

# BEKI Bulletin

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March 2001 Vol. 7 Issue 3

ק"ק בית אל-כתר ישראל

Adar 5761

## Purim at BEKI

### Fast of Esther

The holiday of Purim commemorates the defeat of a genocide plot against the Jews in the Persian Kingdom over twenty centuries ago. The dramatic (and some would say comic) story is told in the Biblical Book of Esther, which is read on the night and morning of the holiday.

The Fast of Esther, which is observed the day before Purim, marks the serious side of the holiday. While on Purim we joyously celebrate the failure of the plot and mock the racism of its hatches, on the Fast of Esther we fast and pray that we will bring the world to an era that does not know the threat of genocide. The Fast of Esther begins at dawn on Thursday 8 March 2001. Thursday *shaharit* morning services are from 8:15a to 9:00a and include "Avinu Malkenu — Our Father, Our King," familiar to all from the Yom Kippur service. As on

other half-day fasts, no food or drink is consumed. The Fast of Esther is a minor fast, and therefore those with any significant medical contraindications should not undertake the fast. The *minha* afternoon service is at 5:45p and ends at 6:05p. The fast ends at 6:20p, or when the person observing the fast eats, whichever comes first.

### Megilla Readings

The *Megilla* (Book of Esther) is read during the evening service, which begins at 6:30p on Thursday 8 March 2001, and then again during the morning service, which begins at 7:00a, Friday 9 March 2001. If you are a megilla reader and have not yet reserved a chapter to read, run, don't walk, to the nearest telephone and call Rabbi Tilsen at 389-2108 x10 or email to [iwannareadmegilla@beki.org](mailto:iwannareadmegilla@beki.org). Come

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## Why Did He Do It?

by Marc Schwartz

George Posener recently pledged up to \$10,000 to match the increase in each BEKI member's donation to the synagogue's renewal, or Renaissance, fund this year. A few weeks ago, Rob Forbes and I went to George's modest white shingle home in Orange to find out why he made the pledge. Parked outside was his 1985 automobile, somewhat patched up but presentable. His pleasant living room was furnished pretty much as it must have been 25 years ago.

It turns out that George is very particular about where he puts his money. "I'd rather give the money I could spend on a new car to the education of Jewish children. The car is good for a few years.

A Jewish education is forever." In his ninetieth year, his sparkling wit and warm vitality is undiminished. His years have given him a special perspective about what is important in life.

George feels very strongly about Jewish continuity. "Our people have a long and fascinating history. We have survived for thousands of years." The ethical, spiritual, and intellectual jewels of our religion, he feels, must be cherished and protected. He knows about protecting things. The motto of the insurance company he founded was "If you own it, protect it...with insurance." In a way, he feels that we all 'own' Judaism, and if we are



George Posener

*Continued on page 5*

## Purim News

### BEKI Ex-Treasurer Lands in Federal Prison

Professor Stephen Wizacre, ex-Treasurer of the synagogue, recently landed in a federal penitentiary. According to law enforcement officials, the law professor led a group of Yale Law School students on a fact-finding mission to the facility in Marion, Pennsylvania. When the helicopter in which they were traveling landed safely in the prison heliport, the warden greeted the students....

*continued on p.31*

### Kashrut Alert

The commercial product "Human-taschen" baked by the Soylent Green Company is not produced under rabbinic supervision and contains non-kosher meat. Only baked goods produced under rabbinic supervision should be purchased.

### Pope Converts to Judaism

We extend our congratulations to Dr. Marcia Pope on completing her conversion process and formally becoming a member of the Jewish people under the supervision of a Beit Din (rabbinic court).

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### BEKI & Temple Mishkan Israel Presidents Discuss Merger

Following a recent Federation board meeting, BEKI President Dr. Byron Carseat and Temple Mishkan Israel President Seymour Gould had a friendly discussion about the proposed merger of Delta and Continental Airlines.

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Washroom Mirror, photo by Charlie Ludwig

## 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](mailto:jjtilsen@beki.org)

or see our web page created by Phill Simon: [www.beki.org](http://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.

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### BEKI-Bulletin

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## A Message from Rabbi Alan Lovins

There is a basic question that underlies our existence on the planet. This question has given birth to much of the content of Western religions. It has stimulated the development of democracy, political theory, philosophy, science and the arts, all of worthwhile human development and progress. The question is, *why are we here? What is the purpose and meaning of human life?*

I like to think that one early Jewish contribution to society is the answer that we can give our lives meaning by making the world a better place. So the Jews (and the religions that relate back to Judaism) established hospitals, orphanages, welfare agencies, institutions of solace and refuge.

Sometimes in the daily scramble for livelihood, personal comfort, family issues, children, parents, relationships, pursuits of physical and psychological satisfaction, we forget why we are here, and we lose the ability to experience the most profound satisfaction of all – deeds that actualize our need for transcendent purpose and meaning.

We belong to synagogues in order to worship God and to experience community. But there is more. We established synagogues to be vehicles

for making the world a better place, and we use them to satisfy our need for that. In order for that to work, we must recognize our need for planned giving and for charitable intent. More than the synagogue needs us, we need the synagogue. Giving to this institution makes our lives more complete and provides us satisfaction that we crave, even if we do not always know it. The *mitzva* of giving was established in order to enhance our lives and give them meaning.

— Alan

You too can express your charitable intent through planned giving. For further information please contact estate planning attorney Donna Levine at 787-1633 ([sdsij@aol.com](mailto:sdsij@aol.com)) or your own financial advisor. You may also contact Rabbi Tilsen at 389-2108 x10 ([jjtilsen@beki.org](mailto:jjtilsen@beki.org)) or the Director of [The Jewish Foundation](#) at 387-2424 x304 for a confidential discussion.



Rabbi Lovins

## BEKI Religious School Mezuzah Project

As part of their preparation for Pesah, students and families of The New School at BEKI will be studying how we continue to mark our doorposts today with *mezuzot*.

