BIDDING FOR BEKI

On Sunday, June 1, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., BEKI will hold a party with live and silent auctions, cocktails, gourmet hors d’oeuvres and desserts — and plenty of fun. The theme of this year’s auction is caring for the environment, and everyone will go home with a reusable tote bag, emblazoned with the BEKI logo and the names of our wonderful sponsors.

There are a variety of goods and services available this year. Among the items generously donated by BEKI members and friends: a get-away weekend at a beautiful vacation home in Vermont, an afternoon’s sail on Long Island Sound (with Tina Rose), a private tour of the Grove Street Cemetery (with docent Daniel Lovins), home-baked hallot by Judi Jannette, and a hallah-baking lesson with Helene Sapadin, a behind-the-scenes visit to Yale’s incomparable Babylonian collection (with scholar Bill Hallo), hand-crafted jewelry, massages, and much more.

And we have a special offering you can bid on this year: three private parties, each featuring a BEKI celebrity speaker and gourmet food. Groups are encouraged to bid on these together.

- Marcia Landesman, associate director of admissions for Yale College, will speak at a brunch hosted by Elayne and Mort Dimenstein. She will talk about what elite colleges and universities are really looking for when they screen applications.
- BEKI President Jay Sokolow, radiologist and contest king, will be the featured guest at a dinner hosted by Rachel and Allen Sutin. Jay will explain how you, too, can enter contests and win prizes.
- Author Mark Oppenheimer will talk about contemporary Jewish fiction and its roots in the 20th century. Rachel and Steve Wizner will host that dinner.

Once again Bidding for BEKI will have a table with “white elephant” surprise gifts. These were a big hit last time, and will surely attract a lot of bids again.

EXPLORING CHARITABLE GIVING

What charities did your parents support? What will your children and grandchildren think about your philanthropy? Please join fellow BEKI members for an evening program on giving and find out how charitable giving can help you. Thursday, June 3 at 7 p.m., at the residence of Rabbi Murray Levine, 35 Knollwood Drive, New Haven. For reservations and information, contact John Weiser, 314-8600. johnw@brodyweiser.com. Wine and refreshments, no solicitations.
Look What’s New at the JCC

Sandwiches
Salads
Coffee & More!

Game Room
Pool Table • Foosball • Jukebox
Wireless Internet • Ping Pong
Open Daily. Come in and hang!
Game Room furnishings generously donated by the Vine Family.

JCC of Greater New Haven
360 Amity Road, Woodbridge www.jccnh.org

Greater New Haven County Real Estate
Call the EXPERT!
Mark Levine
203.795.2483
203.795.6000 Office
Mark.Levine@CBMoves.com

Benefit Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel
Ask us about establishing a fund, trust or annuity to ensure BEKI’s future.
Charitable giving strengthens our Community and provides the donor with tax savings.

Annual Meeting
Wednesday, June 25
7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Visit us at www.beki.org
LifeCycle

HaMaqom Yenahem

With sorrow we note the passing of
Howard Sugarmann
Alex Heisler
Ruth Heydemann, mother of Lynn (& Jay) Brotman
Edith Tepper Cooper, mother of Willa (& Howard) Needler

May the Almighty comfort those who mourn

Bat Mitzva

Shoshana Lovett-Graff, daughter of Bennett Graff & Sharon Lovett-Graff, will lead services as a bat mitzva on Shabbat June 13-14.

Mazal Tov to

• MAKOM graduates Joshua Seth Levine, Daphne Lew, Molly Rachel Sapadin, Jonathan Stone, Karen Sutin and Benjamin Isadore Watsky
• Rachel Lovins on son Ben becoming a bar mitzva; and to grandparents Lovins & Trish Loving, and uncle Daniel; and to Jonathan & Florence
• Howard Needler on being awarded the Binzwanger Prize for Great Teaching at Wesleyan
• Barzillai Chesksis on the birth of a great-grandson

Concert to Highlight Annual Meeting

The Connecticut Z’mirah Chorale will perform a concert of Hebrew, Yiddish, and Ladino music in conjunction with the celebration of Israel at 60. The concert will begin at 8:15 p.m., following BEKI’s Annual Meeting, which will begin at 7 p.m. on June 25.

