

## LETTER FROM WORCESTER

### Teaching Continuity

Malka Levine was my first-grade teacher, the person who taught me to write sentences in English, to add and subtract numbers and to read Hebrew.

I was 5 or 6 years old when this all happened, so I don't remember it very well. And I assume that if Mrs.



LEVINE:  
Jewish  
educator.

Levine had not been there, I would have eventually learned how to do all those things from somebody else.

Mrs. Levine died last month, at age 65, of cancer. And what with Yitzhak Rabin, Sara Duker, Matthew Eisenfeld, David

ifshin and Admiral Boorda, I hesitated before inflicting the story of another death on the Forward's readers. But as the Jewish people struggle with the task of producing committed, proud Jews in modern America, the tale of her life is worth telling on behalf of all the Jewish educators who go unnoticed and all the small day schools and summer camps that go mostly unremarked.

She was born in America, but her father was from Poland and her mother was an illegal immigrant from Israel, according to her husband, Rabbi Murray Levine. She met Rabbi Levine before he was a rabbi, when they were both counselors at an independent summer camp in Pennsylvania where students were expected to speak Hebrew all summer. She earned degrees at Brooklyn College and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, where he was ordained. She taught in the New York City public schools.

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Then, when her husband took a job at a Conservative synagogue in Framingham, Mass., she applied to be a teacher at a Solomon Schechter day school that my parents were helping to found here in Worcester, Mass. On May 21, 1978, my dad offered her a job as a teacher — and as the school's first principal.

As my mother remembers it: "On Tuesday, June 13, just three weeks after she was hired, but two months before she started getting paid, Malka held a 'meet the staff night' at our home where she turned our living room into a classroom, bulletin boards and all, outlined the school's general and Judaic studies curricula, dealt with the organizational facets of the school such as tuition, transportation and calendar and presented demonstration lessons. In short, she turned the founding parents' dream into reality and convinced parents to enroll 21 children."

By the time she retired as principal to return to classroom teaching at the Solomon Schechter school full-time three years later, the school's enrollment had grown from 21 to 78, and two grades had been added.

#### *Continued from Page 1*

Mrs. Levine's genius was not only organizational. As a teacher, she managed to balance warmth and caring with exacting standards. She animated learning with songs and games. She built character, writing in the school's first newsletter that "Justice, honesty, charity, responsibility, faith and community are values that are transmitted in the classroom." Since she taught both general and Judaic studies, students got the sense that the two were intertwined. My parents tell me that I once came home and asked them if Mother's Day was a Jewish holiday because Mrs. Levine had said that honoring your mother and father was one of the Ten Commandments.

The teacher kept in touch with her students after class was over and even when school was out. Mrs. Levine was known for her annual visits to Camp Ramah in New England, where she would bring packages of food to her students who were tired of the dining hall fare.

In addition to the Jewish school she led and taught and the Jewish camps where she met her husband and visited over the summer, Mrs. Levine was committed to two other important Jewish institutions: the synagogue and the family.

Rabbi Levine says that just before her death, Mrs. Levine finished a project she had initiated to replace the covers of the Torah scrolls in the synagogue to which she belonged in New Haven, Conn., where she and her husband retired three years ago. Her marriage of almost 45 years, and her three children, Judah, Reena and Mordecai — all married to Jews — are testament to the importance this working woman placed on the family.

Most of Mrs. Levine's students have now graduated from the Solomon Schechter Day School in Worcester. They've gone on to be counselors at Camp Ramah,

leaders of Hillels at Ivy League colleges, volunteers on *kibbutzim* in Israel. The school she helped start now has about 125 students and recently completed a \$2 million capital campaign for a new building.

There's been much agonizing lately among the Jews about the so-called continuity crisis, about the indifference of Jews to their heritage. This has generated commissions and reports ad nauseum. I think, though, that Mrs. Levine had the answers to most of these problems before most Jews even figured out they were problems.

— IRA STOLL



## *Talk of the town*

**By Stacey Dresner**

### **Malka Levine leaves a legacy at Beth El-Keser Israel**

In May, **Malka Levine** of New Haven died of cancer at the age of 65. But Malka was able to complete her last project — she lead a group of volunteers in replacing the covers of several

scrolls at her synagogue, Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel.

Three years ago, Malka and her husband, **Rabbi Murray Levine**, retired to New Haven from Framingham, Mass., where he was a rabbi at Temple Beth Shalom, and she was principal and teacher at the local Solomon Schechter school. Rabbi Levine is currently chaplain at St. Raphael Hospital. They moved to New Haven to be closer to their daughter, **Reena Seltzer** and her family.

The Levines became active members of BEKI, and Malka made replacing the deteriorating covers of nine unique scrolls of the prophets and other writings a priority. She and her group of volunteers custom-designed the covers, and Malka did much of the needlework herself, said **Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen** of BEKI.

"I saw her the night before she died. She wasn't conscious, but her needlework was right beside her. She finished one of the covers, that was one of the last things she did," Rabbi Tilsen said. "If Malka set her mind to do something, she did it. She was determined and capable. She was a very strong woman."

June 28, 1996

## Local rabbis lobby in Washington

Two New Haven area rabbis recently visited Washington, D.C., as part of a national delegation of Conservative Movement rabbis, to advocate positions on social welfare policy.

The Connecticut delegation, Rabbi Richard Eisenberg of Congregation B'nai Jacob of Woodbridge, and Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen of Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel of New Haven, met with Senator Joseph Lieberman, Representative Rose DeLauro, and the staff of Senator Christopher Dodd to convey positions on welfare, immigration, health care, and the separation of church and state adopted as resolutions of the Rabbinical Assembly at its annual convention in May.

The delegation also met with Secretary of Education Richard Riley and presidential advisor Rohm Emanuel. A discussion was also held with William Kristol, former chief of staff of former Vice-President Dan Quayle and editor of the Weekly Standard, and Mark Talisman, former chief lobbyist of the Council of Jewish Federations.

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## Adult education endowment

Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel has received an anonymous gift of \$6000 from a congregation member family to establish an endowment to support its Torah for the Hungry Mind Adult Studies. The endowment will be administered by the Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven, and only the interest will be used to support the Jewish education programs.

For further information on this adult studies program, call BEKI at 389-2108.



### **Torah Pathways class at BEKI**

Talmud scholar Ruth Fagen will present, "A Taste of Mishna & Talmud," on Sunday, June 30, from 10:30 a.m.-noon, at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, 85 Harrison Street, New Haven. This introductory course is for those with or without a knowledge of Hebrew.

Ruth Fagen is the curriculum coordinator for the Department of Jewish Education of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven and serves on the faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and the Drisha Institute.

Torah Pathways is a discussion and study group for adults which meets twice monthly. For further information, call BEKI at 389-2108.

July 19, 1996



### **Book of Life**

Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen of Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel dedicated the 1996 Sisterhood Book of Life at the Book of Life Luncheon recently held at the synagogue. Shown with him is Grace Geisinger, the Sisterhood's 1996 Woman of Valor, who was honored at the luncheon for her dedication to the BEK Sisterhood.



## Children's Shabbat Havura

The Children's Shabbat Havura welcomes preschool children with their parents every Shabbat morning from 10:45 a.m. to noon in the Claire Goodwin Children's Room at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel (BEKI) in New Haven.

Run cooperatively by parents and teachers, the Havura provides a setting for children to enjoy Shabbat by combining song, prayer, stories, and creative activities.

For further information, call 389-2108.

### **'Justice delayed is justice denied'**

Miriam Benson of New Haven has long been involved in the fight to allow women to gather in prayer groups at the Kotel.

Benson says she is not surprised that the Israeli government this week again delayed making a recommendation on how to secure rights for women at the wall.

"We are seeing yet again more food dragging, more inaction," she said. "Justice delayed is justice denied. Again, we are denied the chance to exercise our basic rights."

A lawyer and the wife of Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen of Beth El - Keser Israel in New Haven, she is founding member of the International Committee for Women of the Wall and acts as legal liaison for the organization.

From 1983 to 1989, Benson lived in Israel, where she studied law at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. During that time, she became active in civil and women's rights. While attending a Jerusalem conference on the empowerment of Jewish women, Benson and a group of women decided to hold a prayer service at the Kotel, the beginning of several unsuccessful attempts over the following years.

Benson says she and her comrades have been spit on, beaten and had their prayer books ripped from their hands by angry men and women at the wall.

"I am a Zionist, a Jew and a woman," Benson explained. "In as much as the Kotel belongs to the entire Jewish people, it belongs just as much to women, including women of the Diaspora."



program, is open to adults and children. There will be beginner instruction and tips for the expert with BEKI member Isaiah Cooper, who is a Ba'al Tiqui'a shofar blower and slide-trombone artist. Everyone is welcome and can bring their own shofar or try one of the synagogue's.

The workshop is made possible by the Morris & Sara Oppenheim Endowment for Sacred Music at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel.

For further information, call the synagogue at 389-2108.

### **Sunday, Aug. 18**

**Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel** - New and prospective members' brunch, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., Benson-Tilsen residence, 389-2108.

## **Learn how to sound a shofar**

A "Shofar Sounding Workshop," will be held Wednesday, Sept. 11, at 7:30 p.m., at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel in New Haven.

The workshop, part of the synagogue's adult education

## **BEKI News**

Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, 85 Harrison Street, New Haven, will offer several Hebrew classes. A brush-up class taught by Liz Shanks on Tuesday, Aug. 27, at 7:30 p.m., will be presented for those who know the Hebrew alphabet and wish to refresh their reading skills. Those who are interested in a beginning Hebrew class, to introduce the Hebrew alphabet, and an intermediate Hebrew language class are asked to call the BEKI Men's Club president Drew Allison at 389-9503.

Two workshops on the music of the High Holy Days will be presented by Rabbi Alan Lovins and Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen on Wednesday, Aug. 28, and Wednesday, Sept. 4, at 7:30 p.m. The workshops, made possible by the Morris & Sara Oppenheim Endowment for Sacred Music at BEKI, managed by the Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven, will review the melodies and meanings of selected prayers and poems. The community is invited to attend.

For further information on these classes and workshops, call the BEKI office at 389-2108.

NEW HAVEN REGISTER

SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 1996 PAGE A3

### **Workshops prepare faithful for holy days**

**NEW HAVEN** — Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel will offer a series of workshops during the next several weeks to help area residents prepare for the High Holy Days.

The workshops will be held at the synagogue, 85 Harrison St., between Aug. 27 and Sept. 13, the beginning of the Jewish new year, or Rosh Hashanah. Topics will include a "Hebrew Brush-Up Class," "Music & Poetry of the High Holy Days" and "The Meaning of the High Holy Days."

For information, call 389-2108.



## At our synagogues



### Kids welcome at BEKI High Holiday services

Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, 85 Harrison Street, New Haven, welcomes children during the High Holidays.

Special, parent-led programs

will be offered during the holidays, as will babysitting (for which a small fee will be asked). Ticket holders will not be charged for children, who are included in the adult ticket price.

Kids are also welcome at a workshop on shofar-blowing, to be held on Wednesday, Sept. 11, at the synagogue. Isaiah Cooper, a BEKI member, professional

trombonist, and shofar expert, will conduct the workshop.

For further information on children's programs, High Holiday tickets, or other synagogue activities, call 389-2108.

