



NEW MEMBER
INTRODUCTION

SEE PAGE 5

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Singing Circle

A Niggun Circle will be the Shabbat Schmooze on Dec. 13 at 12:45 pm. Come sing niggunim, which are wordless, melodic Jewish tunes—sometimes joyful, sometimes meditative.

Children's Events

Check page 7 to see the Hanukkah events.

New Yiddish Music

ReynHartsik, which is the Yiddish musical duo of Yoshie Fruchter and Rabbi Deborah Sacks-Mintz, will present a concert at BEKI on Saturday, Jan. 10 at 7:30 pm.

ReynHartsik, meaning “heartfelt,” explores Yiddish poetry, *loshen koydesh* (Hebrew- and Aramaic-derived words in Yiddish), prayer, and niggun in an intimate acoustic folk setting. Using a combination of their voices with cello, guitar, bass, and mandolin, Fruchter and Sacks-Mintz bring new melodies to the Jewish music canon, using intricate songs, sensitive musicianship, and a sincere desire to connect with audiences.

The vocal chemistry between the duo is paramount, and the unique arrangements and compositions provide a setting that evokes past and present in perfect harmony.



Yoshie Fruchter and Rabbi Deborah Sacks-Mintz will perform at BEKI on Jan. 10.

Sacks-Mintz, the Director of Tefillah and Music at Hadar Institute, is also a performer and composer who has collaborated on over two dozen albums and produced three of her own albums. She received rabbinic ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Fruchter, who is a musician, composer and bandleader with nine albums, has performed with a wide variety of Jewish artists and at Broadway shows. He plays guitar, bass, oud, and mandolin.

Watch for information about how to purchase tickets.

Elm City Winds

We're working on a new date for the Elm City Winds concert, probably in the spring.

Scholar in Residence

If you're craving another weekend of learning, mark your calendar for April 24-26, the Elm

City Kallah. Our speaker will be Rabbi Shai Held, President and Dean at the Hadar Institute, philosopher, theologian, and Bible scholar.

Named multiple times by *Newsweek* as one of the 50 most influential rabbis in America and by the *Forward* as one of the 50 most prominent Jews in the world, Held is the author of *Abraham Joshua Heschel: The Call of Transcendence* (2013), *The Heart of Torah* (2017) and, most recently, *Judaism is About Love* (2024).

As I finish this bulletin—my 66th and final bulletin as editor—I want to thank all of our contributors, readers, and advertisers. I especially need to thank my meticulous editors—Donna Kemper, Donna Levine, Nancy Meyers, David Spitzer—and my predecessor, Bruce Oren, who designed this layout template and taught me how to use it.

Rachel Bashevkin

BEKI Bulletin

The newsletter is published monthly by Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel for the benefit of its members.

Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel is affiliated with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

To contribute articles or for inquiries regarding membership:

- Call the Synagogue office: 203.389.2108
- Write: 85 Harrison Street, New Haven, CT 06515-1724

• Email: bulletin@beki.org

• Visit our web page: www.beki.org

• Follow us on social media:



• For advertising information, call the synagogue office.

Deadline for submission of ads or articles is the first of the month preceding publication.