Since the autumn of 2006, Connecticut Z’mirah Chorale, conducted by Dr. Kevin Mack, has attracted singers from throughout the state to perform music of interest to Jewish audiences. The repertoire ranges from complex modern compositions to Yiddish and Israeli folk songs, performed both accompanied and a capella. Rhoda Zahler and Michael Kligfeld are both members of the Chorale.

The Chorale performed a brief musical interlude at last year’s annual meeting, and were invited back this year to give a longer concert, open to the entire community.

At the annual meeting, BEKI members will vote on the new board of trustees and hear a roundup of the year’s highlights from Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen, whose annual reports are famous for being useful, information-packed, and funny.

Refreshments will be served following the concert. The concert is co-sponsored by BEKI and the Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven.

Hazak: Bibliodrama for Seniors

Join Rabbi Moshe Murray Levine and other 55+ friends for an evening of bibliodrama and organizing a seniors group for our community.

The meeting and activity will be in BEKI’s Rosenkrantz Family Library on Thursday 12 June 2008 at 7:00p. Members, friends and visitors are welcome; no charge, no fundraising. For more information, contact Rabbi Levine at 397-2513.

Visit us at www.beki.org
**From Pesah to Shavuot**

**Sefira – Counting the Omer**

At the second seder, we began daily *sefira* (counting of the Omer), a counting of days to Shavuot, the next major festival. The counting, preferably done each night for 49 nights, is an expression of eager anticipation, commemorating the period of expectation and preparation we experienced in the Exodus from Egypt until the revelation at Sinai. Counting is the fulfillment of a mitzvah specified in the Torah: “You shall count from the eve of the second day of Pesah, when an Omer of grain is to be brought as an offering, seven complete weeks. The day after the seventh week of your counting will make fifty days” (Lev. 23:15-16).

The simple home ceremony appears in *Sim Shalom* and most *siddurim* (prayer books) immediately after the weekday evening service. While it is a mitzvah prescribed for adults, *sefira* can also be a fun, artistic and joyous ritual for families with children.

In the days before printed calendars, calendar watches and daily newspapers, the *sefira* served to keep the liturgical calendar of the Jewish People synchronized, no simple accomplishment given the dispersion and isolation of much of the community. The term *omer* refers to the measure (one handful) of grain that was used to create a physical relic of the counting. With a physical reminder, even illiterate people could do a recount in case they forgot the day’s number.

Families with young children may use this opportunity to help their children understand and experience anticipation, planning, counting and hope.

*Teach us to number our days, that we may attain a heart of wisdom*

— Psalm 90:12

**Shavuot Two-Day Festival: The Jewish Hajj**

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. The word *hag* (pilgrimage festival) is known widely by its Arabic cognate, *hajj* (which, for Muslims, means pilgrimage to Mecca). The Torah commands, “Three times a year—on the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on the Feast of Weeks, and on the Feast of Booths—all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place that He will choose. They shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed, but each with his own gift, according to the blessing that the Lord your God has bestowed upon you” (Deut. 16:16-17).

Shavuot comes at the culmination of the counting of seven weeks from Pesah, and will be a 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 re-enact the extraordinary experience of our ancestors and show our own enthusiasm for receiving Torah.

**Shavuot Candle Lighting**

Those who are able may light Festival candles at 8:05 p.m. or earlier on Sunday, June 8. It is also customary to light Yizkor Memorial candles immediately before lighting the festival candles. On Monday, June 9, the candles are lighted at 9:06 p.m. or later using the pre-existing flame of the memorial candles, pilot or other light.

The blessing recited over the Festival candles is “Barukh...asher gideshanu bemiztvotav vetsivanu lehadliq ner shel yom tov” and the “Shehehianu,” both of which can be found in most *siddurim* (prayer-books). Audio recordings of these and other *berakhot* (blessings) are available at www.beki.org/audio.html.