## Come Home for the Holidays

Rosh Hashanah (Sept. 14-15) and Yom Kippur (Sept. 23)

to

### Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel

- Warm & heimish; traditional & egalitarian
- Participatory, member-led services
- Babysitting & children's programs available
- Student free with ID

85 Harrison St. at Whalley Avenue, New Haven

For ticket information, call 389-2108



### **Kever Avot service to be held**

"Kever Avot" Cemetery Memorial Services will be held on Sunday, Sept. 8, at 10 a.m., at the Beth El Memorial Park in Warner Street in Hamden, and at 11 a.m., at the Keser Israel Memorial Park on Farwell Street in West Haven. Both services will be conducted by Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen of Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, and an opportunity will be afforded to offer private prayers at individual gravesites.

The service is free of charge and will be held near the gates so that Kohanim (descendants of the Biblical leader Aaron) may participate.

For further information, call 389-2108.



## What's Happening

### Friday, Sept. 6

**Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel** - Installation of officers and board, 8 p.m., 85 Harrison Street, New Haven, 389-2018.

**Congregation Mishkan Israel** - Open house reception for prospective members, 7 p.m., 785 Ridge Road, Hamden, 288-3877.

### Saturday, Sept. 7

**Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel** - Torah discussion, with Dr. Robert Forbes, 11 a.m., 85 Harrison Street, New Haven, 389-2108.

**Congregation Or Shalom** - New Haven area Conservative synagogues' annual combined Selichot service, 11 p.m., 205 Old Grassy Hill Road, Orange, 799-2341.

**Congregation Bikur Cholim Sheveth Achim** - Selichot services, 9 p.m. coffee and refreshments, guest speaker Rabbi Josef Kalmenson, "Selichot - Repentance," 10 p.m. services, 112 Marvel Road, New Haven, 387-4699.

### Sunday, Sept. 8

**Temple Emanuel** - Open house for prospective members, 7-9 p.m., 150 Derby Avenue, Orange, 397-3000.

**Independent Vilner Lodge** - Memorial services, noon, Westville Memorial Park, Jewell Street, New Haven, 776-6036.

**Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel** - Cemetery memorial services, 10 a.m., Beth El Memorial Park, Warner Street, Hamden, and 11 a.m., Keser Israel Memorial Park, Farwell Street, West Haven, 389-2108.

**Shoreline Chapter of Hadassah** - Fall brunch, with guest speaker Charlotte Jacobson, national chairman of Jerusalem 3000 special events, 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m., at a private home in Madison, 421-4664, 488-0400, 777-0400.

**Congregation Mishkan Israel** - Interfaith Outreach meeting, 10 a.m., and "How to Build a Sukkah," with Ben Ledbetter, noon, 785 Ridge Road, Hamden, 288-3877.

**Rachel's Table Greater New Haven** - Volunteer recognition brunch, 10 a.m., JCCS, Woodbridge, 387-2424, ext. 325.

**Jewish Home for the Aged** - Brunch and Raffle '96 drawing, 11 a.m., 169 Davenport Avenue, New Haven, 789-1650.

**Masonic Home and Hospital** - High Holiday service, for residents, masons, and their families and friends, 12:45 p.m., Masonic Avenue, Wallingford, 284-3900.

### Monday, Sept. 9

**Jewish Foundation** - Dinner honoring Hyla and Barry Vine, 6 p.m., Congregation B'nai Jacob, 75 Rimmon Road, Woodbridge, 387-2424, ext. 312.

### Tuesday, Sept. 10

**Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel** - "The Meaning of the High Holy Days," with Liz Shanks, 85 Harrison Street, New Haven, 389-2108.

**Jewish Family Service of New Haven** - Workshop, "Adoption in the 90s," 1440 Whalley Avenue, New Haven, reservations: 389-5599.

### Wednesday, Sept. 11

**Jewish Foundation/Bank of Boston** - Seminar on estate planning, 6 p.m., JCC, Woodbridge, reservations: 387-2424, ext. 312.

**Tarbut Na'amat** - Meeting, 1:30 p.m., Westville Synagogue, 74 West Prospect Street, New Haven, 777-1815.

**Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel** - Shofar sounding workshop, with Isaiah Cooper, 7:30 p.m., 85 Harrison Street, New Haven, 389-2108.

### Thursday, Sept. 12

**Jewish Family Service of New Haven** - Workshop, "Adoption/Foster Care of an Older Child," 6:30-8:30 p.m., 1440 Whalley Avenue, New Haven, reservations: 389-5599.

### Friday, Sept. 13

**Yale Hillel** - Apples and Honey Kiddush, immediately following Rosh Hashanah services, Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale, 80 Wall Street, New Haven, 432-1134.

## What's Happening...How to submit

Organizations are asked to send their notices of upcoming events to: What's Happening, attn: Ellen, Connecticut Jewish Ledger, 924 Farmington Avenue, West Hartford CT 06107 or fax (860) 231-2428. Notices must include the name of the organization and its location; the date, time, and place of the event; a brief description of the event; and a contact phone number. The listings will run from the issue date (a Friday) through the next ten days.

The deadline for calendar listings is Tuesday, ten days before publication. For further information, call Ellen at the West Hartford office of the Ledger, at (860) 231-2424, ext. 3008.



# **ALL** *in the* **FAMILY**



Chris Volpe/Register

Cantors Alan Lovins and his daughter, Rachel, will sing together during the high holidays.



# Duo shares duty to faith

By Susan A. Zavadsky  
Register Staff

**NEW HAVEN** — A cantor's voice speaks for the people in the eyes of God, one voice singing for generations of young and old.

But as the Jewish High Holy Days begin tonight, two voices will sing at a local synagogue, a former rabbi and his daughter whose melodies and harmonies will bring two generations of faith to the Congregation Beth El Keser Israel in Westville.

Cantors Alan and Rachel Lovins, who will celebrate Rosh Hashanah services this weekend and Yom Kippur next weekend, say singing together during the high holidays brings them closer together as they get closer to God.

"It feels incredible. It feels very, very close," said Alan, 61. "It's just an emotional, spiritual

experience to do it together."

"This way we're really together," said Rachel, 29. "It feels much less like a job and more like we're celebrating the holidays together."

Alan, a former rabbi who switched to a career in clinical psychology years ago, has been a cantor for more than four decades.

His daughter grew up listening to his voice with awe and decided in college to become a cantor herself.

When she became part of the services, "the holidays became that much more powerful for me than when I just sat there," Rachel said. "It's so much more moving for me."

Her two younger brothers also are cantors — Jonathan, 26, sings for a congregation in Cheshire and Daniel, 28, works in Biloxi, Miss.

*Please see Sing, Page A14*

**New Haven Register**

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1996

## Sing: Father, daughter make duet a tradition

*Continued from Page A1*

Rachel was a cantor for a congregation in Orange for several years and left New Haven for 12 years before returning recently to attend Yale Medical School.

This will be the second time she joins her father at high holiday services. Last year, her son, Benjamin, was only six weeks old and Rachel was unable to handle doing the job solo where she was living in New York. So her father invited her back to New Haven, and they decided to make it a tradition.

The Lovins' music is equally moving for the congregation, said Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen. He said the pair symbolizes the many generations of worshipers at the Beth El Keser.

"Their singing together represents the coming together of the generations," Tilsen said, adding that Alan and Rachel are admired and endeared by the congregation.

"Because both Alan and Rachel are people who are known and are respected in our community, it makes it even more fitting that they represent us," Tilsen said. "So often congregations bring in someone from the outside because of their expertise in the liturgy or their beautiful voice. Alan and Rachel have that, and they are part of the community."

Alan said he loves being a cantor as much for the words as for the music.

"The prayers and poems are emotional and stirring, and put together with the music, it's awesome," he said. "It gives me chills . . . There's a relationship that you feel with the congregation. Part of it is drawing in the people."

For Rachel, singing with her father during the High Holy Days "feels like coming home," she said. "It's coming home to my family and my religion."



## BEKI's childbirth program awarded Gateway grant

Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel (BEKI) has been awarded a grant by the Gateways outreach program of the Jewish Theological Seminary to promote its unique and innovative, "LaMaazel: The Jewish-Spiritual Way in Childbirth" workshop.

The LaMaazel workshop explores the Jewish-spiritual way in childbirth with prospective parents, health care professionals, and others. It is open to Jews, members of other faiths, and interfaith families.

LaMaazel is designed to take away some of the mystery, but to enhance participants' understanding and sense of awe of the miracles of childbirth. It introduces pregnant women and their partners to "tehinot" (prayers written by and for women), appropriate approaches to sexu-

ality during pregnancy, the meaning of names, brit milah (bris), simhat bat (celebration for baby girl), programs for young children and related topics. It is an opportunity to meet a mohel or mohelet (the person who performs the circumcision) who can answer questions about that process.

LaMaazel is a safe space for adults to explore questions they may face: Will the child have a brit mila/simhat bat? What happens if parents or grandparents have differing religious traditions? Can or should the baby be brought up with no religious tradition, one tradition, or two?

The next meeting of LaMaazel will be Sunday, Oct. 27, at 4 p.m. Those interested in attending should leave a message for Rabbi Tilsen at 389-2108.



**LaMaazel:**  
**The Jewish-Spiritual Way in Childbirth**

The LaMaazel workshop explores the Jewish-Spiritual way in childbirth. It is open to Jews, members of other faiths and interfaith families. LaMaazel takes away some of the mystery and enhances your understanding and sense of awe at the miracles of childbirth. LaMaazel helps you choose names, prayers and ceremonies for your baby and share your concerns with other expectant parents.

LaMaazel meets next on **Sunday 27 October** at 4:00 p.m. at the Benson-Tilsen Residence in Westville, New Haven. Call 389-2108 by noon Friday for directions. It's free and it's fun.

Sponsored by the Gateways Project of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and the Torah for the Hungry Mind Adult Studies Program at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, 85 Harrison St. at Whalley, New Haven, CT 06515 <jjtilsen@aol.com> [www.uscj.org/ctvily/newhavcb](http://www.uscj.org/ctvily/newhavcb)





George Posener, right, gives a check to Edward B. Winnick, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven, to establish the Posener Family Memorial Fund for Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel.

## George Posener establishes BEKI building fund

The Posener Family Memorial Fund for Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel (BEKI) was recently established by George G. Posener in memory of his wife, parents, sisters, brother, and two sons.

The fund will be managed by the Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven and a percentage will be transferred annually to BEKI for the purpose of maintaining the syna-

gogue.

Posener has been chairperson of BEKI's building committee, where he managed major restorations last year, including the replacement of the roof. He also oversees the repair and maintenance of many parts of the synagogue.

Posener was honored with the BEKI Distinguished Service Award in 1995 in recognition of his volunteer effort. ■



## LaMaazel-tov !

## Workshop focuses on Jewish issues surrounding childbirth

By Stacey Dresner

There are no breathing exercises and no films of women giving birth like in Lamaze childbirth classes.

"LaMaazel: The Jewish Spiritual Way in Childbirth," a workshop for expectant parents, focuses on childbirth from the Jewish perspective — from prayers that can be recited during labor to discussions on brit milah and baby naming.

LaMaazel was born four years ago when Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen of Beth El-Keser Israel in New Haven and his wife, Miriam Benson, were expecting their second child.

"There were eight couples all expecting, and we said, 'Let's get together and talk about Jewish birth rituals,'" Benson said.

At the same time, Rabbi Tilsen was increasingly dealing with issues surrounding childbirth with members of his congregation.