Annual subscription is \$36

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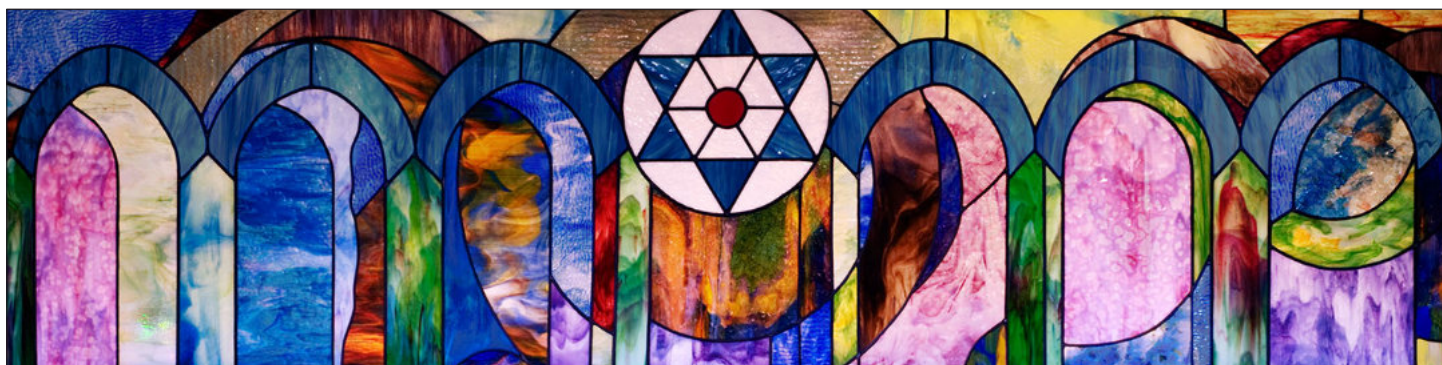
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If you have questions or concerns, please speak with a Board member.

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BEKI STAINED GLASS WINDOW DESIGN BY CYNTHIA BETH RUBIN



Welcome New Members

Keren & Yaron Ayalon, Yuval and Omri

Can You Provide a Meal?

BEKI has a long tradition of providing meals to families who have welcomed a child.



Rachel Greenberg

You can prepare and deliver the dinner or arrange delivery from a restaurant.

Anything you need to know about preferences or address is provided at the platform called Lotsa Helping

Hands. Just [log in](#) and choose your password. When the calendar is set up for meals, you'll receive an email with a link. If you have questions, consult rachel.d.greenberg@gmail.com.

A Top Ten Destination

New Haven joins Madeira, Portugal; Bilbao, Spain; Mykonos, Greece; and Vail, Colorado as one of the Top Ten 2026 Trending Destinations for travel, according to [Skyscanner](#).

"Acclaimed for its pizza and cultural scene, New Haven offers museums, architecture, and diverse cuisine," Skyscanner notes. Those of us who live here can enjoy these pleasures every day.

Amer is Available

BEKI custodian Amer Hassoon is available on Wednesdays and Thursdays if you'd like to hire him to clean up leaves or assist with other tasks at your home.

Call or text him at 203.393.5845.



Amer Hassoon

Annual Appeal Contributions

You should have received Annual Appeal information by email around Oct. 21. There will be no Annual Appeal materials sent by letter, except to those members who have asked to receive materials by mail.



Murray Akresh

Thank you in advance for your generous contributions. If you have any questions, Murray Akresh or Rozzie Levine Rodwin would be happy to answer them. Peggy in the BEKI office can put you in touch with them.



Rozzie Rodwin



**Join us in
Illuminating
the Future**

As you celebrate the Festival of Lights, honor the spirit of Hanukkah by making a legacy commitment and leave a lasting impact on generations to come.



With a legacy gift, you ensure that the warmth of Hanukkah continues to spread its glow for future generations.

It's easier than you think! Contact BEKI's Finance Chair, Attorney Donna Levine, at sdsij@aol.com or 203.668.6473 to learn how to create your legacy.

High Holy Days Thank You

BY JENNIFER MYER AND HAROLD BIRN

Perhaps High Holy Days seem like they are long behind us, but we want to thank our volunteers for their contributions! There are far too many to name one by one, but all are valued for their contributions and for making BEKI services a special experience. Particular appreciation also to BEKI staff Peggy, Amer and Fatima without whom nothing would happen!

This year we have a new and beautiful sanctuary. From the accessibility of the bima and the beautiful ark doors to the comfortable seating and new flower arrangements, we were delighted by the changes. This was accompanied by returning and new service leaders, sharing comforting and fresh elements of the service. Acoustics are being worked out, as is the amount and placement of extra seating. New services leaders and shofar blowers continue to be cultivated, and our High Holy Days, like all things, continue to evolve as the times and our congregation change.