In conjunction with BEKI's Jewish family education program, students and families of The New School at BEKI will be exploring *mezuzot* this month. In class, students will learn about the contents of a *mezuzah klaf* (parchment). All students will be making *mezuzah* cases, and the Gan and Nitzanim classes (K-1 and 2) will have the help of their parents in this project. Families will be learning at home together about the proper placement and care of a *mezuzah*.

All BEKI families are invited to make appointments to have their *mezuzot* checked with a *sofer* (scribe) at BEKI on Sunday morning 18 March (after the 9:00a service until about noon). This is also an excellent opportunity for those children looking forward to becoming *benei mitzva* to arrange for purchase of their *tefillin*. Please call the family educa-

tion office to make appointments: 389-2108 x33.

On Sunday, 25 March, our *mezuzah* project will culminate in an all-school field trip. The children will be divided up in small teams according to geography to visit all of the participating households in their region for the inspection and hanging of *mezuzot*. This is an excellent opportunity to get rid of *Hamets* (leavened food) before Passover: feed the inspectors! The children will be photographing *mezuzot* as they travel, and the resulting poster, Doors of BEKI, will be available for sale at the TNS Pesah happening the following Sunday, 1 April. Posters are also available for sale through the family education office: call 389-2108 x33 to reserve yours! This is a school fundraiser

BEKI's Family Education program is a project of Keshet L'Mishpachah, funded in part by a grant from the Jewish Federation for Greater New Haven and the Jewish Foundation for Greater New Haven.

Anne Johnston

## Purim at BEKI

*Continued from page 1*

one, come all! Hearing the reading of the Megilla (or reading it oneself) is a Biblical commandment (*mitzva*). Other Purim *mitzvot* (religious imperatives) include sending food gifts to a neighbor, alms for the poor, and a feast on Purim day. Children are reminded to keep their adults from talking or making too much ruckus during the actual Megilla reading at BEKI. Please keep hands and feet within the sanctuary until the service comes to a complete stop.

## Koakh Outreach to Students

We will be sending *mishloach manot* (Purim baskets) to our students away at school. If you would like to send one or more packages, please contact Mimi Glenn at 397-3851 by 2 March 2001, with name, address and a short message to be included in the package.

## Mishloah Manot – Purim Baskets

Mishloah manot - Purim Baskets ordered from the BEKI office will be delivered on Thursday night 8 March and Friday 9 March. You can collect the baskets and deliver them yourself on Purim evening or morning; otherwise the BEKI Basket Bearers bring the baskets to recipients within their delivery area. If you can help deliver, contact Gloria Cohen at 389-2070 or email [iwambakbasketbearingbeautifulandbeautifulbaskets@beki.org](mailto:iwambakbasketbearingbeautifulandbeautifulbaskets@beki.org)

## Purim Carnival

Everyone is welcome to the Purim Carnival on Sunday 4 March from 11:00a to 12:30p. Fun, food, games, costumes, prizes galore!





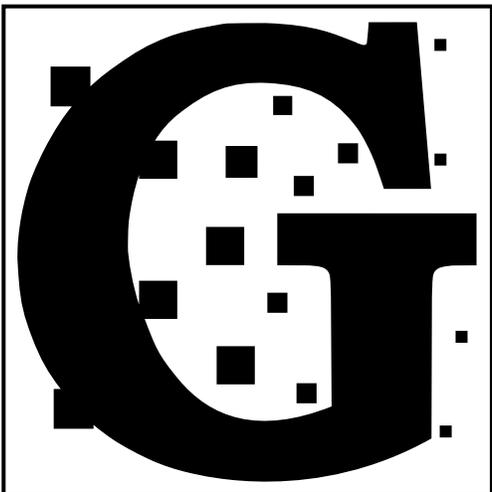
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## Why Did He Do It?

*Continued from page 1*

sensible, we will take steps to protect it, to assure its continuity.

How can we do that? By investing our time and money in the education and spiritual lives of Jewish children and by making the synagogue a place where everyone, rich or poor, knows they can come and pray. "Jews have to change their priorities. Giving money for Jewish causes all over the world while failing to educate and teach our young people about Judaism will mean, in a few years, there will be no Jews left here to support those other efforts." He believes charity begins at home, and that Jewish continuity depends on the strength of our local Jewish community.

A successful businessman, George also believes that the future belongs to those who prepare for it. We can prepare our children for their future by teaching them about their religion and teaching them to help those less fortunate. Backing up this philosophy, each year he gives a *tzedaqa* box to every graduate of the Ezra Academy.

But while we prepare for the future, he feels very strongly that we live in the present. "Why wait to give until after you die – it is so much better to enjoy giving while you are alive." With a twinkle in his eye, he recounted how he had sent a letter to each of his beneficiaries telling them he was cutting them out of his trust – and instead was giving them their inheritance "right now while you can enjoy it." Chuckling, he says that if they enjoyed receiving their inheritance as much as he enjoyed giving it, they were both very happy. To his great pleasure, some of them gave the money they received to Jewish charitable organizations.

He is very fond of BEKI because there are "all types of individuals here, from Yale professors to

shopkeepers. It gives me great pleasure to see and associate with so many of them as they come in and commune with God." George appreciates that BEKI's services are easily understood even by those who do not know Hebrew and "that people there speak English." He relishes the fact that that a husband and wife can sit together in synagogue. "I like BEKI. I want it to be alive long after I am gone – and financially secure enough that we never have to stop people at the door." He feels that those who can afford it should support BEKI so everyone, rich and poor, will have a place to pray.

George's generosity has greatly benefited BEKI over the years. Among his many gifts were the repair of our Torah scrolls and the renovation of the Chapel. A few years ago, he established a building endowment. He has also given to other Jewish causes that are personally meaningful to him. Fifteen years ago, he furnished the newly built Jewish interfaith chapel at the Yale New Haven Hospital and purchased the Jewish prayer books. He loves the idea of people of all religions praying at the same time. In addition, he initiated the Jewish chaplaincy at the hospital because he wants Jews to be able to talk to a chaplain of their own religion during times of need. He also has been a very significant contributor to research and clinical activities at hospitals throughout the country.

