Tikkun Olam
• To Lisa Stanger and family in memory of Dr. Melvin Stanger by Arlen Espinosa & Earl Baker
• To BEKI/BJ USY in support of the pie drive by Ruth & Morton Silver

The George G. & Leah E. Posener Fund for Education of BEKI Youth
• In memory of George Posener by Dan & Beth Weintrob

The Barzillai Chesek BEKI Youth Israel Scholarship Fund
• To Lisa Stanger, Greg Colodner and family with sympathy on the passing of Melvin Stanger by Rachel & Alan Gerber
• To Jonathan Hayward in honor of his Bar Mitzva by Joy Kaufman & Stuart Frankel

In-Kind Donations
• Trish Loving for the supplies and her skills in making new Torah Binders

Yahrzeit Fund ($5 minimum) to support synagogue operations
• In memory of Ellen Slopak Schwartz by David Schwartz
• In memory of Dr. Abraham E. Hyman by Shirley & Harold Fidler
• In memory of Philip & Julia Schnee by Charles & Carolyn Schnee
• In memory of Bernard & Kate Weinstein by Charles & Carolyn Schnee
• In memory of Molly Greenberg by Irving Greenberg
• In memory of Benjamin Zipper by A. David Nabatoff
• In memory of loved ones by Ben Marks
• In memory of Betty Katten by Henry Katten
• In memory of Sylvia Feldman by Sara & Steven Salomon
• In memory of Samuel Flamer by Mickey & Bud Chorney
• In memory of Julius Margolis by Helene B. Axelrod
• In memory of Bernice Auerbach by Hillel & Sara-Anne Auerbach
• In memory of Mary Epstein by Kranie & Earl Baker
A Message From Rabbi Tilsen

If I Had Another Million Dollars

Four years ago (March 2008) in my essay “If I had a Million Dollars,” I dreamed of further reducing BEKI’s use of Iranian oil and saving on our energy bills by replacing our leaky single-pane windows, updating our HVAC system, and installing additional roof-top solar panels.

Back then, I wrote:

Sometimes I am inspired by the New York Lottery’s theme song (by the Canadian group Barenaked Ladies) to think about what I would do if I won a million dollars. I don’t actually play the lottery, as I believe people who want a lot of money should get a job or otherwise do something productive to earn it. Maybe I will even do that myself some day. The lottery is just a tax on the mathematically challenged. The chances of winning the lottery are almost the same whether or not you buy a ticket, so I don’t ever buy one. But that doesn’t stop me from thinking about what I’d do with the jackpot.

…Our synagogue priorities are set by a somewhat democratic communal process, with a lot of guidance from people who are expert in financial matters and fiscal responsibility. If the synagogue comes into money, it is applied to the current priorities, such as retiring debt (i.e. paying for things we’ve already bought) and daily operations. That is as it should be; the rabbi does not make these decisions.

But if I had a million dollars – or maybe just $100,000 – I would put tuches afn tisch (Yiddish for “put your money where your mouth is”), and make us less dependent on oil, or at least prepare us for the day when we will not be able to afford heating oil. A guy can dream, at least.

In the interim, although I still haven’t bought any lottery tickets, I’ve continued to dream. Happily, we’ve converted from oil to gas and made some improvements in our HVAC system that make it markedly more efficient (going from criminally wasteful to maybe a C-). But greater energy efficiency remains a high priority. We still have our single-pane windows, a roof without insulation, and a system that is less intelligent than a coal-burning stove. (It is worse than brainless – it is insane. But with due credit to those who’ve put a lot of effort with a bare budget into making it much better than it used to be.) Sadly, even the “basic package” of improvements in this arena could use up most of my million dollars.

With my remaining funds, I would refurbish the school wing so it does not look like a moldy dungeon, write a new Torah scroll that is light enough for us to safely lift (our newest scroll was written before the Congregation was founded 120 years ago), install covered bicycle parking, dehumidify the lower level social hall, and air-condition the school wing so that our children do not have to endure 98-degree heat in the summer any more.

I would cap dues at $100 a month (although everyone is encouraged to contribute more in the annual campaign) so that dues are not a barrier to membership. Even though dues are abated or waived by request, which is the case for around 20% of our members, there are still many who just don’t like to join unless they feel able to pay the going rate. Even $1,200 a year in dues is a lot for a family in a country with a median household income of $50,000. Yes, BEKI is worth supporting, and most people give more, but the basic dues level should be affordable for most potential members.

In the George G. Posener Daily Chapel and Rosenkrantz Family Library, after replacing the leaky cracked inoperable single-pane windows, I would scrape off the pealing and bubbled paint and finish the eastern wall with Jerusalem Stone, which would go perfectly with the elegant Aron Qodesh (Holy Ark) that Sisterhood provided, and finish the remaining walls with drywall and wood. I’d commission a readers’ table to match the Aron Qodesh. I’d buy another 25 chairs to match our present chapel chairs so we wouldn’t have to use folding chairs for Shabbat evening services when attendance tops 44, which is happening more frequently lately.

In the sanctuary, I’d clean the walls in the sanctuary (for the first time in 60 years), replace some or all of the fixed seating with wide, sturdy chairs with more leg room. I’d make space for people who use wheelchairs or need a place to park a walker. I’d replace the dark wood paneling and create new window wells to reduce the glare. And a hearing loop that broadcasts directly into hearing aids would be installed so that more people could actually hear what is...
being said or sung. Additional carpeting and other improvements would make the sound quality better, too.

