**Tiqun Leil Shavuot**

The Festival of *Shavuot* (“Weeks”), one of the three major pilgrimage festivals, celebrates the anniversary of the Giving of the Torah at Sinai some 3,400 years ago. Shavuot comes at the culmination of the counting of seven weeks from Pesah, and will be the major observance at BEKI this summer. Just as we look forward to important events in our personal lives, so too our ancestors enthusiastically and devoutly anticipated the event at Sinai. By participating in BEKI's Shavuot observance, we reenact the extraordinary experience of our ancestors and show our own enthusiasm for receiving Torah.

On Thursday morning 8 June, the morning before Shavuot, the Men’s Club Miqva visit will follow the 8:15a weekday morning service, from 9:00 to 10:00a. Individual immersion for Jewish males is one way of preparing for the enhanced state of spiritual sensitivity experienced on the Festival marking our national encounter with the Almighty.

Thursday evening from 7:00p to 8:00p, Anne Johnston and others will lead a “Family Shavuot Experience” for people of all ages. Also during that time period, the Tiqun Leil Shavuot Night of Study will begin with a presentation by Pamela Tamarkin Reis, an independant Bible scholar, on “What Hagar Did.”

Those who are able may light Festival candles at 8:06p. It is also customary to light Yizkor Memorial candles immediately before lighting the festival candles. The blessing recited over the Festival candles is “Barukh....asher qideshanu bemitzvotav vetsivanu lehadliq ner shel yom tov” and the “Shehehianu,” both of which can be found in most *siddurim* (prayerbooks).

The brief Minha Afternoon Service, from 8:00p to 8:15p, will be followed by “Songs of Shavuot,” lead by Amy Pincus, for all to enjoy. Children and adults will be treated to the special refreshments of Shavuot, which may include popsicles, fruit, cheesecake, freshly brewed coffee, tea and softdrinks. The brief Festival Evening service, from 9:00p to 9:20p, will be followed by a presentation by Rabbi Carol Stein, entitled “Moses Meets Thomas Jefferson” beginning at 9:30p.

After another break for recently brewed coffee and other refreshments, exploration of Torah continues with a presentation by Jay Sokolow entitled “Four who entered Pardes: Rapture and Rupture in the Mystical Teaching of Judaism,” from 10:45p to 11:30p, and then Isaiah Cooper on “Ezekiel’s Vision” from 11:45p to 12:30a. Those still awake will be treated to further delights of Torah through the early hours.

More Shavuot on page 4

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**Gladys Lipkin Honored at Sisterhood Book of Life Luncheon**

Veteran BEKI member Gladys Lipkin will be honored as Woman of Valor at The Book of Life Luncheon by Sisterhood at noon on Tuesday 6 June 2000. A lovely affair is planned, with good company, great food and entertainment. For reservations call Mary Ellen Mack at 389-2108 x14 (beki@snet.net).

Gladys Lipkin has long been a member of Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel and its Sisterhood. She has served with distinction in numerous synagogue and Sisterhood leadership positions, giving her wisdom in directing the affairs of the synagogue and Sisterhood, providing much hands-on volunteer effort in implementing activities and projects, and supporting these efforts through her philanthropy.

*Adele Tyson, Sisterhood President, et al.*
How to Contact the BEKI Bulletin

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

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

Summer Publication Schedule

This summer the BEKI Bulletin will publish a combined July-August issue. Deadline for this special issue is 1 July.

Calling BEKI

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

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BEKI-Bulletin

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

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

BEKI-Bulletin
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A Message from Rabbi Tilsen & Dear Rabbi
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Calendar Meeting

There will be a calendar planning meeting on Monday 12 June 09:30a to 11:15a in BEKI’s Rosenkrantz Family Library. All officers, chairpersons and project leaders at BEKI are urged to attend so that our upcoming year of events can be coordinated. Please call Mary Ellen at 389-2108 x14 (beki@snet.net) or Jon-Jay at x10 (jjtilsen@beki.org) for more information.