A central notion in George's philosophy is the power of two. "It always takes two to create. Adam couldn't have done it by himself." Only by two working together can continuity, on-going life, be assured. "The life after death that I believe in is the life of our community, our synagogue, our children," which is why he made his gift a matching gift. He hopes people like you will join him in the effort to assure a vibrant future for BEKI and its children for generations to come.

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## Selling of Hametz

During the eight days of *Pesah* (Passover) it is forbidden for Jews to eat or own edible hametz. Hametz is any product containing wheat, barley, oats, spelt or rye that has not been especially prepared kosher for *Pesah*. Ideally one physically disposes of all hametz by the morning before *Pesah* (this year, because *Pesah* starts Saturday night, this date is moved up to 10:00a Friday 6 April 2001). In order to be sure that this has taken place, or to avoid the loss of expensive hametz such as liquor, one can sell their hametz for the period of *Pesah*. If you would like to authorize Rabbi Tilsen to sell your hametz on your behalf to someone who is allowed to own it, please sign the form available at each daily morning and evening service beginning at Purim or sign and return the form included in the March synagogue mid-month mailing for that purpose. If you need a form faxed to you, leave a message for Mary Ellen Mack at 389-2108 x14 with your fax number or fax her at 389-5899; you can also find a form at [www.beki.org/forms.html](http://www.beki.org/forms.html).

## LifeCycle

With sorrow we note the passing of Motya Vysochek, father of BEKI member Larry Visochek (& Julie Cohen), on 31 January 2001 in New York.

## Letters

I wish to thank Rabbi Tilsen and all my many friends for their generous contributions, get well cards and kind messages during my recent surgery. It certainly aided my recovery.

I am looking forward to resuming my activities with greater vigor.

*Inge Fish*

The form is a power of attorney allowing Rabbi Tilsen to sell your hametz for you, which he will do in a sale that will be effective at 10:00a on the Friday morning before *Pesah* (with an exception for hametz to be used on Shabbat). Please sign and return the authorization form at your earliest opportunity.

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## Torah for the Hungry Mind: Adult Studies at BEKI

### Darshan in March

Joseph "Jo" Wynschenk will serve as *darshan* (Torah commentator) on *Shabbat Zachor* (the Sabbath of Remembering), the morning of 3 March. Also during March, our benei mitzva will serve as darshanim on their respective *Shabbatot* (Sabbaths) (see "Benei Mitzva in March" in this issue).

### Book Group

BEKI's monthly Book Group meets on Thursday 15 March at 7:30p in BEKI's [Rosenkrantz Family Library](#). For further information, contact Helen Rosenberg at 389-9594 or Marc Schwartz at [marc.schwartz@healthcalls.com](mailto:marc.schwartz@healthcalls.com).

### Reading Torah at BEKI

Thanks to Dr. Paula Hyman for coordinating the Torah readings for the book of *Bereshit* (Genesis) and to Darryl Kuperstock for coordinating the Torah readings for the book of *Shemot* (Exodus), through the end of March. Thanks also to Paul Bass who is coordinating Torah readings for Shabbat afternoon services.

If you would like to read Torah, or learn how to read Torah, call Darryl at (203) 387-0304 ([kuperst@aol.com](mailto:kuperst@aol.com)) or Paul Bass at (203) 397-3046 ([pbass@newmassmedia.com](mailto:pbass@newmassmedia.com)).

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### Rashi Study Group

Each Monday morning from 7:45a to 8:30a adults meet in the [Rosenkrantz Family Library](#) to read Rashi's commentary on the Torah. It is possible to participate for a single meeting or to begin at any time. Knowledge of Hebrew is not necessary. Rashi purported to explain the *peshat* of the Biblical text, i.e., the meaning in its historical, literary and linguistic context. Visitors and new participants are welcome. The Rashi Study Group has been meeting weekly since 1994.

### 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 [jay@jacsw.org](mailto:jay@jacsw.org).

### Sunday Brunch Features Herb Winer

BEKI member Herb Winer was one of the participants in the controversial "obedience experiments" conducted in the 1960's by psychologist Stanley Milgram. Participants were given permission to administer electric shocks to any persons responding incorrectly to a given question. The results of these tests gave rise to questions about whether human beings have an inherent sadistic bent, perhaps explaining how the outrages of Nazi Germany could have occurred. The ethics of conducting such experiments were also very controversial.

This presentation, which was originally scheduled for January, will be on Sunday 18 March from 9:30a until 11:00a and will be offered along with a brunch. Reservations are not required; a donation of \$2 per person is suggested. Please direct any questions about this event to Helen Rosenberg. Her number is 389-9594.

## History of BEKI

With its recent growth in membership, it is quite probable that most of the newer members, including some of the most active leadership, are not aware of the varied history of what is now Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel. In June 1985, the Congregation celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our building. A banner was stretched across Whalley Avenue and the building was wrapped with a giant blue bow. A large banquet was held in the social hall, and a commemorative ad book was published. In preparation for the event the general Chairman, Paul Goodwin, asked me to research and write the history of the Congregation. An adaptation of that history follows. Part of this history is adapted from the work of Rabbi Elliot B. Gertel. – Alan Gelbert

### Part One: Beth El

According to *Jews in New Haven* (vol. 2), edited by Dr. Barry E. Herman, published by the Jewish Historical Society of New Haven, several Jewish families in the Congress Avenue, Washington Avenue, Commerce Street and York Street area felt the need to establish an additional traditional congregation in the late 1800s. "The existing synagogues were already overcrowded.... In 1891 they formed a group for the purpose of worship and study, praying in private homes and hiring a teacher for their Chevra Mishnais (Mishna Study Group). In June 1892, the group purchased land for a cemetery in Hamden's Highwood section under the name 'Chevra Benai Israel.' Articles of Association were filed with the State of Connecticut on July 1, 1892 as the Congregation Benai Israel."