"I have found that people often come to me as a rabbi with all sorts of questions about pregnancy and childbirth, whether it is about raising children or what to do about a spouse or in-laws who aren't Jewish, or concerns about brit milah or simchat bat [the celebration for baby girls]," Rabbi Tilsen said. "My thinking was that if there are people who would take the time to approach me as a rabbi with their questions, there must be other people who might enjoy getting together with other expectant parents and a mohel or mohelet, and share their experiences or concerns."

This year, LaMaazel was awarded a grant from the Gateways outreach program of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

"The purpose of the Gateways Grant is specifically to encourage programs that reach out to interfaith couples and this program has been pretty effective in that area," Rabbi Tilsen said. "So often young couples or interfaith couples, don't turn to a synagogue unless they are dealing with childbirth or other life cycle issues."

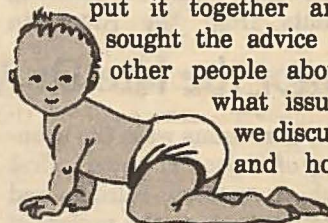
Rabbi Tilsen said that although most LaMaazel participants are Jewish, as is the subject matter, interfaith couples find it a good forum for their own questions concerning childbirth.

"I have had people ask, 'Can we have a bris and a baptism?' and questions dealing with the religious identity of the child. Often people are concerned about being able to include non-Jewish grandparents in things like the simchat bat ceremony. Also there are people who are uncertain as to whether they want to raise their children as Jews, but want to make an informed decision. And pregnancy is often when that decision is made."

**Advice from professionals**

Besides Tilsen and Benson, LaMaazel has benefitted from input from local health care and religious professionals, such as mohelet Paulette Lehrer, Rabbi Murray Levine, Rabbi Alan Lovins, childbirth educator Jennifer Botwick-Ries and social worker Marsha R. B. Beller.

"It has really evolved. We put it together and sought the advice of other people about what issues we discuss and how



**"...May the child be vital and healthy. May I not struggle only to achieve emptiness, may I not labor in vain, God forbid.**

**Because you alone hold the key to life, as it is written, And God remembered Rachel and listened to her and opened her womb (Genesis 30:22).**

**— Prayer to be said during labor, as taught in LaMaazel.**

to talk about them best," Rabbi Tilsen said.

Besides typically Jewish issues such as the bris or baby-naming, LaMaazel also deals with sexuality during pregnancy, and the spiritual side of childbirth through prayers specifically for pregnant women.

"We touch on the anxieties around being pregnant and giving birth," Benson explained.

"When I was first pregnant, I was terrified about the unknown. These sorts of things can be seen through the lens of spirituality."

Paulette Lehrer, the mohelet who has spoken at nearly every LaMaazel workshop, said she thinks the workshop can help expectant parents think about the future in terms of the Jewish world.

"I really feel that many times parents may have been married in a synagogue, but then they sort of let things ride for a while," she said. "Once you are pregnant there are all these thoughts — 'How do I fit in, how does the baby fit in?' It is really important to be receptive to those feelings and LaMaazel is an excellent way to make that transition."

Ellen and Jeff Katz of New Haven, who are expecting their second child in November, took part in a LaMaazel workshop in July.

"When I gave birth the first time, we were overseas and there was no Jewish community," Ellen Katz recalled. "So I thought this time we would see what the Jewish community had to offer. LaMaazel is helpful for people who have questions about things like a bris or baby naming, but a big reason we went was to meet other women in the congregation who were expecting."

Rabbi Tilsen agreed that the program appeals to young members of his congregation on a social level, but that the goal is to be an educational program for people throughout the entire New Haven area.

"We do want to make it more broadly accessible, and people, regardless of synagogue affiliation, are happy to come," he said. "It is not done as a recruitment tool, to be honest, but part of my agenda is to get people involved in synagogue life, but it should be the synagogue that is right for them." ■



**Page A4 New Haven Register, Saturday, November 16, 1996**

**Beth El-Keser lecture**

**NEW HAVEN** — The public is invited to a lecture, "The Jews of Hong Kong," by Yale Professor Robert Johnston and Jewish educator Anne Johnston, at Late Friday Service, 8 p.m. Nov. 22 at Beth El-Keser Israel, 85 Harrison St. For information: 389-2108.

## Women's League meeting

The Connecticut Valley Branch Women's League for Conservative Judaism will hold a branch meeting and lunch on Tuesday, Dec. 3, at 10 a.m., at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, 85 Harrison Street, New Haven. Guest speaker will be Lili Schlossberg Fogle, project coordinator of Communities Against Violence in the Home. Her topic will be, "Domestic Violence in the Jewish Community: Myth vs Reality."

Communities Against Violence in the Home is a coalition of more than 65 agencies dedicated to creating a community response to domestic and

sexual violence. Members represent court agencies, law enforcement, clergy, health care providers, social service agencies, schools, politicians, community leaders, and community groups from eastern Fairfield County. The organization recently won a grant from the Bridgeport Police Department to create a domestic violence office in the Bridgeport community police substation.

Attendees are asked to bring toiletry items for donation to a shelter for battered women. For further information and reservations, call 203-389-9599.

## From our Synagogues

### Haftorah practicum

NEW HAVEN — A my Pincus will lead two Haftorah workshops at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, 85 Harrison Street, New Haven. The workshops, made possible by the Morris & Sara Oppenheim Endowment for Sacred Music at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel and managed by the Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven, are designed for those who have never read a Haftorah or who have not read one since their bar/bat mitzvah.

The first workshop, on Tuesday, Dec. 10, at 7:30 p.m., will introduce the concepts and the table of trope. On Tuesday, Dec. 17, at 7:30 p.m., the second workshop will be a practicum designed to improve and reinforce the skills learned in the first.

For registration and further information, call the BEKI office at 389-2108.



### **Beth El-Keser offers lecture, special events**

**NEW HAVEN** — The public is invited to the following lectures and special events at Beth El-Keser Israel, 85 Harrison St., at Whalley Avenue. For information: 389-2108.

■ "Shabbat for the Rest of Us," a Torah pathways discussion with Rabbi Tilsen, at 9:40 a.m. Dec. 15.

■ Shabbat Shalom Learner's Minyan with Steven Fraade and Alan Lovins, 10:45 a.m. to noon Dec. 21.

■ Pirke Avot study session following 4:10 p.m. Minha service; Havdala after 5 p.m. service Dec. 21.

The Shul in the News...

What they're writing about

**Congregation**  
**Beth El-Keser Israel**

*March 1998*

## **Jewish, Arab Israelis to discuss coexistence**

**NEW HAVEN** — Two Israeli citizens, one Arab and one Jewish, will discuss "Israel's Next 50 Years: The Coexistence Challenge," in a special program Sunday at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, 85 Harrison St.

The event is co-sponsored by The Abraham Fund, a not-for-profit fund-raising and educational organization whose goal is to enhance coexistence in Israel among its Jewish, Arab, and Druze citizens.

Other sponsors are the Connecticut Coalition of Arabs and Jews for Peace and Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel. The event is from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and includes brunch.

The speakers are Mohammed Abu-Nimer, assistant professor at the School of International Service, Peace and Conflict Resolution at American University in Washington, D.C., and Ron Kitrei, a former colonel in Israel's defense forces central command and principal of the Hebrew Reali School, Haifa, Israel.



## Arab and Israeli educators to lead dialogue

**T**wo Israeli educators, an Israeli and an Arab, will hold a dialogue entitled, "Israel's Next 50 Years: The Coexistence Challenge," at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, 85 Harrison Street, New Haven, on Sunday, March 22, at 11 a.m.

Mohammed Abu-Nimer, an Israeli native and citizen, is assistant professor in the School of International Service, and director of the Conflict Resolutions Skills Institute at American University in Washington, D.C. He has held several teaching, research, and curricular positions relating to conflict resolution, with particular focus on the Middle East.

Ron Kitrei, also an Israeli native and citizen, was a career officer in the Israeli Defense Forces for 26 years, rising to

the rank of colonel in the Central Command, with specific responsibility in army intelligence analysis and training. Since 1996, he has been principal of the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa, an independent public 12-year-school, with a progressive philosophy.

This program is being co-sponsored by the Abraham Fund, an organization which promotes Arab-Jewish cooperation within the state of Israel, and the Connecticut Coalition of Arabs and Jews for Peace, a local organization which facilitates dialogue between area Jews and Arabs. The program is free of charge and open to the community. Brunch will be served.

For more information, call the synagogue office at (203) 389-2108. ■

# Arab, Jew unite in peace crusade

By Giselle P. Richards-Genece  
Register Staff

**NEW HAVEN** — At age 36, Mohammed Abu-Nimer still can remember the harrowing stories his father told him about the suffering he and other Arab Israelis endured trying to survive in Israel over the past half-century.

But even today, Abu-Nimer said he experiences some of the same harsh realities his father told him about.

On several recent trips to Israel, Abu-Nimer, an Israeli citizen, said he was strip-searched because he, like other Arabs, have been labeled a threat to Israel's national security.

ty.

But Abu-Nimer, an assistant professor at the School of International Service, Peace and Conflict Resolution at Washington's American University, said he has no hard feelings.

In fact, to commemorate Israel's 50th anniversary, he wants to help find a way for Jews and Arabs to coexist peacefully and show the world that most Arabs are peaceful, law-abiding citizens.

"I look back at our Jewish neighbors and I wish the next 50 years could be different. We have to live together, it is our destiny," Abu-Nimer told approximately 100 listeners at an event focusing

on Arab-Jewish relations in Israel. The event was held Sunday at the Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel at 85 Harrison St.

For hundreds of years, Jews and Arabs have fought over issues having to do with land and national identity. As a result he said there's a lack of trust between the two. But Abu-Nimer said many Jews and Arabs want to put the past to rest.

He was joined by Jewish-Israeli speaker Ron Kitrei. Both men were born in Israel.

Kitrei, a principal at the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa, Israel

*Please see Israel, Page A4*

## Israel: Speakers in city urge peace

*Continued from Page A3*

flew in this weekend for the talk. The men met for the first time Sunday during their crusade for peace.

"The picture is gray and turning darker. There's extremism on both sides. We can interpret the past differently, but the truth lies somewhere in the middle," Kitrei said. He said the best way to change history is to teach youngsters to change the image.

The talk was well received by many of the listeners who mostly agreed a change is long overdue. Debby and Bezalel Porten of New Haven said Jews and Arabs in America should work to change tensions in Israel.

Rabbi Murray Levine, also of New Haven agreed. He said like himself, Jews and many others have treated Arabs unfairly, especially by dubbing them terrorists.

"I hope that the future will enable both Jews and Arabs to live together in peace," he said.

The event was co-sponsored by the Abraham Fund, a non-profit fund-raising and educational organization. The fund's goal is to enhance co-existence by supporting programs that encourage tolerance and promote understanding among all Israeli citizens.

The Connecticut Coalition of Arabs and Jews for Peace and Congregation Beth-El Keser Israel also were co-sponsors.

# front

## 'All as One'

BEKI program reaches out to adults with special needs

By Dorine Leogrande

One Shabbat morning, Anne Johnston noticed a few newcomers at her synagogue—adults with special needs—who were struggling to understand the all-Hebrew service.

These visitors to Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel (BEKI) in New Haven came from Chapel Haven, an agency down the street where adults with developmental disabilities participate in an assisted learning apartment program.

At Chapel Haven, adults learn how to do everyday chores—how to cook, clean, and balance a check book. But the Jewish residents also wanted to learn about synagogue life and their Jewish heritage.

As a special educator, Johnston wanted to integrate these adults into BEKI's services with "dignity and respect." She wanted them to feel that BEKI was their "spiritual and social home."