I’d extend the lobby finish of wainscoting and drywall to the hallway by the Sisterhood Giftshop and Daily Chapel, and make the lower lobby match upstairs and extend the art displays to that space. Our art display czarina, Helen Rosenberg, would have more space to fill with the works of member and local artists.

With that million dollars, I’d make sure we are paying 100 percent of our employees medical premiums and fund retirement accounts. We may be doing better than many employers right now, but it is still not good enough. I’d print the Bulletin in color each month; although our copier could do it now, we’ve never wanted to spend the extra money for color printing.

I’d also hire an assistant rabbi or program director or executive director so that each staff person could do more of what we do best and of what the Congregation needs most. Besides the important job of sitting around and dreaming of how to spend other people’s money that we don’t have, there is so much that ought to be done, and that needs to be done, that we can’t do simply for lack of time and resources.

I would outfit one more classroom as a library annex so that we don’t have to limit our collection so severely, and provide the Library Committee with an annual budget to buy new books. That same room could serve as a media room with a screen and projector.

The happy news is that since I wrote my essay four years ago, BEKI did get a million dollars, and more, through a bequest from Mrs. Irma Hamburger and through several generous members who have funded building upgrades and established endowments. But the Board of Directors in their wisdom have directed most of those proceeds to pay for really boring things like the mortgage, insurance, utilities, snow removal and salaries, managing somehow to keep a bare-bones budget in balance. Rarely can we spend beyond the most basic necessities.

There’s a lot more I’d like to do, but our House Committee and Finance Committee Chairpersons say my list so far of how I’d spend a million dollars is already more than five million dollars, so I’ll save the rest. Even more important than rabbinic musings are the dreams of those who own, create and sustain the congregation, namely our members and supporters. Much of what is most important to our community is free or available at low cost, but there is a point where money becomes the issue, and our common dream is part of what motivates us. That is what is so special and affirming about our community.

In fairness, this describes what I’d do if the synagogue came into a million dollars (or five million), but if I won the lottery personally I might have a few things to do around my own house before I install that covered parking space for the rabbi at the synagogue.

But hey, a guy can dream.

**News**

**God vs. Gay? The Religious Case for Equality**

Save the date, **Sunday Jan. 22**, for a special Sunday brunch program. Jay Michaelson, author of the newly published book *God vs. Gay? The Religious Case for Equality* (Beacon Press, 2011), will be speaking to us about his book over brunch, at **10:00 am**, following the 9:00am morning minyan. Come for minyan and stay for brunch and what promises to be a most informative and stimulating program.

In his book, Michaelson, a biblical scholar and author of three previous books and 200 articles on the intersections of religion, sexuality, and law, argues that the “God vs. gay” divide is a myth and that the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament emphasize the importance of love, compassion, and equality for all people. Re-examining the question “What does Scripture really say about homosexuality?” he makes the case that the moral principles in these texts favor acceptance of gays and lesbians and he questions the standard translations/interpretations of the biblical passages that seem to condemn homosexuality.

Jay Michaelson holds an MA from Hebrew University and a JD from Yale and has held teaching positions at Yale, Boston University Law School, and City College of New York. A founder of Nehirim, a national provider of community programming for LGBT Jews, he has been featured in the *New York Times* and on NPR and CNN. This program is free and open to the public. Copies of *God vs. Gay* will be available for purchase and signing by the author.

RSVP (recommended) to the BEKI office, (203) 389-2108.
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**Service Times**

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Look For The “Golden Ticket” In Your Deli Box And Win

For the 21st year, our community will be treated to festive, flavorful and fantastic boxed kosher deli lunches and dinners, thanks to the efforts of the BEKI/BJ Joint Youth Commission. The event, DELI BOXES, is our only annual fundraiser for the joint youth programs of the two synagogues, and will take place this year on Sunday, February 5 – Superbowl Sunday (as usual).

BUY DELI BOXES! You don’t need to be watching the Superbowl to enjoy a delicious deli meal prepared with love. Give yourself a break, have a party, fress – and support our award-winning youth programs.

Again this year, the choices are abundant, including: pastrami, corned beef, roast beef, portobello mushroom with roasted red peppers, turkey, tuna salad, egg salad and salami.

Added Bonus: “Golden Tickets” will be randomly included in 3 Deli Boxes. Each “Golden Ticket” will entitle the winners each to 4 FREE MOVIE TICKETS! And maybe a few surprises for our 21st year.….

The funds that are raised will be used to provide subsidies to enable more of our youth to participate in a broad range of chapter, regional and international activities, and to supplement the program activities of both USY and Kadima at BEKI and B’nai Jacob.

The Youth Commission would like to encourage you to volunteer to help out at BEKI on Saturday Feb. 4 from 7:30 p.m. on, and/or on Sunday, Feb. 5 from 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. as the great “Deli Boxes” machine rolls into action. We need all the help we can get to make sure the program is a success.

Order forms are available in a special mailing, on the BEKI website www.beki.org/deli.pdf, in the literature rack in the synagogue lobby, and by email request to kuperst@aol.com. Deadline for orders is Friday, January 27. Please send orders with your advance payment to: Darryl Kupersh, 2 Debby Lane, Woodbridge, CT 06525, or send your order by email to Darryl at kuperst@aol.com. (Please note that all emailed orders are commitments for full payment at pick-up on February 5).

If you are interested in providing additional support for our youth (with funding or volunteer participation), please contact the BEKI Youth Commission Chairperson: Rena Cheskis-Gold (203) 397-1497.

Thanks for your support.