The Congregation purchased a house at 10 Rose Street in 1894, and built a new building during the winter which came to be known as the "Rose Street Shul." Dues were 10 cents per member household per week. In 1901, under financial stress, the group reorganized as "Congregation Beth Hamedrosh Hagadol B'nai Israel." It was the largest traditional congregation in the area for many years.

"The building itself was box-like. The exterior of buff-colored brick had some fancy masonry over the doors, windows and stained glass star of David. The interior was bright and spacious, with a center-located *bimah*.... A gallery for women en-

circled on three of the four walls...."

Membership dues were low, but the shul was filled more by ticket buyers than members at holiday time. *Aliyot* were auctioned to the highest bidder, cantors were hired just for the High Holydays – the more renowned the cantor, the better the ticket sales. The Rabbi did not have a contract with the Congregation. By informal arrangement, he would be available to one or more congregations to deliver sermons, but earned his living by providing personal services such as weddings, funerals and supervising *shehita* (slaughter) of animals for kosher meat. Rabbi Aaron Shuchatowitz began his service as the Congregation's rabbi in 1935. Mr. Louis Friedman became its *shamas* (ritual director) in 1946.

By the nineteen forties and the end of World War II, a second generation, American born, had come along. Post-war prosperity had prompted movement away from the geographic area of the shul, and attendance at Rose Street was decreasing.

### Redevelopment

In 1955, under the administration of Mayor Richard C. Lee, the City of New Haven began a program of redevelopment. One of the first in the country, New Haven was named a "Model City." The goal was to eliminate blighted areas and restore commercial vitality to the downtown section.

A major thrust of the redevelopment program was the Oak Street Connector, a multi-lane highway connecting to and from the Connecticut Turnpike. This would pass through the heart of the so-called "Jewish Ghetto." College Street was to be extended over the highway to Congress Avenue, passing but yards from the site of the synagogue.

In October 1955, the Congregation received a letter from the City about acquiring the building. Paul Goodwin (a BEKI member to this day) was asked to represent the Congregation in this matter. He had worked with Dick Lee in veterans' organizations after the war. His committee included Dr. Samuel Gelbert, Philip Magid, Robert Shure, Louis Goodwin, Edward Weinstein, Charles Byer, Edward D. Goldman, David H. Levine, Edward I. Levine and Abraham Alderman.

The first figure offered by the City was \$92,000.

Edward Weinstein, while running a large grocery business on Dixwell Avenue, was nevertheless a Yale graduate engineer. It was largely through his efforts that the value of the building was augmented to the final price of \$203,000.

The committee had taken a survey of the membership and determined that most of the members now lived in the Western section of the city. It was pointed out, however, that those members who remained in the area of Rose Street would not ride on the Sabbath; therefore, the City would have to make available property in the area on which to build a small synagogue for them. The committee had thus recognized and accepted the responsibility to build two synagogues.

The City offered a parcel of land of 7,000 to 9,000 square feet on Congress Avenue for the downtown synagogue. In Westville, the Benton School property at the corner of Whalley Avenue and Harrison Street was offered. The latter was a beautiful site at the crest of a hill with West Rock as a backdrop, across the street from the Mitchell Library and next door to the Westville Methodist Church. A right of way was negotiated for access to the church from Harrison Street and for parking on Sunday.

The last services at Rose Street were held on Sukkot of 1957. Arrangements were made with the City for the use of a room in the Cedar Street School until the small synagogue could be built. These services were conducted by Mr. Friedman and Rabbi Shuchatowitz. Before the acquisition of the Westville property, all synagogue meetings also took place at the Cedar Street School. High Holidays services in 1958 and 1959 were held at the Jewish Community Center on Chapel Street.

The Congress Avenue property, as it turned out, was coveted by Yale University for future hospital expansion. Yale offered the Congregation a swap for a larger parcel on Howard Avenue. This deal had to be approved by the City Council and the Yale Corporation and was not finally approved until March 1960. Yale retained an option for first refusal on the second parcel.

### **The Rift**

The first plans to be drawn were for the small synagogue, a basic building to house 50 to 75

people at an estimated cost of \$75,000. The majority all along intended to build a downtown shul. It was anticipated that it would one day be the only traditional synagogue in the area and would serve many people on their way to and from work, for Qaddish and for daily services. No action was taken on building because of the delay in acquiring the property.

Meanwhile, the Benton School property had been acquired. Dr. Herbert Winer (a member to this day), lead a crew of men who rehabilitated the yellow house on Harrison Street to serve as a temporary synagogue, school and rabbi's office. Martha Goldman was tireless in organizing the religious school. Joan Gelbert (a member to this day) was the first Sunday School teacher. A nursery school was also organized, under the direction of Gloria Dubrow, assisted by Ethel Goldberg (a member to this day).

A survey of the membership showed that those who intended to go to the Westville site preferred mixed seating (also known as family seating). As it was felt that Rabbi Shuchatowitz was not inclined to adapt to this arrangement, Rabbi Isaiah Rackovksy, who had served in the US Army with Robert Goodwin and was well-known to him, was interviewed and found to be learned and well-spoken. Rabbi Rackovsky, who had Orthodox *semikha* (ordination), did not object to the mixed seating, which was becoming the practice of many Orthodox and most Conservative congregations by that period. Rabbi Rackovsky moved to New Haven with his wife and son and assumed the pulpit of B'nai Israel.

The hiring of Rabbi Rackovsky set up a situation that pitted these two men against each other for the leadership of the Congregation. Rackovsky was now the contracted rabbi for all of B'nai Israel and Rabbi Shuchatowitz was the loser. However, he maintained a strong following in the downtown group.