**Tiqun Leil Shavuot**

Study and celebrate at our annual Tiqun Leil Shavuot Sweeter than Honey Night of Study is on Sunday night 8 June 2008. Dairy and pareve refreshments will be served. That means cheesecake.

The evening begins with the Minha Afternoon Service, from 8:15p to 8:25p. The brief Festival Evening service, from 8:25p to 8:45p, will be followed at 9:00p by a presentation by Steve Fraade, the Mark Taper Professor of History of Judaism at Yale University. Steve teaches in the Department of Religious Studies and the Program in Judaic Studies. He will present “Hearing and Seeing at Sinai.”

**Taper Professor of History of Judaism at Yale University.**
From Pesah to Shavuot

in Sinai?” Michal Bar-asher Siegal is a doctoral candidate, Religious Studies Department, Yale University, and visiting lecturer, Religion Department, Smith College. Michal will speak on “A Persian Queen and Rabbinic Menstruation Laws: Non-Jews and Jewish Law.” Elitzur and Michal serve as the co-halakhic advisors of two “Partnership Minyanim,” Minyan Tehillah in Cambridge MA, and Minyan Urim in downtown New Haven.

A late-night shiur by Moshe Meiri will begin sometime after 11:00p. Moshe will teach on “The Mortgage Crisis: Halakhic Alternatives to Lending Criteria.”

Shavuot Mornings

Yizkor Memorial Service

The Shavuot First Day Festival Shacharit Morning Service begins at 9:15 a.m. on Monday, June 9. The service includes the full recitation of Hallel.

The Shavuot Second Day Morning service begins at 9:15 a.m. on Tuesday, June 10. The Festival service includes a Shaharit morning service, Hallel (Psalms of praise), a Torah reading and Haftara. Following the Haftara (prophetic reading), the Yizkor Memorial Service is held. The Yizkor memorial service is one of four such services during the year that help us recognize our feelings of loss, which are sometimes especially intense during the Festival season, and to honor the memories of our loved ones.

Following Yizkor, the Book of Ruth is read to a uniquely beautiful and ancient melody based on the same system of ta`amei hamiqra (“trope”) found in most of the Hebrew Bible. Then the Festival Musaf additional service is recited.

SATO: Social Action – Tiqun Olam

Soup’s On

BEKI Social Action Committee will serve meals at the Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen (DESK) on two upcoming Sundays. Please respond if you can help serve 4-6 p.m. on July 6 or Aug. 3. Contact BEKI’s DESK scheduler, Judy Hoberman, jdhoberman@aol.com or (h) 389-2378 or (w) 248-3191. We need four to eight people on each date. Gloves and hairnets will be provided and must be worn. Don’t come if you don’t feel well.
Last Chance for High CGA Rates

Beginning July 1, 2008, All Charitable Gift Annuity Rates Will be Lowered — Act Now to Lock in Current Rates and Help Benefit BEKI

Create a Jewish Legacy for Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel and receive a tax deduction and a guaranteed annual income.

When you establish a charitable gift annuity for the benefit of BEKI, you invest in the future of your community, leave a charitable legacy, receive a generous income tax deduction, and receive a guaranteed income stream.

For example, Sarah, age 80, creates a single life charitable gift annuity by donating $10,000 to the Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven for the benefit of BEKI. The charitable gift annuity agreement provides that Sarah receive an annual annuity of $800, of which, $542 is tax-free for 9.4 years. In addition, the agreement provides that at her death, the remainder from Sarah’s annuity creates a perpetual endowment fund for BEKI, in memory of Sarah’s parents. Not only does Sarah receive a lifetime annuity payment, but she will also receive a $4,905 charitable deduction. In addition, if Sarah’s contribution consists of long-term appreciated property, Sarah may be able to reduce and defer the capital gains tax on the property she donates. Sarah now has a guaranteed income stream, a charitable deduction and has helped her community by creating a permanent endowment for BEKI.