She and BEKI spiritual leader Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen procured an \$18,000 grant from the Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven to start up a two-year program, which will offer Jewish education for adults with developmental disabilities and for adults with chronic mental illness in the greater New Haven area.



Anne Johnston and Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen of Beth El-Keser Israel started "Kulanu," a study and friendship circle.

(continued.)



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(Continued)

### 'Kulanu Ke'Echad Havura'

The program started last fall. Called "Kulanu Ke'Echad Havura" (a phrase Tilsen picked from Birkat HaMazon-Grace after Meals), it means, "all as one."

"This program," Tilsen explained, "addresses a need unmet by the Jewish community of Greater New Haven. It incorporates a component to explore how participants can make Jewish observance more a part of their home lives, just as they may learn in their residential and guided-living programs how to live independently."

Johnston added, "The idea is there's lots of JCCs and synagogues around the country doing nice little segregated programs. Let's give these people their own group and space and we'll teach them. Kulanu is a bridge to open up the synagogue to help our congregants be more welcoming and informed, and to help our syn-

agogue be a less threatening place to walk into if you're not used to it."

### Reaching out

Kulanu is a one-woman show run by Johnston, a 35-year-old from out west. Years ago, Johnston converted to Judaism. She then taught Jewish education in synagogues in Iowa, Oregon, and Nebraska.

Aside from being education coordinator at Congregation Or Shalom in Orange, and teaching courses at MAKOM Hebrew High School in New Haven, she teaches Kulanu classes at BEKI, the Keefe Community Center in Hamden, and the Learning Barn at Fellowship House in New Haven. Her Kulanu students range in age from 18-50.

A few weeks ago, Johnston held a belated Tu B'Shevat seder for her students—they ate Israeli food, talked about the current situation in Israel, and planted parsley seeds so they'll have parsley at their Passover seder. "This way, they'll see the passage of Jewish time," she explained.

For Purim, several volunteers with special needs (from the Learning Barn), will help run a children's program at BEKI. Johnston and her Kulanu students will "brainstorm" about Purim costumes, learn about "cool" shiny face make-up and hair mascara, and make "shalach manot" with leftover Valentine's Day candy.

Soon, Kulanu will start a class in intensive Jewish learning (study of Hebrew and liturgy) to help "diminish the distance between the 'bima' and the 'pews,'" said Johnston.

By request, a Hebrew-sidur class will be held at the

Learning Barn. She hopes BEKI congregants will volunteer and teach Kulanu students Hebrew one-on-one.

Johnston will also ask BEKI members to provide home hospitality—inviting participants over for Shabbat lunch or for the High Holiday meals. (BEKI provides clients with free tickets for High Holiday services).

In the summertime, Kulanu participants may have a joint program with one of BEKI's social action committees—they will clean up Beaver Pond Park in southern Connecticut, where congregants have held Tashlich services during Rosh Hashanah.

Kulanu also plans to provide a job training sight at BEKI for adults with developmental disabilities who have the capacity to move into simple jobs at businesses like Kinko's.

Finding clients to attend the Kulanu classes seems to be Johnston's biggest challenge. She admitted, "Part of the challenge is to locate people who are interested. Agencies just want me to drop off fliers—but that's not bringing in enough participants."

Tilsen noted that Kulanu is being thoroughly documented so the materials and program model can be disseminated.

"Our goal," said Johnston, "is to reach out to these people to help them feel at home. If every other congregation in the Greater New Haven area wanted to do this, we'd be thrilled to pieces. For, after all, that's what 'k'lal Yisrael' is all about." ■

For more information on "Kulanu," contact Anne Johnston at BEKI, (203) 389-2108.

# In Greater New Haven

## Apples and honey in the delivery room BEKI rabbi and wife welcome Rosh Hashanah baby

By Lisa S. Lenkiewicz

**N**EW HAVEN—Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen's Rosh Hashanah sermon was about the impressive growth of Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel. In particular, he cited the number of children now coming to the New Haven synagogue.

Four years ago, when he assumed the pulpit at BEKI, there were about 70 children. Today, there are 165.

"Oops—I mean 166!" said the rabbi, announcing the joyous news that he and his wife, Miriam Benson, welcomed a baby girl into the world on Erev Rosh Hashanah.

Baby Benson-Tilsen is the first Jewish child known to be born in Connecticut in the New Year. She arrived on 1 Tishrei 5758 (Wednesday, Oct. 1, at 8:18 p.m. to be precise.)

### The essentials

When Miriam, almost two weeks overdue, went to Yale-New Haven Hospital Wednesday afternoon, she was already in labor. The rabbi knew it might be a long night. So Tilsen packed an overnight bag with all of the essentials—apples and honey, challah and grape juice!

In the delivery room, between weighing and measuring the baby, the rabbi, his wife, their midwife and labor nurse ushered in the New Year with the traditional Rosh Hashanah food.

At 11 p.m. that night, the rabbi walked some three and a half miles home from the hospital, and was in synagogue on time Thursday morning for services.

"I was nervous about his

walking home so late at night, but he wasn't worried," said Miriam. "Since it was Rosh Hashanah, I couldn't speak to him on the phone to make sure he got home okay."

The next day, Tilsen walked back to the hospital. This time he brought a shofar, which he blew not only for his wife, but also for other Jewish patients.

### The miracle of creation

This baby is number three for the couple, who also have a daughter, Gilah, 6½, and a son, Tsvi, 4½. The baby's name was to be announced at the simchat bat baby naming during the Shaharit morning service on Thursday, Oct. 9.

"I've never missed a Rosh Hashanah service in my life," said Miriam, adding that Rosh Hashanah being "such a communal holiday," it was especially hard for her to be alone in the hospital. But, she noted, as Jon-Jay said from the pulpit, what joy to witness the miracle of creation on the day we mark the birthday of the world. ■

The Shul in the News...

What they're writing about

**Congregation**  
**Beth El-Keser Israel**

*April 1998*



# Remembering Holocaust survivors on April 23

Survivor — I know of no word in the English language that carries more affirmation of life. It means, according to the dictionary, "to continue living or existing after an event or another's death." Many older people are survivors.

I've been talking to two individuals who have expert knowledge of a special kind of survivors, those who were victims of the Holocaust in the World War II era that left as many as 6 million Jews dead.

Of those who escaped, many came to the United States and some settled in the New Haven area. Those still alive are primarily in the mid-70 to mid-80 age group. They became outstanding citizens and have left progeny to be proud of.

Sally Horwitz, 70, is a little younger than most survivors; she was only 17 in 1945 when she and her sisters, Manya and Franya, were freed from concentration camps by Russians. She tried to return to her hometown, Zwolen, in Poland but "a pogrom was under way in Kielce, 45 kilometers away. I barely escaped with my life." (My dictionary defines a pogrom as "an organized persecution and massacre of a minority group, especially Jews.")

In New Haven Sally soon met and married Mort Horwitz who became an insurance broker and it was in their Chapel Street home that I spoke with her and Arnold Lehrer, a Chapel Street realty agent.

Arnold is the son of a survivor, Irwin Lehrer, 70, whose exit from Europe was similar to Sally's. He was released from a camp in Russian Uzbekistan, wanted to go to his hometown, but was dissuaded because of pogroms. He eventually came to New Haven, learned the upholstery trade and opened his own shop.

The terrible experiences he went through before he arrived in this country are still very much in



Al Sizer/Register

Sally Horwitz and Arnold Lehrer plan a Holocaust remembrance.



ALVIN V. SIZER

SECOND ROUND

his mind. "My father has had many nightmares," revealed his son, "and sometimes has woken up screaming."

Sally and Arnold and their colleagues have a mission: to memorialize the Holocaust and ensure it will never be forgotten. "If we forget our past," says Sally, "we are destined to repeat it."

They are leaders in the endeavor to keep the Holocaust and its lessons alive. Arnold is co-chairman, with Betty Norman, of the Holocaust Remembrance Committee, a branch of the Jewish Community Center.

Sally is vice president of the Holocaust Survivors Fellowship of

Greater New Haven of which Sylvia Zamkov is president, Irwin Lehrer, vice president, and Mort Horwitz, honorary secretary.

They say they owe eternal gratitude to William Rosenberg, only survivor of a family of nine, who founded the Holocaust survivors group and started the Holocaust Video Archives at Yale.

Plans are now being completed for the most important local Holocaust event of the year, Yom Ha-shoah, the Day of Remembrance, scheduled for April 23. It will begin at 7 p.m. with a march from the Holocaust Memorial at Whalley and West Park avenues. About 100 children will carry candles in the procession to Beth El Keser Synagogue at Whalley and Harrison Street where 700 are expected to attend a special service.

Arnold explained the background of the memorial service: "It was designed by a committee back in the 1960s when there were about 160 survivors here and we have always wanted it to be a community event, not solely Jewish. We have had involvement from clergy of other faiths and civic

leaders. There will be a program and speeches. Survivors will light a candle and a second-generation child of a survivor will read an account of what they endured.

"The purpose is to remember the 6 million who perished, to show strength, to testify that the Nazis did not win, that the survivors are strong and multiplying."

I asked Sally to comment on that. "The younger generation has sort of taken over," she smiled. She and Mort have three children and 12 grandchildren, as a case in point.

What were the aspirations of survivors who came to New Haven?

"We wanted an education. We wanted to go to college but couldn't afford it. We wanted to learn English quickly. We wanted to make sure our children went to school and college. We wanted to become citizens as soon as possible.

"I think our background had a positive effect on our descendants. They have carved out enviable careers, many in the professions."

All was not discrimination-free in this country, either. She remembers her son being told by a schoolmate, "Jew bagel, go back to Palestine!" But, she says, he too survived and prospered.

Sally wanted to see everything America meant to her, like the Statue of Liberty. Visits followed to New York, Philadelphia and Washington. Mort took her to Yale Bowl, where she saw famed Eli football star Levi Jackson play.

She summed up her feelings about the Holocaust:

"I think you might say that in the Holocaust God was testing humanity and from it came those who survived and made much of their lives."

They will be honored here April 23.

*Al Sizer is the former associate editor of the Register. His column appears here each Sunday.*



### **Remembrance day will be held at synagogue**

**NEW HAVEN** — Greater New Haven's annual public Yom Hashoah, or day of remembrance for the victims of the Holocaust, will be held at 7 p.m. Thursday at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, 85 Harrison St.

It will be preceded at 6 p.m. by "Mini-March of the Living" for junior high and high school students. The students will march from the Holocaust Memorial on Whalley Avenue to the synagogue.

Six Holocaust survivors with ties to New Haven will discuss their experiences. The service will include a performance by Ezra Academy Youth Choir, a candle-lighting ceremony and communal memorial prayers.

For more information, call the Jewish Community Center at 387-2522, Ext. 203..



# Holocaust victims' stories recalled

By Randall Beach  
Register Staff

**NEW HAVEN** — Their memories are unbearable and unbelievable, but every word is true. Thursday night, their voices spoke out at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, reminding humanity never to forget.

On an international day of remembrance for victims of the Holocaust, six survivors with ties to the New Haven area told of labor camps, shootings, beatings and gas chambers.

One of the evening's themes was educating today's children about what happened. As part of that effort, a group of junior high and high school students met at the Holocaust Memorial on Whalley Avenue and marched in a driving rainstorm to the synagogue.

The survivors, each of whom lit a candle to honor Holocaust victims they had known, stood on the stage as their descendants standing next to them read their accounts of the horror.