The General Meeting of the Congregation on 28 June 1959 authorized the expenditure of \$325,000 to build the synagogue on Harrison Street in Westville. The downtown group grew restless with doubt that the small downtown building would

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*Continued on page 14*

## BEKI Events

2001

*March - Adar - Nisan*

5761

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				6 Adar 1	7 Adar 2	8 Adar 3
Shaharit=Morning Minha =Afternoon Maariv=Evening SSLM=Shabbat Shalom Learners' Minyan TNS=The New [Religious] School KISS=Kids in Shul when there's no School	<u>BEKI phone numbers:</u> (203) 389-2108 Fax (203) 389-5899 Mary Ellen-Office x14 Religious School x13 Rabbi x10 Kulanu x33	<u>Office Hours:</u> Mon 9a-12 & 1p-3p Tue by appt. only Wed 10a-12 & 1p-6p Thu 9a-12 & 1p-3p Fri 9a-2p	<u>BEKI email:</u> Office: BEKI@snet.net Rabbi:jjtilsen@beki.org Anne Johnston: anne@beki.org website: www.beki.org	8:15a Shaharit 5:15p Benei Mitzva Prgm 5:45p Maariv 8:00p A.A.	7:00a Shaharit 5:27p Candles 6:00p Maariv 6:30p 20s/30s Havura Group Shabbat Dinner	9:15a Shaharit <i>Darshan: Jo Wynschenk</i> <i>Kiddush in Honor of New Members</i> 10:45a Children's Programs 5:25p Minha
9 Adar 4	10 Adar 5	11 Adar 6	12 Adar 7	13 Adar 8	14 Adar 9	15 Adar 10
9:00a Shaharit 9:30a Religious School and Purim Carnival 5:45p Maariv	7:00a Shaharit 7:45a Rashi Study Grp 5:45p Maariv	7:00a Shaharit 5:45p Maariv	7:00a Shaharit 4:15p Religious School 5:45p Maariv	8:15a Shaharit 5:45p Maariv 6:30p Megilla Reading and Purim Gift pickup 8:00p A.A.	<i>Purim</i> 7:00a Shaharit and Megilla Reading 5:35p Candles 6:00p Maariv	<i>Shushan Purim</i> 9:15a Shaharit <i>Leora Bezahler Bat Mitzva</i> 10:45a Children's Programs 10:45a Cosmic Conversations 10:45a SSLM 5:30p Minha
16 Adar 11	17 Adar 12	18 Adar 13	19 Adar 14	20 Adar 15	21 Adar 16	22 Adar 17
9:00a Shaharit 9:30a Religious School 5:45p Maariv	7:00a Shaharit 7:45a Rashi Study Grp 5:45p Maariv 7:45p Exec. Board	7:00a Shaharit 5:45p Maariv	7:00a Shaharit 4:15p Religious School 5:45p Maariv	8:15a Shaharit 5:45p Maariv 7:30p Book Group 8:00p A.A.	7:00a Shaharit 5:44p Candles 6:00p Maariv 8:00p Late Service	<i>Shabbat Parah</i> 9:15a Shaharit 10:45a Children's Programs <i>Kiddush Sponsor: Stan Saxe</i> 5:45p Minha
23 Adar 18	24 Adar 19	25 Adar 20	26 Adar 21	27 Adar 22	28 Adar 23	29 Adar 24
9:00a Shaharit 9:30a Religious School 9:30a Congregational Breakfast 11:30a TNS Parents Group 5:45p Maariv	7:00a Shaharit 7:45a Rashi Study Grp 5:45p Maariv 6:00p Special Needs Seder	7:00a Shaharit 12:00p-5:00p KISS 5:45p Maariv	7:00a Shaharit 4:15p Religious School 5:45p Maariv	8:15a Shaharit 5:45p Maariv 5:45p Benei Mitzva Prgm 8:00p A.A.	7:00a Shaharit 5:52p Candles 6:00p Maariv	<i>Shabbat Hakodesh</i> 9:15a Shaharit <i>Zachary Chernes Bar Mitzva</i> 10:45a Children's Programs 10:45a SSLM 10:45a Cosmic Conversations 5:45p Minha
1 Nisan 25	2 Nisan 26	3 Nisan 27	4 Nisan 28	5 Nisan 29	6 Nisan 30	7 Nisan 31
Rosh Hodesh 9:00a Shaharit 9:30a Religious School 10:00a 20s/30s Havura Group Brunch 5:45p Minha	7:00a Shaharit 7:45a Rashi Study Grp 12:00p-5:00p KISS 5:45p Maariv 7:45p General Board	7:00a Shaharit 5:45p Maariv	7:00a Shaharit 4:15p Religious School 5:45p Maariv	8:15a Shaharit 5:45p Maariv 8:00p A.A.	7:00a Shaharit 5:58p Candles 6:00p Maariv	9:15a Shaharit <i>Nina Bender Bat Mitzva</i> 10:45a Children's Programs 5:45p Minha

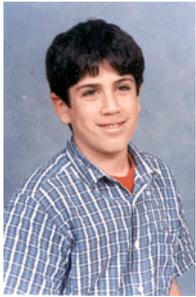
## Benei Mitzva in March

Leora Bezahler, daughter of Dr. Lynn Rudich (& Alan Kleinman) and of Dr. Ronald Bezahler, will lead services as a bat mitzva on Shabbat 9-10 March. Leora is a student at Ezra Academy and a graduate of the BEKI Benei Mitzva Program.



Leora Bezahler

Zachary Chernes, son of Ira & Elizabeth Chernes, will lead services as a bar mitzva on Shabbat 23-24 March. Zach is a graduate of BEKI's religious school and of the BEKI Benei Mitzva Program.



Zachary Chernes

Nina Bender, daughter of David & Sharon Bender, will lead services as a bat mitzva on Shabbat 30-31 March. Nina is a graduate of BEKI's religious school and of the BEKI Benei Mitzva Program.