When you Create a Jewish Legacy with a charitable gift annuity

• You will receive a guaranteed annual income for life (for you and your spouse).

$10,000 Cash Gift Annuity*

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*Based on rates as of May 2008 for a one-life annuity. Rates differ for two-life annuity. Tax-free portion differs when annuity is established with appreciated property.
Fiscal Year-End Collections
As we enter the final month of our synagogue fiscal year, your payment now of outstanding balances due will help us reduce financing costs and end the fiscal year in the black (in other words, we’re out of money, please send more). For those who can afford to donate all or a portion of your stimulus payment to BEKI, we would certainly welcome such additional gifts, and we promise to spend it in very stimulating ways. – Donna Levine, Treasurer

Torah Reading
If you would like to read from the Book of Numbers (May 31 to Aug. 2) at BEKI, please contact Torah Reading Coordinator Darryl Kuperstock (203) 387-0304 kuperst@aol.com. Beginners are welcome.

The Shul in the News
See Jews going beyond ‘kosher,’ by Ed Stannard, New Haven Register, April 19, 2008.
A Message from Rabbi Tilsen

If a chapel is a dedicated space for prayer and contemplation, and if a library is in essence a repository of books, then our shared George G. Posener Daily Chapel and Rosenkrantz Family Library is merely a dedicated double room with prayerbooks and a small specialized collection of volumes for local use. However, the similarity to other chapels and libraries ends there. There is no Marian the Librarian to “shush” the whispers of patrons. Rather, our prayer-room and book-room is, at times, a boisterous anarchical educational feast of Torah known as a “Beit Midrash,” a “Place of Learning.”

A traditional Jewish mode of learning is paired or small-group, the “hevruta” (study-buddy) system. This system requires vocalization, and when multiple hevrutot and formal classes share the same space, as they do in yeshiva and sometimes in our beit midrash, the result is an intense and loud community of learners, whose words of study or prayer create a shir hadash – a new kind of sound in service rising toward the Heavenly Throne. As our sages say, study is a form of worship at least on par with prayer. Study and prayer are fully integrated into traditional services, and there is no reason to separate them spatially. Hence, the beit midrash.

In the beit midrash, conversations are not private. Anyone is welcome to listen in and occasionally add their two sheqels worth, even if that means shouting across the room. If someone else is doing something more interesting, why should you deprive yourself of their experience? If someone else is reading something the wrong way, aren’t you obliged to correct that person? In this atmosphere, we learn to be back seat drivers in each other’s lives. We are not simply an aggregation of Jews, but a Jewish community.

At the same time, there are moments that call for quiet reflection, prayer and public reading of scripture, particularly during scheduled public tefilot (prayer services). When these services take place in the sanctuary – with its particular sonic profile – in contrast to the beit midrash, a somewhat more orderly atmosphere is called for.

In particular, it is important to show consideration to others while reciting the Shema and the Amida. The Shema comprises three paragraphs of Torah that we are Biblically commanded to recite twice-daily. The Amida is the series of blessings recited standing thrice daily (four times on Shabbat and festivals, and five times on Yom Kippur). These are to be recited without interruption: “If the king addresses the worshiper, the worshiper should not interrupt their prayers; even if a snake is wrapped around their ankle, one should not interrupt the recitation” (Berakhot 5:1). The sages, though, suggest that one might take into account whether the king is hostile or not, and whether the snake is poisonous or not (Berakhot 33a). BEKI worshipers should use their best judgment about these matters. The point is, we should avoid disturbing those reciting the Shema and Amida, where a “disturbance” would be addressing them or making them move from their place. But it is not a disturbance for others’ voices to be heard (especially if engaged in study or prayer or other necessary sounds); indeed, we are advised by the sages to vocalize our personal prayers. For that reason, “silent devotion” is a misnomer, and I suggest the term “individual recitation” instead.