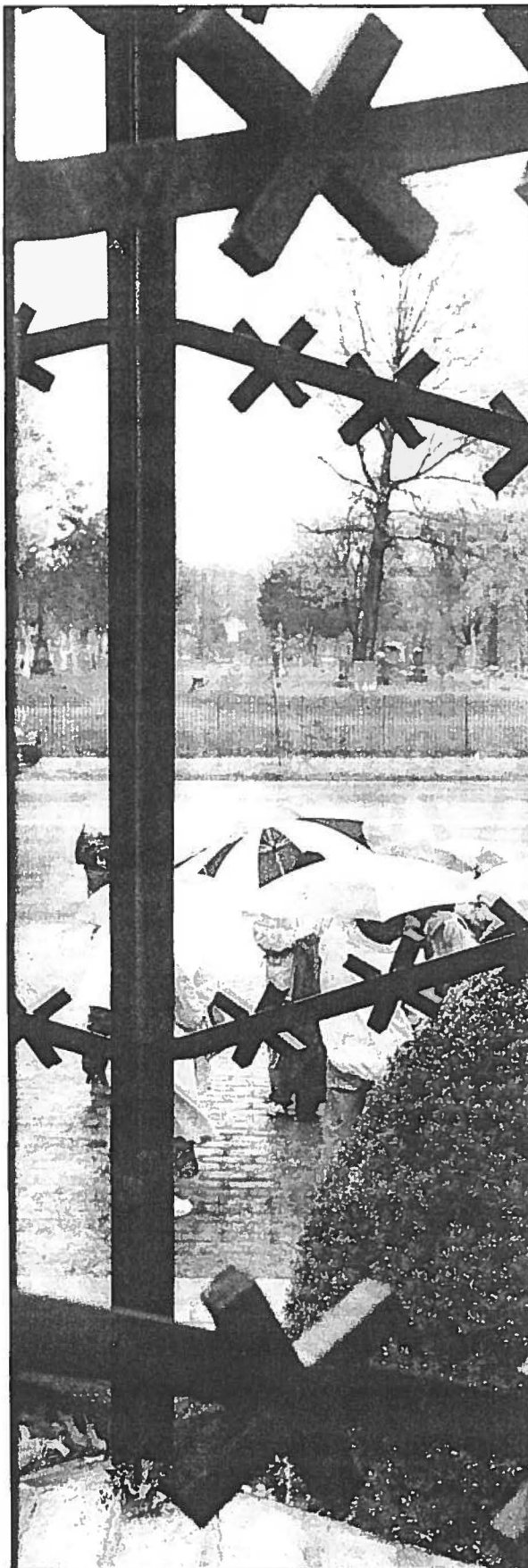
Sonia Markman of New Haven, whose recollection was read by Wes Markman, said her life changed forever in the summer of 1941 when the Germans marched into her town in Poland. After first beating old villagers with sticks, the soldiers escalated their tactics.

"They dragged people out of their homes, clubbing them, forcing them to the town square," Markman said. "The people were given shovels and told to dig their own graves. Then they were all shot."

Markman hid with 13 other friends and family members, crouching in an underground crevice beneath their kitchen stove. "But when my mother and four of my cousins went to the attic, the Germans found them. As they dragged my mother out of our house, we heard her say, 'My life has ended, take care of the children.'"

"We heard five gunshots, one for each person. Three days later, when the shooting stopped, we went outside. I saw my mother lying dead in front of our house. I held her in my arms."

Jerry Ravski, whose remembrance was read by his son, Norman, of Woodbridge, described brutality, forced labor and gnawing hunger in a ghetto created by the Nazis in Poland. "In 1942, my parents died of starvation. . . . My brother and I were taken to Auschwitz with



Chris Volpe/Register

Teen-agers gather Thursday night at the Holocaust Memorial before their march to Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel.

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## Holocaust: Victims' stories of horror retold

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my sister. We never saw her again."

Ravski said the years that followed were a hellish maze of other camps and forced death marches.

"One day we were marched into a gas chamber — but for some reason we were not given gas."

When the camps were finally liberated in 1945, Ravski said, "My brother and I were the only ones of our family who had survived. . . . No decent human being will ever be able to understand what those German beasts unleashed on us. But they did not succeed in completing their plan of horror."

As part of the evening's ceremonies, New Haven Mayor John DeStefano Jr. spoke about the challenge of remembering the lessons of the Holocaust as more and more years go by. His proclamation was read designating April 19-26 as days of remembrance in memory of the 6 million victims of the Holocaust. Thursday was also proclaimed a particular day of remembrance, in honor of Yom Hashoah.

The commemoration was held in the wake of a survey by the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, revealing that 20 percent of Americans don't know or aren't sure Jews were killed in the Holocaust.

See Holocaust, Page A4

## **Remembrance day will be held at synagogue**

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Six Holocaust survivors with ties to New Haven will discuss their experiences. The service will include a performance by Ezra Academy Youth Choir, a candle-lighting ceremony and communal memorial prayers.

For more information, call the Jewish Community Center at 387-2522, Ext. 203..

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**Beth El-Keser Israel**

*Summer 1998*



# Connecticut Jewish Ledger

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**New Haven - Congregation**  
*Beth El-Keser Israel* - Tiquin  
Leil Shavuot Sweeter than  
Honey Late Night Adult  
Study, Mincha service 8 p.m.,  
study; 8:30 p.m., 85 Harrison  
Street, New Haven, (203)  
389-2108.

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## Susan Voigt named deputy sheriff

Susan Voigt was recently named a deputy sheriff, by New Haven County High Sheriff Frank Kinney. Voigt is the county's first woman deputy sheriff.

The business manager of Yale University's Peabody Museum of Natural History, Voigt is the membership coordinator at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel.

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## Eva Landau

Eva Landau, daughter of Helen Rosenberg and Charles Landau, was called to the Torah as a bat mitzvah on Saturday, April 4, at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel in New Haven,

## Danya Cheskis-Gold

Danya Cheskis-Gold, daughter of Martin Gold and Rena Cheskis-Gold, was called to the Torah as a bat mitzvah on Saturday, May 9, at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel in New Haven.

# OPINION

## New Haven Register

FOUNDED 1812

INCORPORATING THE JOURNAL-COURIER, FOUNDED 1755

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### LETTERS

## Palestinians never owned the land of Israel

While the sentiment expressed in the title of the July 29 letter, "Americans need to recognize the plight of the Palestinians," is laudable, the letter presents a distorted and misleading history.

The writer observes, "The Jews owned only 7 percent of Palestine, but they were given 55 percent of the land." Are we to assume that Palestinian Arabs owned the remaining 93 percent of that land? In fact, 70 percent of the land was owned by the British government, which took title from the Ottoman emperor after World War I. Of the remaining 23 percent, part was owned by the Muslim Trust for Holy Sites, part by the Vatican and other churches, and much of the rest by absentee, non-Palestinian landlords living in Beirut, Damascus and Baghdad. Little was owned by native Palestinian Arabs.

Only 7 percent was owned by Jews because the British government would not transfer title to Jews, and because Arabs wishing to sell land to Jews were deterred by death threats from Arab nationalists. Jews and Arabs alike viewed the Ottoman and British control of



Palestine as illegitimate, and did not accept their system of land ownership and registry.

From World War I until 1948, the land was occupied by the British Empire. For a couple of hundred years before that, it was occupied by the Ottoman Empire. Most of the Palestinian Arabs' ancestors immigrated to Palestine during or after the Ottoman period. When was it their land?

That land was considered by most of the world to be a Jewish commonwealth, at least from about 1000 B.C. until the first century A.D., when the Roman and then Byzantine empires stole it from the Jews. The new state to be established will be the very first time in history that Palestinian Arabs have exercised sovereignty over that or any piece of land. To imply that the Jews stole it from the Palestinians is absurd.

As for the assertion that Israeli rubber bullets have "killed and disabled thousands of children," no statistics published by Israeli, United Nations or Palestinian human rights monitors, or the Palestinian Authority, support that wild claim.

This is not in any way to diminish the legitimate rights of the Palestinian Arabs, nor to justify any unjust acts of the Israeli government or its citizens. But inflammatory propaganda does more to harm than aid the Palestinian's cause.

Jon-Jay Tilsen  
New Haven

Editor's note: Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen leads Congregation Beth El Keser Israel in New Haven.

## **Intermediate Hebrew class**

"On Beyond Gimel," a six-session intermediate Hebrew class, will be offered by Kathy Rosenbluh at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, 85 Harrison Street, New Haven. The series will take place on Sundays, 9:30-10:30 a.m., on June 7 and 28, July 12, 19, and 26, and Aug. 9.

The course will cover elements of basic Hebrew common to the modern, prayer book, and Biblical language.

For registration and further information, call the synagogue office at (203) 388-2108.



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# Chana Timoner, rabbi and army chaplain, dies at 46

Remembered as a groundbreaker and Renaissance woman

By Lisa S. Lenkiewicz

**C**hana Timoner had big dreams: to be a rabbi and to be in the Army.

She accomplished both in her lifetime, which was tragically cut short at age 46 when she died July 13 in her sleep at home in New Haven. Her husband, Dr. Julian Timoner, said it is believed she died as a result of an accidental fatal overdose of pain medication and sleeping pills. She had been suffering from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, specifically the Epstein-Barr virus.

Until her honorable discharge for medical reasons two months ago, she had served for more than six years in the U.S. Army, rising to the rank of captain.

A New Haven native and lifelong New Haven area resident, she was the first woman



**Rabbi Chana Timoner**

rabbi to hold a long-term assignment as a chaplain in the Army.

In interviews published recently, Timoner spoke of how

her family were her role models. Her late grandfather was Rabbi Abraham Greenberg of Bikur Cholim in New Haven. Her mother, Mary Surasky, was so anxious to fight the Nazis in World War II that she joined the Canadian Army in 1940, and then transferred to the U.S. Women's Army Corps after the U.S. entered the war.

Her cousin David Surasky was an area *mohel* for many years. Her uncle, the late David Surasky, was the *baal koreh* at B'nai Jacob and taught her how to read Torah as a youth.

Married at age 18, Timoner graduated from Southern Connecticut State University, going to school while raising two children, who were teenagers when she made the decision to enroll in rabbinical school. For five years she

**Continued on page 8**

# Timoner remembered for taking on new challenges

Continued from page 3

commute to New York City to attend the Academy for Jewish Religion, where she was ordained in 1989. She then spent two more years studying for a doctorate at the New York Theological Seminary; she completed the coursework and was working on her dissertation at the time of her death.

Prior to all this, she had studied voice and worked as a music teacher in area synagogues and served as a cantor with Rabbi Gerald Brieger of Temple Emanuel in Orange for the High Holidays. While in rabbinical school, she was a student rabbi at Beth Israel in Wallingford, and was a hospital chaplain. She also worked for the National Council of Christians and Jews.

At a time when the Jewish community shied away from the topic of AIDS, Timoner was at the forefront supporting the gay community. "She was the rabbi for the Connecticut gay Jewish community," stressed her husband.

## Loved basic training

At age 39, she entered the

Army, undaunted by the grueling challenges of basic training.

A groundbreaker who was unafraid to speak out on controversial issues, on her first day at Fort Bragg, N.C., following President Clinton's "don't ask, don't tell" policy on homosexuals in the military, Timoner made an announcement: gay soldiers were welcome to come to her for counseling.

There are countless stories of her caring nature. She organized donations to be made to social service agencies and to servicemen on the base. She served on the *chevra kadisha* (burial society) in the communities where she was stationed.