Nina Bender

## Stan Saxe Bar Torah

Stanley Saxe will lead and participate in services as a *Bar Torah* on Shabbat morning 17 March. During the past several years, Stan has studied Hebrew language, prayer, and other aspects of traditional Judaism. At his *Bar Torah* observance, Stan will celebrate his accomplishments in Jewish studies and affirm his commitment to the mitzva of *Talmud Torah* (study of sacred texts) and to living and growing as an active member of the adult Jewish community. Stan will also present a qiddush following the service to mark this occasion.

## Summer Service Time Schedule to Begin

Mishna Avot, also known as *Pirqa Avot* or Ethics of the Fathers is studied at BEKI each Shabbat afternoon between the *minha* and *maariv* services during the winter months. The last day for Avot study this season will be 31 March. Everyone is welcome. Beginning on Shabbat 7 April, Minha only will be held on Shabbat afternoons at BEKI, and the service time will remain at 5:45p until the end of October. Daily afternoon and evening services will continue to begin at 5:45p Sunday through Thursday.

## Membership Shabbat

On Shabbat 3 March BEKI will honor new members with *aliyot* during the Torah service and a special qiddush, along with other recognition. We will also welcome prospective members.

This is the week to bring a friend to BEKI – especially a friend who might like to participate in, and join, a synagogue. As Sharon Lovett-Graff has said, "Membership is everyone's responsibility," so think of your wayward friends and invite them to join us on 3 March.

Steven Stoll

## Community Second Seder

The Greater New Haven Conservative-Masorti Congregations are again presenting a Community Second Seder on the second night of Passover, Sunday 08 April 2001. This year, the seder will be held at Congregation B'nai Jacob. Services will be held at 6:00p; the seder begins at 6:45p. Adult reservations are \$32.00; children 10 and under are \$16.00 per person; vegetarian selections are available by reservation. For information or a registration form, call Congregation B'nai Jacob (203) 389-2111. Registration forms are also available from the BEKI office and will be included in a mid-month mailing.

## KISS "Snow Day" Program to meet

BEKI's unique "Kids In Shul when they close the School" program, also known as the "Snow Day" program, will meet on Tuesday 20 March 2001 from noon to 5:00p and Monday 26 March 2001 from noon to 5:00pm in the Claire Goodwin Youth Room. The KISS program offers a fun-filled Judaic program for elementary-school aged children on a day when Ezra Academy and public schools are closed for conferences and holidays when parents may have to work. Space is limited. Contact **Anne Johnston** at 389-2108 x33 ([anne@beki.org](mailto:anne@beki.org)) to reserve your space or fax in the registration form available at [www.beki.org/kiss.pdf](http://www.beki.org/kiss.pdf) or from the office

## Thank You for Your Generous Contributions

### **Saul's Circle**

- The **Louis L. Borick Foundation** to continue outstanding work for society through BEKI

### **Qiddush Sponsors (minimum \$75)**

- Leon Cummings in honor of Stephen and Rachel Wizner on their return from a semester in Israel, and in honor of Dr. Paula Hyman and Barry Etra on their return from recent visits to Israel
- Lynn Rudich & Allan Kleinman in honor of Leora Bezahler on her bat mitzva observance
- Stanley Saxe marking his Bar Torah observance
- Liz and Ira Chernes in honor of Zachary on his bar mitzva observance
- Sharon and David Bender in honor of Nina on her bat mitzva observance
- BEKI Membership Committee on "Bring a Friend to BEKI Shabbat"
- Friends of Sarah Serkin wishing her a "Nesiya Tova" on her study in Australia
- Tina Rose marking the yahrzeit of her father, Max Garsen

### **Chai Fund (minimum \$18) to support synagogue operations**

- To Darryl Kuperstock in honor of her USCJ Youth Leadership Award by Robert & Janice Lettick
- To Mikki Ratner with sympathy on the passing of Louise Egalka by Robert & Janice Lettick
- To Charlie Ludwig in honor of his milestone birthday by Robert & Janice Lettick

### **Synagogue Fund (minimum \$10) to support synagogue operations**

- To Mikki Ratner with sympathy on the passing of Louise Egalka by Violet & Charlie Ludwig
- To Mikki Ratner with sympathy on the passing of Louise Egalka by Helen Drucker
- To Jane Kasper with sympathy on the passing of Joyce Arons Wolff by Anna Goldberg
- To Mikki Ratner sympathy on the passing of Louise Egalka by Saul Bell

### **Yahrzeit Fund to support synagogue operations**

- In memory of Jack Yasgar by Howard Yasgar
- In memory of Morris M. Posener by Virginia M. Posener
- In memory of Donna Wright, George Brunswick and

Sidney Cushen by Barbara Cushen

- In memory of William Miller and Rachel Miller by Abe & Ada Fish
- In memory of Ruth Matloff by Kenneth Matloff
- In memory of Annie Cohen by Ruth Maltin
- In memory of Sam Miller by Richard & Victoria Miller
- In memory of Morris Oppenheim by Michael & Joyce Bohnen
- In memory of Reuben Gralla by Linda Schultz & Howard Gralla
- In memory of Eleanor Hepler by Linda Schultz & Howard Gralla
- In memory of Jacob Cohen by Grace Cohen Geisinger
- In memory of Diana Kaufman by Freda and Sol Kaufman
- In memory of Charles and Fannie Rosenblat by Saul Bell
- In memory of Paul and Bella Bell by Saul Bell
- In memory of a loved one by Helen Kaplan
- In memory of Louis Rachlin by Earl & Kranie Baker
- In memory of Mary Nitkin by Bernard Nitkin

### **Murray E. Kahn Memorial Fund**

- In memory of Evelyn Kahn by Richard Kahn

### **Frankel-Mattler Memorial Fund**

- In memory of Ida and Isadore Frankel by Shirley Mattler
- In memory of Esther Black and Jacob Mattler by Shirley Mattler
- In memory of Harry Shultz by Jack & Sylvia Botwinick
- In memory of Jordan Abeshouse by Ruth Abeshouse
- In memory of Marguerite Lerner by Gwen Weltman & Peter Lerner
- In memory of Sarah Miller by Leon & Lillian Weinberg
- In memory of Max Haves by Ethel Haves