This is also our farewell letter as High Holy Day Co-Chairs. We assumed leadership when Darryl Kuperstock

moved away. We then immediately had to contend with the pandemic. Remember parking lot services? Assigned services and spray chalk marking where to sit? Thankfully those days are behind us.

For next year, the responsibility for the elements of the services will return directly to the Rabbi and Ritual Committee. Other elements like art, security, food drive and Yizkor book will continue to be handled by longstanding individuals and committees which have taken responsibility for sections.

However, the job of overall coordination (including honors) is still open. This is an amazing opportunity for an individual or group of individuals to be creative and contribute meaningfully to the community. Though perhaps the job is daunting in the abstract, we have created an outline of tasks and timing and will be available for consultation if desired or needed.

We thank the congregation for their trust, patience and feedback, all of which have helped us with the High Holy Days at BEKI.



Harold Birn



Jennifer Myer

Sisterhood Store

The Sisterhood Shop is open every day by appointment, except Shabbat, and usually during BINA school hours. Call Harriet 203.675.8607 or Karen 203.430.2182 or email giftshop@BEKI.org.

We'll also have the gift shop open and a book sale display during two Hanukkah events (see page 7). We'll offer Hanukkah gift bags appropriate for children or adult hostess gifts.



Welcome New Members

We want to introduce you to the people who have joined recently.

Printouts of all of these photos and bios from the bulletin are posted on bulletin boards near the Goodwin Youth Room.

Keren & Yaron Ayalon, Yuval and Omri

Hi! We are Keren, Yaron, Yuval, Omri, and Shoko (our 4-year-old Hebrew-speaking labradoodle!). We live in Woodbridge.

Keren is a Hebrew instructor at the University of Hart-

ford, Quinnipiac University, and Fairfield University, and is also working on her EdD in Educational Leadership at Fairfield. With many years of experience teaching Hebrew to students of all ages, her expertise spans Hebrew language and culture and second language acquisition.

Yaron recently became Director of the Bennett Center for Judaic Studies at Fairfield University, where he also holds the Carl and Dorothy Bennett Chair of Judaic Studies and serves as Professor of Religious Studies. His scholarship focuses on Sephardic Jews, the Ottoman Empire, the Middle East, and Israel.

Yuval is a 10th grader at Amity Regional High School, and Omri is a 7th grader at Amity Middle School. Yuval is an accomplished pianist and plays percussion in the Amity band. Omri plays clarinet and viola, and both he and Yaron practice taekwondo.

We're excited to connect with other families who share our love of Hebrew, Jewish learning, music, or simply a warm sense of community!



Operation Isaiah Update

Thanks to everyone who donated to BEKI's annual Operation Isaiah high holy day food drive.

Lynn Brotman reports that she and Robert Lettick delivered 445 pounds of non-perishable food items, which is equivalent to 371 meals, plus \$250 in grocery gift cards to the Jewish Family Service (JFS) Food Pantry.

Their pantry is open to *all* members of the community—Jewish and non-Jewish alike—who are experiencing food insecurity, that is, they are without regular access to a sufficient amount of nutritious food and often do not know where they'll get their next meal.

If you would like to provide additional help to the JFS Food Pantry, their [wishlist](#) and their link to [donate](#) are at the JFS website.



Bikes for JCARR Families

JCARR, the Jewish Community Alliance for Refugee Resettlement, a partnership of six area synagogues and the Jewish Federation, has helped resettle ten families in the New Haven area. We're grateful for local organizations that have assisted us, for example the Bradley Street Bicycle Coop (BSBC), which this year provided bicycles to both young men in Family 10. Three years ago, BSBC donated bikes for the three little girls in Family 5, and this fall provided the larger bikes they needed.



The daughters of JCARR Family 5 again received donated bicycles from the Bradley Street Bicycle Coop.

Hanukkah Events for Kids of All Ages

By ANNIE NORMAN-SCHIFF, EDUCATION DIRECTOR

BEKI children, teens, and tweens will have many chances to celebrate Hanukkah together, bringing light, joy, connection, and fun to the darkest part of the year.