Office Vacation Closing

The synagogue office will be closed for staff vacations from Friday 16 June to Wednesday 5 July. Members of the Board of Directors will be checking for phone messages and will return calls if urgent; otherwise return calls will be made when the office opens on 6 July. Door will be open for worship services and classes at their usual times. Thank you for your understanding.

No Parking

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

The Mitzva of Qeruv
(Outreach)

How did you first find out about BEKI, and why did you join? (Written reader responses are welcomed.)

It is a mitzva (religious prescription) to share the teachings of Torah with others. One way to do that is to live decently and honorably, in a way that associates such behavior with a life of Torah. If Torah and mitzvot significantly and noticeably uplift our character, others will see this and be inspired to follow. That, at least, is the theory.

Most of us lead lives that are neither wholly pious nor wholly depraved. We are neither tsadiqim (righteous) nor resha’im (wicked), but rather benoniim (intermediate). From the outside, it is not always apparent whether our religious practice or Jewish identity exert a postive influence on our character. I have heard as many remarks praising the integrity of a presumably religious person as I have heard slurs about the dishonesty and corruption of same. “If that is how a religious Jew behaves, I want no part of it.”

While scientific studies have tried to show that religious life can improve the measurable quality of our life or character, the subjective experience of the individual remains the most compelling evidence that observance of the mitzvot is good for us. Indeed, that is part of the very purpose of the mitzva system. As Scripture states (in several places): “So hear, O Israel, the laws, statutes and judgments, which I teach you, and do them, that you may live...” (Deut 4:1).

I know that without the constant reinforcement of the teachings of Torah, without the daily routines that gently keep me on track, without a family and community that expect something from me, I would probably be much worse of a person than I already am.

As I complete my seventh year at BEKI, I appreciate more than ever that I am privileged to be part of a caring and concerned community dedicated to teaching, living and learning Torah. One of the reasons that I studied to be a rabbi in the first place was that I knew that there were wonderful things in our tradition that I wanted to more fully and consciously incorporate into my own life and that I wanted to share with others. I am convinced more than ever that this is so.

Judaism is a religious civilization that seeks truth. In contrast, there are those religions that believe they possess “the” truth. Truth-seeking is a characteristic (although not unique) aspect of normative Judaism, happily coinciding with a liberal value that underpins much of democratic society. As truth-seekers we are happily not compelled to “spread the word” in quite the same way as people who think they “have” the ultimate truth are. Even so, we have figured out and been taught some pretty impressive things about God and creation, and out of our love for our fellows we want to share those things.

During these past few years, BEKI has been wonderfully successful in welcoming new people into our community. While we have a long way to go to become the truly caring community we want to be, we already can offer so very much to others, in our imperfect way.

For that reason, this summer and fall, I want to encourage all of us to bring friends and neighbors, especially those not affiliated with a local synagogue, to BEKI for a class, family education program, social action project, service or Sisterhood function. Perhaps you have a neighbor or relative who has not been to a High Holy Days service in some time. The Hebrew word “qeruv,” most simply translated as “outreach,” actually is rooted in the notion of “drawing near,” or attracting. A simple invitation can sometimes be all that it takes. After all, what was it that brought you to BEKI in the first place, or that led you to stay?

Hillel says: Be of the disciples of Aaron: loving peace and pursuing peace, loving your fellow creatures by drawing them near to Torah. — Avot 1:12

If you know someone who might like to receive information on BEKI or on the High Holy Days at BEKI, please give their name, address, phone number and email address to Mary Ellen Mack at 389-2108 x14 (beki@snet.net) or Membership Outreach Chairperson Sharon Lovett-Graff at 387-2683 (shoshmom@aol.com)
Shavuot Friday Services

On Friday morning 9 June, the Shavuot Festival Shaharit Morning Service begins at 9:15a and includes the recitation of Hallel, a series of celebratory Psalms. The service is followed by a period of Qiddush Refreshments. The Minha Afternoon Service at 6:00p is followed immediately by the Shabbat Festival Maariv Evening Service at 6:10p, concluding by 6:30p. The Qabalat Shabbat Service, which comprises Psalms and Hymns (such as “Lekha Dodi”) is not recited on the Festival. Candle lighting in New Haven is at exactly 8:07p, and the candles should be lighted using the existing flame of a Memorial or other long-burning candle or pilot light that was lighted Thursday before sundown.