### **Harold Ratner Memorial Fund**

- To Mikki Ratner sympathy on the passing of Louise Egalka by David & Sharon Bender
- To Mikki Ratner sympathy on the passing of Louise Egalka by Beth El-Keser Israel Sisterhood
- To Mikki Ratner sympathy on the passing of Louise Egalka by Lenny & Inge Fish
- To Mikki Ratner sympathy on the passing of Louise Egalka by Helen Rosenberg
- To Mikki Ratner sympathy on the passing of Louise Egalka by Paul & Ruth Lopatin
- To Mikki Ratner sympathy on the passing of Louise Egalka by Rena Miller

## Late Friday Service

With the coming of Spring, Late Friday services are back. Led by Irving Weinstein and accompanied by Kevin Mack, the 8:00p service provides a worship opportunity with singing and friendship. The Late Friday service will take place on Friday 16 March. In addition, the 6:00p Friday Night service continues to meet each week.

## Tax Information

Taxpayers are reminded that synagogue dues, pledges and contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. It is helpful to BEKI to receive your payment at an early date. Please consult your tax advisor for more information.

## Torah Fund

Money raised from the purchase of cards through our BEKI Sisterhood goes to the Jewish Theological Seminary to support its many programs.

The Seminary Library, one of the world's greatest repositories of Hebraica and Judaica, contains 350,000 books and 11,000 manuscripts and fragments. Within these volumes is recorded more than one thousand years of Jewish experience. JTS students and scholars from major centers of learning use the library daily. In 1966 the library was damaged by a disastrous fire that miraculously spared the rare book collection. All of the damaged books are now restored or replaced and housed in a state of the art library complex. During the years of rebuilding, our Sisterhood donated over \$4,000 to help in the rebuilding. Continue to purchase cards for all occasions by calling Barbara Cushen at 407-0314.

**Thank you to everyone who purchased Torah cards in January, 2001.**

### **Mazal Tov and Rejoicing With You**

- To George Posener on his birthday from Sheila Gardner and Henry Rothchild

### **Get Well**

- To Regina Faymann from Jay and Janet Brown, Bertha Fleischer, Grace Geisinger
- To Eric Beller from Inge and Lenny Fish, Sheila Gardner and Henry Rothchild
- To Herb Etkind from Grace Geisinger

### **Sympathy**

- To Mikki Ratner in memory of her sister Louise Egalka from Noel and Harriet Barstein, Barbara Cushen, Regina and Martin Faymann, Grace Geisinger, Shirley Mattler, Helen and Richie Ross, Adele Tyson, Helen Miller, Belle Reese, George and Charlotte Saportin, Jay and Janet Brown, Sheila Gardner and Henry Rothchild

- To Mr. and Mrs. R. D. Moses in memory of Dorothy Cohen from Harriet and Noel Barstein
- To Dr. Susan Rickman in memory of Lawrence Rickman from Barbara Cushen
- To the McClenning Family in memory of Gertrude McClenning from Sheila Gardner and Henry Rothchild, Zelda Katz, Shirley Mattler, Helen and Richard Ross
- To Arthur Greenberg and family in memory of Rose Greenberg from Zelda Katz, Shirley Mattler
- To Rabbi James and Elana Ponet in memory of their sister from Ruth and Mort Silver
- To Mark Fisher in memory of his father Bennie from Adele Tyson
- To Elliot Brause in memory of his mother Clare Brause from Adele Tyson and family

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## Dear Rabbi

*An occasional feature of answers, advice and helpful household hints*

Dear Rabbi,

I've been seeing a lot of publicity lately about efforts to get people to trade in their mercury thermometers for digital ones, part of a campaign to reduce mercury contamination. I realize mercury is highly toxic, even in very small amounts. Besides, digital thermometers are easier to use. And we already have one. But because it uses a battery, it's not usable on Shabbat. So we have a mercury thermometer as well.

What's an environmentally conscious observant Jewish family to do? Keep the mercury thermometer, but use it only on Shabbat, and very, very carefully, as we have been? Or get rid of it and become a six-day-a-week temperature-taking family?

Signed,  
98.6

Dear 98.6,

Temperatures have been rising in the feverish debate on mercury thermometers. It's time for cool heads to prevail.

According to various state pollution control agencies, thermometers with blue or red lines do not contain mercury. If accurate non-mercury mechanical thermometers are available, their use on Shabbat would not entail the violations associated with electronic thermometers.

Thermometers with silver lines, however, do contain mercury. Contrary to popular opinion, this mercury is not highly poisonous for most people, even when ingested or exposed to a wound. The mercury becomes a problem if it is disposed of incorrectly, if it is vaporized and inhaled, or if it is ingested over a long period of time.

New electric non-mercury thermometers are usually battery-operated, made of plastic, and have a much shorter life expectancy than traditional glass thermometers. While possibly free of mercury, these new thermometers may, over the long run, constitute an even greater environmental hazard than durable traditional models.

The solution you suggested is a good one. I would suggest keeping a non-electric thermometer, at least for Shabbat use. As you already own a non-electric thermometer, no additional environmental hazard is created by continuing its use.

## History of BEKI

*Continued from page 9*

ever be built. Perhaps they feared there would not be enough money, or perhaps they were fueled by the rivalry between Rabbi Shuchatowitz and Rabbi Rackovsky. Meetings grew heated with personal attacks. Long-time friends became bitter enemies. Overtures by the White Street Synagogue to absorb the B'nai Israel downtown remnant were discussed in committee, and while it appeared favorable, the downtown group refused to attend the meetings.

When the plans for the Westville building showed a one-floor sanctuary with no separation of men and women, the leaders of the Congregation were enjoined with a lawsuit and personal attachments. The basis of the suit was that B'nai Israel was chartered as an "ultra orthodox" Congregation and as such could not have mixed seating.