For Children

Sunday, Dec. 7, 3-4:30 pm: "Hands-On Chanukah with PJ Library" (Ages 0-7).

Enjoy latkes and an immersive musical experience with Tkiya songleader Rachel Haymer, a ukulelist and singer from Honolulu, who will lead us in joyful, participatory Hanukkah songs. This event is co-sponsored by PJ Library, BEKI, Congregation B'nai Jacob, and Tkiya. Best for children ages 0-7; siblings welcome.

The Sisterhood Store will be open during this event so you can buy Hanukkah supplies, books and gifts.

Sunday, Dec. 14, 11 am-noon: Children's Hanukkah Party (Ages 0-13).

Join us for a Children's Hanukkah party with *sufganiyot* (doughnuts), crafts, games, and fun! BEKI kids of all ages are welcome. BINA students will attend the party with their classes.

During the party, BEKI Sisterhood will provide a gift and book fair for last-minute shopping.

Friday, Dec. 19, 5 pm: BINA Shabbat and Latke Dinner (Ages 0-13).

Celebrate Shabbat and Hanukkah with a festive Kabbalat Shabbat service and latke dinner. BINA students will have special roles in the service, leading prayers and Hanukkah songs; all BEKI kids and families are welcome. Kosher dairy dinner to follow. Registration required.

For Tweens and Teens

Sunday, Dec. 14, 3:30-5 pm: Kadima Ice Skating (Grades 4-8).

Kadima, BEKI's tween youth group, is going ice skating. Join us at Skate New Haven at the Ralph Walker Ice Rink. We'll enjoy the ice (skate rentals available), then have a snack break and light Hanukkah candles. Dress warmly!

Saturday, Dec. 20, 5:30-7 pm: USY Havdalah and Hanukkah Lounge Night (Grades 7-12).

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3-4:30 PM**

Ages 0-7 & their families
(siblings welcome!)

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Services on Public Holidays

On the mornings of Thursdays Dec. 25 and Jan. 1, the service will be at 9 am (not 8:15 am).

Maariv only

During the winter, our 5:45 pm service includes only Maariv. On the nights of Hanukkah, we'll light a hanukiyah in the Chapel as part of the Maariv service.

Fridays at 5 pm

We've moved the evening service EARLY, to 5 pm, for all Fridays this month.

Back to 5:45 pm on Thursdays

The 6:45 pm experiment has ended. Thursday minyan has moved back to 5:45 pm, the same time as the other weekdays.

Sundays at 9:30 am

The Sunday morning service shifted this fall to a 9:30 am start time.

Talmud Study

Sunday Talmud class continues with Rabbi Woodward on Sundays Dec. 7 and 14 at 11 am in the library.

Read Torah or Lead Davening on Shabbat

[Sign up here](#) to lead a service or read Torah or Haftarah on Shabbat and chagim. Assignments are made on a monthly basis. [Join the BEKI Ritual mailing list](#) to receive reminders and announcements.

We encourage all people who know how to leyn or are learning how to leyn to join our rotation of Torah readers. We always need more people to help out on Shabbat morning. [Join the BEKI Leyners WhatsApp group here.](#)

Please reach out to Sylva Kroeber with any questions.

Tefilah Leaders Cohort

This group meets monthly and aims to bring together prayer leaders in the community for the purpose of helping each other reflect and develop as daveners. All who are interested are welcome, especially including those who would like to learn to lead davening. For more information, please reach out to Sylva Kroeber.