At Fort Bragg, she was the only Jewish chaplain for more than 150,000 military members and families. She officiated at all lifecycle events, served as kosher supervisor for the kosher kitchen, ran the Army's largest Jewish religious school, taught adult Hebrew classes, and developed a method to teach children ages 5 and up Torah and Haftarah cantillation before they could read Hebrew.

Timoner also served in

Korea, where she was stationed with an aviation attack regiment near the Demilitarized Zone. With her usual zeal, she immersed herself in the language and culture. It was in Korea (she jokingly referred to herself as "chief rabbi of Korea") where she was diagnosed with the Epstein-Barr virus.

Her last post was at Fort Benning, Ga., where she again made waves, insisting on adding prayers for gay, gypsy and non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust at a Yom HaShoah service. This almost cost her her commission, her husband said. Years earlier, she had confronted Elie Wiesel at a lecture he gave at B'nai Jacob in Woodbridge. From her seat in the front row, Timoner stood up and asked him why he only referred to six million who died, and not 12 million.

While in Georgia, she completed coursework for a degree in marriage and family counseling.

## Spread Yiddishkeit

In his eulogy at her funeral at Congregation Beth El-Keser

Israel in New Haven, where the Timoners are members, Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen spoke of how Chana Timoner "opened the doors to Judaism to so many," building a school and congregation at Ft. Bragg on the "sheer strength of her personality and efforts." Other eulogists were Rabbi Shohama Weiner, president of the Academy of Jewish Religion, and Chaplain Ray Alexander.

Only back in New Haven a few months, she redid the garden at the New Haven Public Library in Westville, planted flowers at BEKI, and Tilsen said she had lined up new students for BEKI's adult studies program in the fall.

Said Tilsen, "Chana was always taking on new challenges...she wanted the whole loaf. She went all the way. Being a good pastor, for Chana, meant being able to understand and empathize with others, and then to help them find their own inner strength to deal with their challenges."

"She was a real Renaissance woman," said her husband of 28 years, noting that his wife was also an expert needlepointer and knitter, was proficient in

the piano and percussion instruments, spoke Italian, was knowledgeable about art, studied philosophy and architecture, was a life member of Hadassah, and, as a teenager thinking of surgery as a possible future career, learned about and practiced surgery.

Found by her bedside nightstand were magazines on topics ranging from Biblical archaeology to quilting, said her husband, who is a chiropractor in New Haven.

Eighteen months ago, Timoner officiated at the funeral of her father, Abraham "Al" Surasky.

In addition to her husband and mother, who resides in Tampa, Fla., she is survived by two children, Aviva, a classical musician in Paris, and a son, Samson, who will enter M.I.T. for his doctorate in the fall; a sister, Abby Sawilowsky, of Detroit; and two brothers, Myron Surasky of San Francisco and Charles Surasky of Yardley, Pa.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Academy for Jewish Religion, 15 West 86th Street, New York, N.Y. 10024. ■

## Letters

### Don't call him "non-Orthodox"

The readership of the Connecticut Jewish Ledger is diverse. It comprises women and non-women, Democrats and non-Democrats, parents and non-parents, New Haven residents and non-New Haven residents, and the elderly and non-elderly, among other loyal (and non-loyal) readers. It would seem fitting therefore for the Ledger to adopt an editorial policy evincing a sensitivity to that diversity, by avoiding the demeaning label "non-Orthodox" so often applied by hapless press agencies and reporters to describe the Conservative and Reform Movements or their adherents.

Many in the Jewish and general community unwittingly have adopted an "Orthodox-centric" view of Judaism. This is in part because Jews occasionally use the term "orthodox" to mean "traditional, observant, Judaism." In the same way, the Democratic party, despite its name, does not always represent the most democratic policies. For that reason the Ledger might do well to avoid the confusing word "orthodox" unless referring to formally Orthodox institutions, in which case it should be capitalized.

Many Ledger readers are not aware of that fact that Orthodox Judaism is a modern invention, having emerged about 150 years ago in Europe. In their general approach to Halacha (Jewish law) and in specific issues of applying Jewish law, most of our great sages over the past two thousand years more closely resembled our present Conservative scholars and sages. Respect for science and secular knowledge, the willingness to consciously develop law in consonance with a changing society, and an appreciation of legitimate diversity within the Jewish world are examples of the former. The permission for women to wear *tallit* and *tefillin*, read Torah as part of a service, and a more "liberal" approach to granting *gittin* (bills of divorce) to women — all positions held by our great sages — are examples of the latter.

It is false history to project the ideology of Orthodox organizations onto our ancestors. This is not to devalue current Orthodox Jewish ideas and practices, but simply to give lie to a persistent myth which has implied a "normative" status of Orthodox Judaism. Describing Conservative Judaism as "non-Orthodox" implies that Orthodox Judaism is some standard from which it deviates. It is inappropriate for a popular newspaper to use such nomenclature. So please, don't call me "non-Orthodox."

Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen  
Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel  
New Haven



# Celebrations

## Local girl puts the mitzvah back in bat mitzvah

### Special to the Ledger

**T**he bat mitzvah of Chava Lilit Cogan, daughter of Neil Cogan and Mannette Dodge of New Haven, started off no different than the usual coming-of-age ceremony. Shabbat morning, Jan. 18, she was called to the Torah at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel in New Haven.

But that evening, instead of having a party at the synagogue or at home, Chava chose to celebrate her simcha with a reception at the Jewish Home for the Aged, where Chava and her siblings are volunteers.

Forty residents joined more than 100 other guests in a special buffet catered by the

Jewish Home, and danced to the sounds of the Yale Klezmer Band.

Many guests took note of the centerpieces—the children's table decorations were designed by the Jewish Home Therapeutic Recreation Department and included stuffed animals and helium balloons. Continuing the theme of mitzvot, the stuffed animals were later donated to Yale-New Haven Hospital's children's center. The adult tables were festooned with balloons and plants, which were given to the Jewish Home.

In addition, each child invited to the affair received a card explaining that the Cogan family had purchased a letter in their names to be included in a new Torah for B'nai Jacob synagogue, and the Cogans planted a tree in honor of each guest. The Cogans also donated a box of clay to the Home for jewelry-making, a project the Cogan children have been helping with in addition to calling

Bingo.

Chava's day also included a Shabbat afternoon Torah study session.

Mannette said that her goal for the evening was to teach

her children the true meaning of a mitzvah. "I want them to learn that they can receive joy from doing things to make others happy," she said. ■



Chava Cogan, mom Mannette and dad Neil celebrate at the Jewish Home.



Mannette greets Jewish Home resident Rose Schwed.



## Personal Mention

### New Haven writer publishes book

Muriel Kaltman of New Haven has self-published a book, "Sprigs of Lilacs." The book is comprised of four short works and a play, which deals with anti-Jewish prejudice and the emotional impact of the burning of a synagogue.

Kaltman is a member of Beth El-Keser Israel Synagogue. The book is available at the synagogue, 85 Harrison Street, New Haven, in the book department at Edge-Of-The-Woods, 379 Whalley Ave., New Haven, or through The Wind-Blown Press, P.O. Box 3322, New Haven 06515.

## LETTERS

### Passover tradition not observed only by Orthodox Jews

I enjoyed the coverage of the Passover observance in the New Haven Register.

However, I wish to point out one distortion in "'Hametz' faces fire" published April 11. The article states, "For many Jews, especially those observing Orthodox traditions, Passover requires them to remove all leavened bread – or 'hametz' in Hebrew – from their homes." The statement "especially those observing Orthodox traditions" is incorrect, if not ludicrous or offensive.

If the Register were to report, by way of analogy, "Christians, especially those who observe Lutheran traditions, are charged to recall the resurrection of Christ on Easter," I am sure that many devout Christians who do not happen to be Lutheran would take umbrage.

Jews occasionally use the term "orthodox" to mean "traditional, observant Judaism." Sometimes there is confusion because "Orthodox" (with a capital "O") is also incorporated into the name of many Jewish institutions. But the orthodox practice (in the first sense) is often not best represented by the Orthodox (in the second sense.) In the same way, the Democratic party, despite its name, does not always represent the most democratic policies. For that reason I suggest the Register avoid the confusing word "orthodox" unless referring to formally Orthodox institutions, in which case it should be capitalized.

Under traditional Conservative Jewish law all Jews, whether they affiliate with Conservative, Reform, Orthodox, Hasidic or other movements, or whether they are unaffiliated, are equally obligated to remove all leavening from their homes.

**Jon-Jay Tilsen**  
New Haven

*Editor's note: Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen leads Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel in New Haven.*



## *Inlight*

Publication of the Jewish Family Service  
of New Haven, Inc.

Spring 1998

### JFS Joins Congregation Beth El Keser Israel for Passover Seder



*Anne Johnston presented an animated version of the story of Passover.*

JFS's Shalom Group joined Congregation Beth El Keser Israel and the Sisterhood for a model Passover Seder on Thursday, March 19. The event was attended by approximately 50 adults including JFS's Shalom Group and members of Southbury Training School. Jennifer Cohen, a social worker from JFS, joined Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen and Anne Johnston in welcoming the guests. Also in attendance from JFS were social workers Myra Tolchin, Karol Wong and Elaine Benevides and Communications Coordinator Sandy Hagan.

Anne Johnston performed an animated version of the story of Passover and led the group in songs. Dinner was served by members of the sisterhood.



*Several members of the JFS Shalom Group pose for a photo. Kneeling in the front row is JFS Social Worker and Shalom Group Leader Jennifer Cohen.*

The Shalom Group was formed by JFS as a way to include adults with developmental disabilities in activities that share aspects of traditional Jewish life. "It's a way to help broaden the activities and expand the knowledge of our heritage to our group members, Cohen commented."

***"This Seder was an opportunity for these adults to celebrate their Jewish heritage and the holiday with friends." - Jennifer Cohen.***

# A Time to Heal

## Area healing services provide spiritual support for those in need

By Mara Dresner

**P**rayers and psalms recited on behalf of those who are ailing in body or spirit have long been a part of Jewish tradition. But recently, a new trend has developed.

Healing services, designed to provide an extra measure of spirituality to those suffering in our communities, have sprung up across the country. The services, usually held apart from traditional Sabbath or holiday services, are a means of helping those who are ailing to feel less alone and more connected to Judaism, as well as providing additional emotional support.

In San Francisco, Ruach Ami, the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center, offers healing prayer services; Shabbat retreats; spiritual support groups; pastoral counseling; in-service training and a variety of workshops, publications and audio cassettes.

So far in Connecticut, there is no such comprehensive, organized system. However, healing services, in various formats, are being held at some of the state's synagogues.

Conservative Beth El Temple in West Hartford is one synagogue that offers regular healing services, organized by Rabbi Jim Rosen and temple members Ruth Anne Faust, Betsy Firger and Elaine Shapiro. Services are usually held monthly.

"Our focus is to come together in support as we sing and experience some of the Jewish liturgy. We are there to support each other and ourselves in whatever challenge we face, such as physical or emotional challenges; or the challenges of loved ones whose needs overwhelm us; dealing with grief," explains Faust. "We really tie it together with chanting, which takes on its own power, connecting us to our own heritage and liturgy."

"I think more than anything, it's a time of respite to stop the world and say, 'I need an hour to stop and feel what I'm feeling; that I am not alone,'" she adds.

The Beth El healing services are attended by as many as 60 people, although the norm is usually 20-30. "We always end with a little nosh and the time to gather together," Faust says. "People have made some real friendships. Those kinds of connecting opportunities are just as important as the service, in some regards."