Shabbat Shavuot Shaharit Morning Services

The Shabbat Shavuot Festival Shaharit Morning Service begins at 9:15a on Shabbat (Saturday) 10 June 2000. The service includes the full recitation of Hallel as on the first day. At about 10:15a, youth in grades six to eight will meet for “Cosmic Conversations.”

During the course of the Torah service, the Congregation will recognize a couple preparing to enter the huppa (wedding canopy) for qiddushin (Jewish marriage) following the Festival. The couple, Nicole Kolodny (daughter of BEKI members Herbert “Haim” & Yvonne Kolodny) and Eran Feit (son of David & Lili Feit), plan to be married the day after Shavuot, and will reside in Switzerland. Rabbi Tilsen will serve as their mesader qiddushin (Jewish wedding facilitator, otherwise known as “officiant”).

Then, following the Haftara (prophetic reading), selections from the Book of Ruth will be read to a uniquely beautiful and ancient melody based on the same system of “trope” found in most of the Hebrew Bible. The Children’s Shabbat Havura (in the Claire Goodwin Youth Room), the K-2 Kehila (in classroom six), and the Junior Congregation (in the George G. Posener Daily Chapel) begin at their usual time, 10:45a.

The Yizkor Memorial Service will be observed during the Torah service as well. This is a sacred time set aside to recall those who have gone from this world, and to reflect on the meaning of our lives and to reevaluate our life choices. All people who have someone they wish to remember may stay for the Yizkor service. Those who wish may take a copy of the Yizkor Memorial Book for personal use.

Following the service there will be a Qiddush refreshment period presented by Haim & Yvonne Kolodny honoring Nicole and Eran as they prepare to enter the huppa.
BEKI Bulletin 5
June 2000

News

**BEKI Master Plan Progressing**

Our Congregation’s Master Plan for Facilities, sponsored through the generosity of Drs. Paula Hyman & Stanley Rosenbaum, has continued to develop on schedule. David Thompson, an extraordinary local architect, has met with Rabbi Tilsen, the officers, board members, synagogue staff, the Sisterhood and representatives of other committees and interested congregants. Mr. Thompson will have the Master Plan completed in time to present to the Synagogue at the annual membership meeting in June.

The Master Plan is a design for the synagogue building and grounds that shows how improvements could be made to the synagogue over the next several years. For example, we know that we will need to make major changes to our heating, cooling and air-handling systems in the next two to three years. In order to determine what kind of system we need, and where to place the pipes and ducts, we need to know what the building design will be for at least the next ten years. It would be wasteful to put a set of pipes in a wall next year, only to find out we have to move them in five years because we need to change the room layout. The Master Plan provides the broad guidelines in which to work. Moreover, through consultations with engineers and careful consideration, we are now better able to prioritize our future building needs.

Our heating system needs updating. BEKI was required by state law to remove its underground oil tanks this past year. We currently are operating the synagogue heating system with temporary tanks that have a storage capacity that is far too small. We needed to determine what fuel we will use, where we will store it, and how it will be piped to the boiler. We also needed to look at the heating system as a whole, to determine how to make it more efficient.

Our cooling system also needs updating. The chiller has served far beyond its maximum rated lifespan. The synagogue staff and leadership have done remarkably well in keeping it functioning well over the years. But we know that the time for replacing it is near. Again, we needed to determine what system to use, and where to put it.

The Master Plan that David Thompson is preparing for us addresses the issues of floor plan and space allocation, mechanical and electrical systems, handicapped accessibility, building codes, aesthetic improvements, parking and grounds, safety, energy efficiency and ease of use.