Minyan Captains

Sunday 9:30 am: Sarah Berry

Email: nelson.berry@gmail.com

Sunday 5:45 pm: Becky May

Email: bseashoremay@aol.com

Monday 7 am: Miriam Benson

Email: mirbenson@aol.com

Monday 5:45 pm: Harriet Friedman

Email: hfrfriedman@gmail.com

Tuesday 7 am: Judy Stein

Email: judithstein52@yahoo.com

Tuesday 5:45 pm: Karen Kassap

Email: kekassap@gmail.com

Wednesday 7 am: Isaiah Cooper

Email: icooper@cooperlaw.net

Wednesday 5:45 pm: Annie Norman-Schiff

Email: anormanschiff@beki.org

Thursday 8:15 am: Alisa Levine

Email: alisa.z.levine@gmail.com

Thursday 5:45 pm: Julie Katz

Email: jmp_katz@yahoo.com

Friday 7 am: Rebecca Weiner

Email: weinerrh@gmail.com

Friday 5 pm: Rabbi Woodward

Email: rabbi@beki.org

Sisterhood Store



The Sisterhood Store has everything you need for Hanukkah.

Saluting BEKI's Legacy Donors

Thank you to those listed below for creating a brighter future at BEKI. We look forward to celebrating you, our legacy donors, on Saturday, Feb. 21, *parashat Terumah*.

If you would like to make a gift to BEKI in your will or trust, or as a beneficiary designation through your retirement account or life insurance policy, please contact Donna Levine at sdsij@aol.com or 203.668.6473. You have the opportunity to impact BEKI's future.

Please let us know if your name belongs on this list.



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- To Robert Lettick in appreciation of support for Rabbi Murray Levine by Judah Levine
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- In honor of David Wright & Debbie Craig and David Spitzer with thanks for the rides to Shabbat services by Nanette Stahl

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Chai/Synagogue Fund to support synagogue operations

- To Stephanie & Harold Birn on the occasion of their 25th anniversary by**
- Jessey & Joe Palumbo

In honor of the Rabbi and the BEKI board members this High Holiday season by

- The Rosen family

To Nadav Sela and family with sympathy on the passing of Rita Sela by

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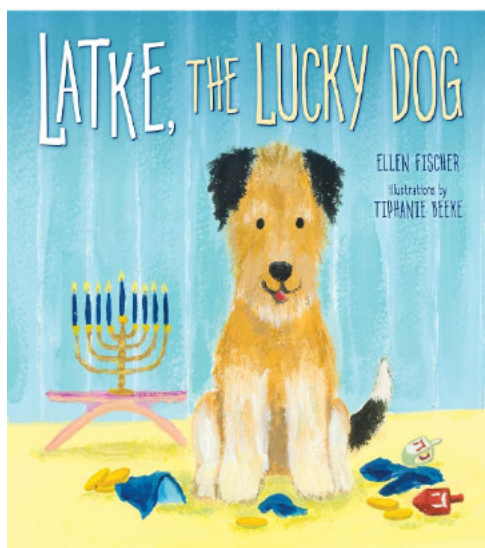
- In memory of Charles Ludwig by Rissa Mendlestein

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- Melvin Stanger by Louis J. Petrillo

Sisterhood Store



The Sisterhood Store is stocked throughout the year with books and gift items.

It's not too late to make a pledge or donation to the **Sanctuary Redesign**, or to increase the amount that you have already given.

Contact Peggy in our office, or speak to a member of the Fundraising Committee:

John Weiser, Murray Akresh
Jessey Palumbo, or John Wareck.

Learn how you can live forever!

Be remembered forever by BEKI with a gift in your will, trust, retirement account, or life insurance policy.

For more information on how you can make these arrangements, contact Finance Chair Attorney Donna Levine at sdsij@aol.com or 203-668-6473.

If you have included BEKI in your estate plans, please let us know.



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What will your Jewish Legacy be?



Harold Miller Created a Legacy for his Synagogue, BEKI

"Keser Israel, and now Beth-El Keser Israel ("BEKI"), has been my synagogue for my entire life. My grandfather was actually the president of Keser Israel in 1948. I had my Bar Mitzvah at Keser Israel and I was married at BEKI. It is a pleasure for me to make a legacy commitment to this synagogue that has been and continues to be such an important part of my life."

—Harold

For more info about Create A Jewish Legacy, contact Lisa Stanger, (203) 387-2424 x382, lstanger@jewishnewhaven.org.
www.jewishfoundation.org | www.jewishlegacynewhaven.org



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LATKE VS. HAMENTASCH

Have you heard of a Latke-Hamentasch debate?