Although not of the same Biblical or Rabbinic stature as the Shema or Amida, the recitation of the Mourners’ Qaddish (like the Yizkor memorial service) is another point in the service when special care should be taken to not interrupt a worshiper. This is simply because this is a moment of intense emotion and sanctity for some individuals.

We are fortunate that our community members are for the most part respectful of each other and of our study and prayer. Any conversation that takes place in the sanctuary is related to prayer or study or the required logistics of the service. Our members generally do not discuss sports or conclude business transactions in shul (but if they do, we expect a cut). We have a beautiful lobby and extended qiddush that accommodate these conversations. When we all try to be considerate of other’s sentiments, and are understanding of their needs and those of their families or wards, we manage to get along rather well. In the end, I am grateful to everyone who attends daily and Shabbat and festival services and programs, for each is needed to constitute our community.
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<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 5:00pm Bidding for BEKI Live &amp; Silent Auction</td>
<td>2 Yom Yerushalayim 7:45am Rashi Study Group</td>
<td>3 Rosh Hodesh 8:30am Rabbi’s Study Group 5:00pm Benei Mitzva Program</td>
<td>5 12:30pm Talmud Study Group (off-site)</td>
<td>6 8:04 Candle Lighting</td>
<td>7 10:45am Children’s Programs 10:45am Learner’s Minyan Giddush: Rudolf</td>
<td>10:45am Learner’s Minyan Giddush: Rudolf</td>
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<td>27 Iyar/42 L’Omer</td>
<td>28 Iyar/43 L’Omer</td>
<td>29 Iyar/44 L’Omer</td>
<td>1 Sivan/46 L’Omer</td>
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<td>3 Sivan/47 L’Omer</td>
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<td>8 Erev Shavuot 8:05pm (or earlier) Candle Lighting 8:15pm Minha &amp; Festival Service 9:00pm-midnight (or later): presentations, talks &amp; lessons</td>
<td>9 Shavuot Office Closed 9:15am Festival Service 9:06pm (or later) Candle Lighting</td>
<td>10 Shavuot II (Yizkor) Office Closed 9:15am Festival Service</td>
<td>11 5:00pm Benei Mitzva Program</td>
<td>12 12:30pm Talmud Study Group (off-site) 7:00pm Hazak Group Meeting</td>
<td>13 6:00pm Shoshana Lovett Graff Bat Mitzva 8:08pm Candle Lighting</td>
<td>14 9:00am Shoshana Lovett Graff Bat Mitzva 10:45am Children’s Programs Giddush: Lovett-Graff</td>
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<td>15 Office Closed/Vacation 7:45am Rashi Study Group 7:30pm Executive Board Meeting (off-site)</td>
<td>16 Office Closed/Vacation 7:45am Rashi Study Group 7:30pm Executive Board Meeting (off-site)</td>
<td>17 Office Closed/Vacation 5:00pm Benei Mitzva Program</td>
<td>18 Office Closed/Vacation 5:00pm Benei Mitzva Program</td>
<td>19 Office Closed/Vacation 12:30pm Talmud Study Group (off-site)</td>
<td>20 Office Closed/Vacation 8:10pm Candle Lighting</td>
<td>21 Darshan: Rabbi Peter Stein 10:45am Children’s Programs 10:45am Learner’s Minyan Giddush: Families of High School Graduates</td>
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<td>12 Sivan</td>
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<td>22 7:45am Rashi Study Group 7:30pm General Board Meeting</td>
<td>23 7:45am Rashi Study Group 7:30pm General Board Meeting</td>
<td>24 5:00pm Benei Mitzva Program 7:00pm BEKI Annual Meeting and concert by the Connecticut Z’mirah Chorale</td>
<td>25 12:30pm Talmud Study Group (off-site)</td>
<td>26 8:11pm Candle Lighting</td>
<td>27 Miller Baby Naming 10:45am Children’s Programs Giddush: Cooper/Lowell &amp; Miller</td>
<td>28 Miller Baby Naming 10:45am Children’s Programs Giddush: Cooper/Lowell &amp; Miller</td>
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Service Times for Spring / Summer

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