If and when the various stages of the Master Plan are considered for implementation, consultations with the membership will take place, and everyone will have an opportunity to review whatever plans are made in the future.

Through this planning process, we have come to recognize that there is a great deal of enthusiasm about the future of our Congregation and the possibilities for improving our facility. At the same time, the leadership recognizes that much needs to be done to develop our administrative capabilities and our culture of giving before implementation of a major capital project can be contemplated. The needs and wishes for an improved facility must be considered along with the need to develop our services and programs, as well as building our capital reserves such as endowments. Our current level of funding provides only for basic maintenance of the facility and a small (but dedicated) staff with minimal program budgets.

Please let us know your thoughts, feelings and ideas. Contact John Weiser (389-0931) or Tina Rose (397-9908) with any comments or questions. We want every congregant to know about and participate in the process.

**JW et al.**

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Muriel Chorney 213 Maple St.
200 Attend BEKI Seders

This Spring, BEKI’s Sisterhood hosted a Special Needs Model Seder in conjunction with the Jewish Family Service, our Kulanu program, and with the generous support of Abel Catering. Our Saul’s Circle program, under the direction of Anne Johnston, held a seder for participants of Fellowship House. In addition, BEKI hosted the Conservative Community Second Seder on the second night of Pesah. In all, over 200 people attended BEKI seders this year.

Generous contributions from Roger & Susan Levine and from Louis Borick, and the annual income from the David & Lillian Levine Endowment for People with Special Needs at BEKI, along with a generous in-kind contribution of Abel Caterers, made possible the participation of many adults with special needs at all three seders.

Artwork at BEKI

During the Passover Festival, our Sanctuary and Lobby were decorated thanks to the efforts of Marc Schwartz, Lynn Brotman, Cynthia Beth Rubin and others. Many favorable comments were heard. Marc’s Devar Torah presented on that occasion can be found at BEKI’s website at www.beki.org/hungry.html.

Among the decorations were works of art by local artist Cynthia Beth Rubin. Cynthia is currently the recipient of the Fellowship in New Media from the Connecticut Commission on the Arts, and has previously received grants from the New England Foundation on the Arts and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, among others.

Rubin’s projects include computer animations and computer painting/collages. Her most recent work is a return to the complexity of still imagery. Trnava Synagogue (1999) is traveling internationally with the SIGGRAPH 1999 art show, and was recently purchased by the Memorial Art Gallery of Rochester, NY.

Her work is on the web at www.cbrubin.net/art and she may be contacted at cbrubin@risd.edu or (203) 789-0071. Some of her works are at the PABA Gallery, 773-3665 (pabagallery@snet.net).

Annual Meeting

Every BEKI member and supporter is invited to attend the BEKI Annual Meeting on 28 June 2000 at 7:30p
With sorrow we note the passing of

BEKI member Sol Reichentahl, husband of BEKI member Manya Reichentahl, father of David & Deana Reichentahl, and of Edward & Lynne Reichentahl, on 24 April 2000 - 20 Nisan 5760.

BEKI member Aaron Field, husband of BEKI member Sara Field, on 5 May 2000 - 30 Nisan 5760.

Harry Komisar, brother of BEKI member Belle Goldberg, on 6 May 2000 - 1 Iyar 5760.

Mazal Tov

To Leah Rachel Margolis, Julie N. Miller, and Sarah Shoshana Serkin, on graduating MAKOM.

To Helen Miller on the bat mitzva observance of her granddaughter.

To Rafi Prober on his graduation from Georgetown University.

Letters

Dear Rabbi Tilsen,

I would like to thank you, Anne Johnston, the Sisterhood and BEKI for once again sponsoring this year’s model Passover seder for people with special needs. Each year, the attendance at this event increases, indicating the popularity of this seder with our Jewish Family Service “Shalom Group” and the Southbury Training School clients. The seder serves as both an educational and social event for these adults and they look forward to attending each year!