Phyllis Schloss is a regular attendee at the services. "I had a life-threatening illness and twice, I almost didn't pull out.



Rabbi Jim Rosen of Beth El Temple in West Hartford.

I was hospitalized for a long time.

"It's a time when you wonder who you are and why you're placed here and will you ever be what you have been before. And it's a lonely period," Schloss says. "Ruth Anne has a manner of conducting the services in which you can almost feel the aura of G-d embracing you."

"It helps you to have the strength and the spirit to continue with your difficult job of rehabilitating your physical and psychic body. The service is conducted in such a non-threatening, comfortable manner that I find it very, very inspirational."

### 'Sense of connection'

Many congregations are experimenting with healing services, and working to discover how the services fit in with their overall prayer structure.

Temple Beth El in Stamford has had special healing services in the past. Now, the Conservative congregation sometimes has a program on Shabbat morning, with special prayers for healing followed by a speaker, as well as integrating elements of the healing ritual into traditional services.

"We incorporate healing prayers into every Shabbat morning service. It's one of the most powerful points of the service," explains Rabbi Joshua Hammerman, who says that his congregation, like many others, rely on Debbie Friedman's "Mishebrach" song as a key component. "We recite names while the song is being sung."

Hammerman doesn't believe that separate services are necessarily needed. "We have healing prayers in our liturgy. It's not to invoke some kind of magical cure by saying a prayer, but rather through the act of prayer, and especially through communal prayer, we can create a greater sense of connection."

"I happen to like the way we do it, incorporated into the services. We'll continue to

develop this.

"Even in the Talmud, it speaks of hospital visits, removing a small portion of illness. A mere visit helps the person to heal," adds Hammerman. "For a person to be well, to heal, the spiritual needs have to be addressed."

At Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel in New Haven, Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen says that plans are under way for the Conservative synagogue to hold its first healing service. "We're planning to do it for the first time on Yom Kippur afternoon. It's a time of heightened spiritual awareness," he notes. "It helps us to help people acknowledge the pain and help people feel less isolated."

Tilsen says that his congregation currently includes healing concepts into their traditional services. "The truth is that incorporated into any traditional service are some elements that touch on the concern of healing. One of the blessings within the weekday Amidah is a prayer for healing, that calls on G-d to heal us and acknowledges G-d as one source of healing."

"On Shabbat, we say the mishebrach for anyone who needs healing; it's traditionally done as part of the Torah reading service. It's a prayer of healing, a way to ask G-d to note that we care about this person and it functions to let others in the community know that this person has something going on in their life that they may need additional help or attention," continues Tilsen.

Sometimes, healing prayers are recited without a public service. Tzipke Cowan of West Hartford organizes a tehillim, or psalms, circle. "It's a circle of women that say tehillim on a monthly basis. If there's a need, such as for someone's who's sick, I call the chain and people say the tehillim," explains Cowan.

"The idea is to get the entire Book of Psalms said. It's been going on for about 10 years. It's automatically done every month on the Shabbos when we bless the new month," as well as when there is a specific need, Cowan notes.

### 'Our emotional work'

Hartford resident Andrea Cohen-Kiener, educator and spiritualist, believes that healing services will continue to expand. "The wider trend is to put feeling back together with worship. Some of these ceremonies have been homegrown by women because some of our ceremonies and losses are not addressed in the traditional liturgy," she notes



Rabbi Joshua Hammerman of Temple Beth El in Stamford.

by e-mail from Israel, where she is on sabbatical with her family.

"Prayer is supposed to help us do our emotional work. When davening is disconnected from understanding and feeling, it really doesn't help us generate emotional strength. Healing services seem to be developing as a format for bringing the power of prayer to bear on the emotional (and energetic!) condition of the ill."

"The circle of friends who pray are also nourished and given an outlet for their compassion and their desire to help each other," she writes.

Faust also hopes that the trend continues to grow. "It's become such a powerful time; it's hard not to want to share it. It can be done in a small group, just about anywhere," she says.

"Our goal is that it's a safe place to focus on your own personal needs and challenges. And for all of us, it's a time to gather together and connect with our Judaism in different ways. We want everyone to get whatever they can out of it." ■

### Jewish healing resources

"Healing of Soul, Healing of Body, Spiritual Leaders Unfold the Strength and Solace in Psalms," edited by Rabbi Simkha Weintraub (Jewish Lights)

"With Healing on its Wings," Masorti Publications, London.

"The Laws of Life: A Guide to Traditional Jewish Practice at Times of Bereavement," Masorti Publications.

—The National Center for Jewish Healing in New York City has a MiSheberakh Card and a Leader's Guide to Services and Prayers of Healing, available for purchase. Call (212) 632-4705 to order.

### A Litany for Healing

When Miriam was sick, her brother Moses prayed: "Oh, G-d, pray, heal her please!"

We join in this responsive prayer based on Moses' words:

We pray for those who are now ill.

Sources of life, we pray: Heal them.

We pray for those who are affected by illness, anguish and pain.

Heal them.

Grant courage to those whose bodies, holy proof of Your creative goodness, are violated by the pain of illness.

Encourage them.

Grant strength and compassion to families and friends who give their loving care and support, and help them, to overcome despair.

Strengthen them.

Grant wisdom to those who probe the deepest complexities of Your world as they labor in the search for treatment and cures.

Inspire them.

We pray for the winds to disperse the choking air of sadness, for cleansing rains to make parched hopes flower, and to give—all of us the strength to rise up toward the sun.

We pray for love to encompass us for no other reason than save that we are human—that we may all blossom into persons who have gained power over our own lives.

We pray to stand upright, we fallen; to be healed, we sufferers; we pray to break the bonds that keep us from the world of beauty; we pray for opened eyes, we who are blind to our own authentic selves.

We pray that we may walk in the garden of a purposeful life, our own powers in touch with the power of the world.

Praise to the G-d whose gift is life, whose cleansing rains help parched men and women flower toward the sun.

(From HEALING CIRCLE, Camp Ramah's: Judaism, Healing and Transformation, June 9, 1996 and A LEADERS'S GUIDE TO SERVICES AND PRAYERS OF HEALING, from the National Center for Jewish Healing)

## Special times for special students

**M**ordechai is a full-time student in a special education program. Inspired by his enjoyment of High Holiday services, Mordechai's grandmother enrolled him in Talmud Torah Meyuchad just two years ago. On Oct. 31, he was bar mitzvahed, completing both maftir and haftarah.

In the fall of 1997, Moshe was approaching 12 years of age. Despite three years of Hebrew school and considerable effort, he still could not read Hebrew. In fact, his mother was wondering if it was worthwhile to continue trying to teach him; learning English has been difficult enough. With a personally developed pro-

gram, Moshe is currently preparing the Hebrew for his bar mitzvah, without transliterations.

Mordechai and Moshe are just two of the students graduating from the Department of Jewish Education's Talmud Torah Meyuchad Program this year, which takes place at both the United Hebrew School in Westville, and Congregation B'nai Jacob in Woodbridge. TTM will graduate at least five b'nei mitzvot in the next two years.

Now in its fourth year, TTM is serving students with disabilities ranging from mild learning issues to autism. Students come from Conservative, Orthodox, Reform and unaffili-

ated families. Some TTM students attend specialized secular schools, while others go to local public schools. Any child with a formally assessed disability may participate in TTM.

TTM's goal is to provide Jewish children with special needs with a fun, safe environment in which to learn about Judaism. Because TTM is housed within local synagogue schools, students have a wide array of options. Some students come to Hebrew school once or twice a week for 30 to 45 minutes and receive individualized instruction. Others learn about Jewish holidays, Bible, and heritage with a larger community of Jewish kids

and receive individualized Hebrew instruction. TTM staff, in consultation with parents, are constantly reevaluating each child's needs.

When the time comes for bar mitzvah planning, parents, rabbis and TTM instructors work together to design a celebration with which everyone is comfortable. Finishing TTM, graduates not only know more about Judaism, they have also become active members of their Jewish communities.

For more information, contact the Department of Jewish Education at (203) 387-2424 ext. 302. ■

## Childbirth classes

The Department of Jewish Education of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven and the Jewish Community Center of Greater New Haven announce the premiere of, "In the Beginning...Jewish Preparation for Childbirth," a series to begin this January.

This five-part series is for expectant Jewish parents interested in finding out about the spiritual aspects of childbirth and meaningful ways to welcome their babies into the Jewish community, including planning a bris and a baby girl covenantal ceremony. These couples will explore such topics as how to raise your child in today's world, how to create a meaningful Jewish home, and how to love your spouse while loving your baby.

For more information or to register, contact Amy Pincus at the Department of Jewish Education, at (203) 387-2424 ext. 308.



# The Sin of Sodom ...and Connecticut

## by Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen

An ancient rabbinic compilation of wise sayings, Pirke Avot (5:12), describes **the ways people view wealth and property**:

There are four character traits among people:

- (1) One who says, **"What's mine is mine and what's yours is yours"** — this is an average trait; and there are those who say that this trait is characteristic of Sodom.
- (2) **"Mine is yours and yours is mine"** — this is a peasant.
- (3) **"Mine is yours and yours is yours"** — this is a very kindly person.
- (4) **"Yours is mine and mine is mine"** — this is scoundrel.

Traits 2, 3 and 4 are easily understood and are consistent with our usual way of thinking. But how can the attitude of "what's mine is mine and what's yours is yours" be either an "average" trait or the one "characteristic of Sodom"? We recall from our reading of Genesis 18:20-21:

And the Lord said: "The cry of Sodom & Gomorrah is great, and indeed their sin is grievous. I will go down now, and see whether they have done according to her cry, which has come to me, or not, and so I will know." The Biblical passage does not state explicitly what the sin of Sodom (and suburban Gemora) was.

As children we were taught the folklore of Sodom, as recorded in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 109b):

In Sodom they had a bed on which wayfarers were made to lie. If a wayfarer was too long for the bed, they cut him down to fit it. If he was too short, they stretched his limbs until he filled it. According to the same passage of the Talmud, "Our [early] sages taught: The people of Sodom have no portion in the Coming World.... Rav Yehuda says, 'Their sin is monetary.'" Another source of folklore says, "Our masters taught: **The people of Sodom were arrogant** because of the bounty the Holy One had bestowed upon them."

So the inhabitants of Sodom said, **"We live in peace and plenty**—food can be got from our land, gold and silver can be mined from our land, precious stones and pearls can be obtained from our land. **What need have we to look after wayfarers, who come to us only to deprive us?** Come, let us see to it that the duty of entertaining foot travelers be forgotten in our land, as is said, "They who keep aloof from [wayfaring] men, turning away [in disdain] from them, had come to forget utterly [their duty toward] foot travelers" (Job 28:4).

Sodom was a wealthy city. Its residents **did not not want to be flooded by the poor** moving in from other cities, so they decided to withhold support from those in need. **Withholding support would actually be better for the poor!** In Sodom they had a flat tax. Everyone contributed the same amount of labor. "One who has an ox is obliged to render one day's herding service [as payment of taxes]; but one who has no ox has to give two day's service."