The downtown group was represented by attorney Robert Berdon, and the Westville group by attorney Louis Feinmark. Before the case came up in court, construction was completed and B'nai Israel Synagogue at Whalley Avenue and Harrison Street was dedicated on the weekend of 24-26 June 1960.

The presiding judge recommended that the suit be heard by a court-appointed referee who would return a recommendation to the judge. The referee was retired Judge Patrick B. O'Sullivan. The plaintiffs presented "expert" testimony by learned rabbis that separate seating was the rule in Orthodoxy. Although mixed seating was allowed in many Orthodox congregations until the 1980s, it had never been endorsed by the Orthodox rabbinic organizations. It remained for Rabbi Rackovsky to vindicate the position of the defendants. But the day before he was to take the stand, he was visited by Orthodox leaders from New York who impressed upon him the negative consequences to his career of testifying that mixed seating was acceptable in "orthodox" congregations. Rabbi Rackovsky announced that he was unable to testify. This prompted Judge O'Sullivan to recom-

mend that a settlement be sought.

The minority faction, ultimately representing about a dozen families, was given the Howard Avenue property, the *Aron Qodesh* (ark) from Rose Street, a number of cemetery plots, and \$30,000 less certain pledges, to be paid over a period of 17 months. They also retained the right to the B'nai Israel name. In the aftermath, Rabbi Rackovsky's services were terminated in April 1961. The remaining 170 families on Harrison Street reorganized as "Congregation Beth El." B'nai Israel ceased meeting for religious purposes after they had to leave the Cedar Street School, and the Howard Avenue building was never built. The assets and name of B'nai Israel were taken by what is now known as "The Westville Synagogue," a nearby Orthodox congregation, in 1974. While its funds and original name were lost, the Beth El group retained most of the member families, memorial tablets, and Mr. Louis Friedman.

Cantor Jordan Ofseyer was engaged to conduct the High Holy Days services of 1961. The members liked the young man and he continued to serve on weekends until completing his rabbinic studies the following year. During his eight-year tenure, Ezra Academy, the Conservative day school, was organized and held classes at Beth El until its growth required it to find larger quarters. BEKI member Marcia Witten served as administrator of the Academy then and still holds that post to this day. In January 1967, Congregation Beth El formally joined the United Synagogue, for the first time officially identifying as a Conservative synagogue.

*In our next issue, "Part II: Keser Israel"*



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## 20s-30s Havura Enjoys Dinner, Brunch

Jewish singles and couples in their 20s and 30s are invited to contact BEKI member Valerie Sandler (777-4784 or [valerie.sandler@yale.edu](mailto:valerie.sandler@yale.edu)) or Mary Ellen Mack (389-2108 x14 or [beki@snet.net](mailto:beki@snet.net)) for information on special events of interest. BEKI's new 20s-30s Havura is primarily for adults without children, and meets about once a month at BEKI for Shabbat services, dinner and *shmoozing* and informal discussion. The Havura is planning a Shabbat Dinner and a Sunday Brunch during March.

People of any age *with* children are encouraged to contact Anne Johnston (389-2108 x33 or [anne@beki.org](mailto:anne@beki.org)) or Mary Ellen Mack (389-2108 x14 or [beki@snet.net](mailto:beki@snet.net)) for information on the Children's Shabbat Havura and other activities of special interest.

## Ramah Family Camp

The Ramah Family Camp will be held from Thursday 24 May to Sunday 27 May 2001 at Camp Ramah in Palmer, MA. The camp is for the entire family. For information, call 781-449-7090 x231 or [ramahfamilycamp@yahoo.com](mailto:ramahfamilycamp@yahoo.com). Camp Ramah serves as the camping arm of the Conservative Movement.

## Special Needs Seder

The Sisterhood of Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, and Kulanu Ke'ehad Havura at BEKI, in conjunction with the Jewish Family Service and Abel Catering, will host the nineteenth annual Adult Special Needs Model Seder at BEKI on Monday 19 March 2001 at 6:00p in the lower level social hall. Each year the Sisterhood has hosted several dozen Jewish adults from the New Haven area with a variety of special needs. For many, this will be their only taste of Passover and one that they relish and look forward to each year.

The Torah teaches of four types of children, and the Haggada reminds us that we must tell the story of the Exodus to each son and daughter of Israel in the way that is most meaningful to him or her. Through the efforts of Sisterhood, Kulanu Director Anne Johnston, the generosity of Abel Catering and the good offices of the Jewish Family Service, the Exodus is reenacted through song, food and story at a table set in the Passover tradition.

Kulanu is BEKI's outreach program for adults with special needs. Kulanu is supported by The David & Lillian Levine Endowment for People with Special Needs at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, which is managed by the Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven. It is also supported this year through a special contribution of Roger and Susan Stone Levine.

If you would like to volunteer to help set up or participate in the seder, or if you know someone who might like to be invited, please contact Sisterhood President Adele Tyson at 389-9599 or Special Programs Director Anne Johnston at 389-2108 x33 ([anne@beki.org](mailto:anne@beki.org)).



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## Calling all Hebrew School Alumni/ae

On Shabbat morning, 19 May, The New School at BEKI will celebrate the learning of its students, past and present, by participating in the Shabbat morning service. We invite any interested alumni/ae to contact the TNS office, 389-2108 x13, to volunteer to participate.

*Anne Johnston*

## Coat Drive

As part of his celebration on becoming a Bar Mitzva, Jason Wiener is collecting warm coats (gently used), toiletries and books. All items will be donated to Domestic Violence Services of New Haven, an agency that provides assistance and support to battered women and children.

Jason will be accepting items until his Bar Mitzva date of 5 May 2001. Items may be deposited in the designated box in the BEKI coatroom.

## Watch those Kids!

Parents of young children attending services at BEKI are asked to be sure their children are always under their supervision. Children are welcome to be in the sanctuary with their adults or in their age-appropriate youth service. Unsupervised children may represent a safety concern to themselves or to others.

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