Thanks again for sponsoring this event. Your support and dedication to adults with developmental disabilities is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Cohen MSW
Jewish Family Service of New Haven

Ben Zlotoff Bar Mitzva

Benjamin Zlotoff, son of Dr. Ronald Zlotoff & Donna Kemper, and the late Beverly Zlotoff, will lead services as a bar mitzva on Friday night 16 June during the 8:00p service, and on Shabbat morning 17 June during the 9:15a service.

Library News

There are two standard tournament size chess sets in the library cabinet for use by responsible players in the Library. Rabbi Tilsen notes that “Playing chess is permitted on Shabbat and Festivals provided the moves are not recorded and there is no wager on the game.”

The Library has a small collection of Judaic Lecture Audio Cassette Tapes from the Rabbinical Assembly. The collection includes the following, among other titles.

“An Introduction to Current Literary Approaches to Reading Biblical Narrative: The Book of Ruth,” in four parts, by Dr. Edward Greenstein.

“Maimonides’ Laws of Giving to the Poor,” by Rabbi Abraham Skorka.

“Passover in Classical Rabbinic Sources,” by Dr. Ruth Sandberg.

“Biomedical Ethics,” in four parts, Rabbi Eliezer Diamond.


For the complete collection visit the Library or see the Library web site at www.beki.org/library.html.
Thank You For Your Generous Contributions

Torah Fund

Rose Feen, Chairman (387-8743)

Due to illness, the Torah Fund Donations for 1 through 30 April 2000 could not be included in this issue. The donation list will appear in the next issue of the Bulletin. My apologies for any inconvenience this may cause.

Please call me (387-8743) for beautiful Torah cards for all occasions. They go out immediately.

We’re Able if You’re Willing

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

During the next decade, BEKI will need to raise at least $5 million to $10 million to provide for its basic operations and building maintenance. Beyond that, another $5 million to $10 million would need to be raised in that same period to provide for the basic capital needs of the Congregation and to improve our facility. For our Congregation to thrive in the coming years, forward-thinking supporters must make provisions now.

If you would like more information on how to make a bequest or a charitable remainder gift for the benefit of BEKI, contact your own attorney or financial consultant, or call estate planning attorney Donna Levine at 787-1633 for a confidential consultation. Attorney Levine will donate her time to help you establish a will or trust for the benefit of the Congregation. You may also contact Rabbi Tilsen at 389-2108 x10 (jtitsen@beki.org) for more information on bequests and endowment opportunities, or call Deborah Kaplan Polivy at the Jewish Foundation at 387-2424 x304 (dpolivy@jewishnewhaven.org) for a confidential discussion.

BEKI can also accept stocks and securities as gifts during a donor’s lifetime or as part of an estate. Please speak with your financial advisor or broker about the potential tax advantages of giving stock and securities. To arrange a transfer, call our Office Manager Mary Ellen Mack at 389-2108 x14 (beki@snet.net).
**Theory & Practice of Jewish Prayer**
An eight-week class on the theory and practice of Jewish prayer continues on each Sunday night in June from 6:10p to 7:15p in BEKI’s Rosenkrantz Family Library. Everyone is welcomed. The class is part of the Siyyum 2001 project. Registration for the class is $18.

**Mishna Sanhedrin Study Group**
An ongoing BEKI Mishna & Talmud Sandhedrin Study Group meets in downtown New Haven every Thursday from noon to 1:00p. If you are interested in participating or for more information contact Eric Beller at eibbpc@aol.com or 782-2250 (w) or 387-4657 (h). Tractate Sanhedrin primarily deals with rules of criminal procedure, particularly for capital cases.

**Shabbat Shalom Learners’ Minyan**
The Shabbat Shalom Learners’ Minyan for adults meets in BEKI’s Rosenkrantz Family Library every second Shabbat (Saturday) morning year-round from 10:45a to noon. The SSLM meets on the 3d & 17th of this month. Everyone is welcome to participate regardless of religious status or background.