They **did not want the poor to be dependent on handouts**, so they limited the length of time they could be on welfare. The individual needs and circumstances of the poor were not taken into account. And if someone did not fit into the clothes they received as charity, if the person was too tall, the

*(continued on page 11)*

*Gracious God, we are your people embraced by your love.  
We thank you for your presence throughout all time.  
Create us anew! Liberate us from that which keeps us from you.  
Enable us to recreate our world and restore justice.  
Heal us from every form of sin and violence.  
Transform us to live your Word more profoundly.  
Reconcile us so enemies become friends.  
Awaken us to the sacred; nurture our relationships.  
Enliven our parishes; reunite our families.  
Fill us with joy to celebrate the fullness of life.  
Empower us to be a community of love growing in your likeness.*

*Amen.*



## The Sin of Sodom (continued from page 11)

Sodomites would cut off the person's hands or feet; if the recipient was too short, the Sodomites would put them on a rack and stretch them. In this haunting way, our sages of long ago described the Sin of Sodom — **a sin being perpetrated today in Connecticut**. What we thought as children to be ridiculously cruel is now our own state policy.

The people of Sodom believed that this **incentive program** would get the poor back to work. It would be better for them in the long run. It was proclaimed in Sodom, 'Anyone who sustains a stranger or a poor and needy person with a morsel of bread is to be burned alive.'

Lot's daughter Pelotit was married to one of Sodom's notables. Seeing a poor man languishing in the town square, she felt sorry for him. What did she do? Every day when she went down to draw water, she would put into her pitcher some of every kind of food she had in her house, and **thus sustained the poor man**. The people of Sodom kept wondering: How does this poor man manage to stay alive? Finally they figured out the reason, and they brought Pelotit out to be burned. She prayed, "God of the universe, exact justice and judgment in my behalf from the Sodomites." Her cry rose up before the Throne of Glory. The Holy One said, "I will go down and see whether they have done according to her cry" (Gen. 18:21)—if the people of Sodom have indeed done according to the cry of this young woman, I will turn the city's foundations over from top to bottom.

**"What's mine is mine, what's yours is yours."** This every-day attitude toward the poor and needy can easily become the attitude of Sodom. Almost all of the residents of Sodom and Gemora suffered from the destruction, just as **all citizens of Connecticut are responsible for state and local laws and policies**.

Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. *Ezekiel 16:49*

Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen  
 Congregation  
 Beth El-Keser Israel (BEKI) [www.beki.org](http://www.beki.org)



## The Light & Peace Summer Program

The Children's Mission of  
 St. Paul & St. James Church  
 57 Olive St, New Haven  
 Wooster Square

**Worship - Stories - Games - Crafts -  
 Singing - Swimming - Snacks**

A Three Week Program  
**July 3-21**

1:30 - 5:30pm  
 Family Supper on Fridays

**We would love your help!**  
 Volunteers and Meal Serving Teams are needed!  
 Scholarship Funds are also needed!

Call Gretchen Pritchard  
 (day) 785-8248  
 (evening) 624-2520



## New Haven area rabbis join colleagues at Washington, D.C., Advocacy Day

By Mara Dresner

**R**abbi Jon-Jay Tilsen of Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel of New Haven and Rabbi Richard Eisenberg of Congregation B'nai Jacob of Woodbridge joined more than 30 of their colleagues nationwide at the Rabbinical Assembly's fifth annual Advocacy Day, held June 20 and 21, in Washington, D.C. The Rabbinical Assembly is an association of 1500 Conservative rabbis..

The Rabbinical Assembly's public policy agenda includes such concerns as hate crimes, gun control, church-state separation and economic justice.

This year, the Rabbinical Assembly passed resolutions opposing tax cuts directed to the wealthiest two percent of Americans, and in favor of international debt relief in order to held the poor.

The goal of the conference was to "promote social justice by letting our legislators and people in the administration know about our concerns on certain issues," explained



**Rabbi Richard Eisenberg**

Tilsen. "We feel it's important to have a direct voice representing our views on these issues, informed by centuries of Jewish tradition."

The group met with a variety of members of Congress, including Senator Joseph Lieberman, FBI director Louis Freeh, New York Times columnist William Safire, and Jack Lew, Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

The Connecticut rabbis also met with Representative Rosa DeLauro and staffers from



**Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen**

Senator Chris Dodd's office.

"We Conservative rabbis will do whatever we can to help protect freedom of religion under the established guidelines of the First Amendment," said Eisenberg in a statement to congregants. "We will continue to struggle for the right to observe and practice our religion without imposing it on anyone else, and we will take the necessary steps to ensure that no one will impose their religion on us." ■



## BEKI wins national award from EPA

**C**ongregation Beth El-Keser Israel of New Haven recently received a national 2000 Energy Star for Congregations Award, presented by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The award recognizes congregations that effectively reduce operating costs by increasing the energy efficiency of their buildings.

BEKI saves \$600 annually,

while preventing 11,000 lbs. of carbon dioxide emissions, by upgrading inefficient exterior and interior lighting. Broken and cracked windows have been replaced, old window air conditioners and computers were replaced with Energy Star models, and regular HVAC maintenance is now underway. The congregations' architect has also designed a comprehensive plan allowing for future savings. ■

## **Synagogues co-sponsor blood drive**

Congregation B'nai Jacob of Woodbridge, in conjunction with Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel of New Haven, is sponsoring a blood drive on Tuesday, Aug. 8, 1:30-6:30 p.m., at 75 Rimmon Road, Woodbridge. Anyone over the age of 17, weighing more than 110 lbs., in good health, is eligible to give blood.

For further information, call Mimi Glenn at (203) 397-3851. To make an appointment, call the Red Cross office at (203) 787-6721.

# CAMPAIGN 2000: THA



CHRIS FAYTOK/THE STAR-LEDGER

on-Jay Tilsen, rabbi at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel in New Haven, Conn., discusses the selection of Sen. Joseph Lieberman as the Democratic vice presidential candidate with Tracey Thomas and her 3-year-old daughter, Gavi Strauss, at Claire's Corner Copia yesterday.

## Joseph I. Lieberman

Age/birth date: 58, Feb. 24, 1942.

Hometown: Stamford, Conn.; resides in New Haven, Conn.

Religion: Jewish

Education: Yale College (1964), Yale Law School (1967)

Experience: Connecticut state senator, 1970-80; state attorney general, 1983-88; U.S. Senate, 1988-present

Family: He and wife, Hadassah, have one daughter together; he has a son and daughter from a previous marriage; she has a son from a previous marriage.

Quote: From Senate speech regarding President Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky: "Such behavior is not just inappropriate, it is immoral. And it is harmful, for it sends a message of what is acceptable behavior to the larger American family, particularly to our children, which is as influential as the negative messages communicated by the entertainment culture."



1975 ASSOCIATED PRESS

Joseph Lieberman, then a Connecticut state senator from New Haven, comments on a bill to raise the state's sales tax from 6 to 7 percent.

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## THAT'S THE TICKET

# Neighbors, friends and even foes praise Connecticut's favorite son

By Jeff Whelan

STAR-LEDGER STAFF

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — As soon as Miriam Benson heard the news on National Public Radio yesterday morning, she packed her three young children into the family car and drove a few blocks to Sen. Joseph Lieberman's red-brick Tudor home.

After they passed the other Tudor and Colonial homes in the pleasant, upper-middle-class area of Westville, the city's largest Jewish neighborhood, she pulled up alongside a dozen news trucks camped outside Lieberman's modest house with its neatly trimmed bushes.

"Take a look, kids, this is history," said Benson, 40. "This puts Connecticut on the map. It sort of says we're a real place."

After the rumors that Al Gore intended to select Lieberman as his running mate became reality, the news spread across this tiny state like wildfire, delighting Democrats and Republicans alike and giving them a boost in civic pride.

New Haven, which boasts of being home to Yale University, the first hamburger and even the first lollipop, now has another first: Connecticut's first candidate for national office on a major-party ticket and the nation's first Jewish nominee for vice president.

The pride was palpable.

"We're from Connecticut," said Jane Snaider, 53, who lives down the block from Lieberman and was out talking with neighbors yesterday. "You just don't think a local boy would ever be asked to be vice president."

Lieberman's neighbors described him as an ordinary Joe who comes home from Washington every weekend to observe the Sabbath with his family. They say they often see him jogging through the tree-lined neighborhood, playing with his grandchildren or walking to the Westville Synagogue.

"He's very approachable," said Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen of Congregation

Beth El-Keser Israel. Tilsen said Lieberman is a member of the Westville Synagogue, an Orthodox synagogue, but occasionally attends Beth El-Keser Israel. He said Lieberman always stays after services to chat with others.

"I think people respect him and like him as a person. When he disagrees with people, he does it very respectfully," he said.

Ed Marcus, the state's Democratic chairman, said that when he began the Lieberman for Vice President campaign about a year ago, the senator would joke that his mother and Marcus were the only two votes he could count on.

"I think most people thought it was an extreme longshot," said Marcus, who ran Gore's failed presidential bid in Connecticut in 1988. He reasoned that the state's size made

it an unlikely source for a national candidate.

Marcus said Lieberman's ascent is a victory for the underdog state.

The same qualities that made Lieberman popular in his home state — his sense of moral authority, his nonpartisan manner and his moderate views — will serve him well on the national stage, Marcus said.

Indeed, Connecticut Republicans seemed nearly as enthusiastic about Lieberman's candidacy as the Democrats.

Even the Republican state chairman, a post traditionally used as a partisan bully pulpit, couldn't muster up criticism of Lieberman, and instead issued a short statement that praised the senator with a backhanded slap at Gore.

"Obviously, Al Gore has sought

an infusion of moral stability into his ailing presidential campaign," said state GOP chairman Chris DePino.

U.S. Rep. Christopher Shays, a Republican from Bridgeport, noted he has known the senator for 24 years and their party affiliations have never prevented them from working well together.

"Joe Lieberman is an outstanding choice for vice president," Shays said. "Like Dick Cheney, he is thoughtful and articulate and commands respect from both sides of the aisle."

Howard Reiter, a professor of political science at the University of Connecticut, said Connecticut Republicans don't mind Lieberman because they don't view him as a liberal, like his Democratic colleague, Sen. Christopher Dodd.

"He gets a lot of votes from Republicans," said Reiter, noting that Lieberman won Connecticut with two-thirds of the vote in 1994. "He doesn't ignite a lot of angry reaction because he's very cautious and he doesn't stick his neck out very often."

But some voters in Connecticut questioned whether that trait could be a liability.

"The only downside is that he's a little boring, a little straight and a little quiet," Tracey Thomas said as she ate lunch at Claire's Corner Copia, a New Haven kosher restaurant that Lieberman is known to frequent.

Joe Starkowski, 53, of Weathersfield, a clerk in the Connecticut state library, said Lieberman has "done everything he can for Connecticut. He has championed moral issues, especially concerning the Internet and television. No one has a bad thing to say about the guy."

"He's a clean guy, one of the few that's left in Congress," he added.

Marcus said Lieberman, who chastised President Clinton for the Monica Lewinsky scandal, would benefit from that image.

"The fact is, Joe is unique," said Marcus. "Anyone in public office has baggage. There are usually allegations or smoke even if there isn't fire. That's just not true in Joe's case."

Mary Kate Frank contributed to this report.

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08/08/00

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**Cantor Ruth  
Greenblatt joins  
Temple Beth Tikvah**

Temple Beth Tikvah in Madison has announced the appointment of Cantor Ruth Greenblatt.

A New Haven resident for more than 30 years, Cantor Greenblatt is a member of Congregation Or Shalom in Orange and Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel in New Haven. She has served both congregations as cantorial soloist, Torah reader, and b'nei mitzvah tutor for many years, and has sung High Holiday services at Temple B'nai Abraham in Meriden.