Many college Hillels, to celebrate Purim, host a debate about which food is better: the latke or the hamentasch.



Eric Woodward

Years ago, when I lived in Ohio, I was asked to participate in OSU Hillel's debate. I was on the latke side, and I made an argument for the superiority of latkes that I think is airtight: A latke is not at essence a potato food – it is, at essence, about the oil. Any fried food can be considered a latke appropriate for Hanukkah. Also, deep-frying a food always improves it beyond its original state. A deep fried hamentasch would necessarily be better than a regular hamentasch – and a deep fried hamentasch would be a latke. QED.

I stand by this argument, but more than that, the connection of Hanukkah and Purim is very real. Unlike the *chagim* (the pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot), or the *Yamim Noraim* (high holy days), Hanukkah and Purim are two holidays that arrive to Jews after the Torah and represent questions of Judaism in history.

But they approach the question of history in different ways. Purim suggests a model in which God is hidden; Hanukkah, in which God is present.

I think our experience of the world has room for both approaches. In the Purim model, we cannot see God at work in the world, and we learn that we must be responsible for ourselves. In the Hanukkah model, we see that God is there for us in the fire of our faith throughout the years, in the

flames of our menorah, and we can always reach out and find a sense of connection.

The dialectic between hiddenness and connection, between God's seeming-absence and palpable presence, appears in our lives all the time. We sometimes feel deeply close and connected; we sometimes feel distant or alienated. We sometimes live with an intense consciousness of purpose and drive; and we sometimes feel at loose ends, not sure how to proceed.

All of these are normal feelings, and the beauty of Judaism's dialectical holidays – holidays which make different claims on us and pull us in different directions – is that there is a role for all of these.

In these months between Hanukkah and Purim, let us remember that whether we feel connected or isolated, feel a sense of God's presence or absence, all of these feelings have a place in our tradition.



This ceramic Hanukkah menorah by Jennifer Wankoff is available at the Sisterhood Store.

December 2025

11 Kislev 5786 - 11 Tevet 5786

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 7am In-person/Zoom service 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 11 Kislev	2 7am In-person/Zoom service 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 12 Kislev	3 7am In-person/Zoom service 4pm BINA 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 13 Kislev	4 8:15am In-person/Zoom service 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 14 Kislev	5 7am In-person/Zoom service 4:04pm Candle Lighting 5pm Kabbalat Shabbat 15 Kislev	6 9:15am Shabbat Service 11am Children's Havura, K-2 Kehila, Jr. Congregation 16 Kislev
7 9:30am BINA 9:30am In-person/Zoom service 11am Talmud Study 3pm PJ Library "Hands-On Chanukah" 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 17 Kislev	8 7am In-person/Zoom service 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 7:30pm Executive Board Meeting (off-site) 18 Kislev	9 7am In-person/Zoom service 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 19 Kislev	10 7am In-person/Zoom service 4pm BINA 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 20 Kislev	11 8:15am In-person/Zoom service 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 21 Kislev	12 7am In-person/Zoom service 4:04pm Candle Lighting 5pm Kabbalat Shabbat 22 Kislev	13 9:15am Shabbat Service 11am Children's Havura, K-2 Kehila, Jr. Congregation 12:45pm Shabbat Niggun Circle 23 Kislev
14 Erev Hanukkah 9:30am BINA 9:30am In-person/Zoom service 11am Talmud Study 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 24 Kislev	15 Hanukkah I Office Closed 7am In-person/Zoom service 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 25 Kislev	16 Hanukkah II Office Closed 7am In-person/Zoom service 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 26 Kislev	17 Hanukkah III Office Closed 7am In-person/Zoom service No BINA 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 27 Kislev	18 Hanukkah IV Office Closed 8:15am In-person/Zoom service 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 28 Kislev	19 Hanukkah V Office Closed 7am In-person/Zoom service 4:06pm Candle Lighting 5pm BINA Kabbalat Shabbat 29 Kislev	20 Rosh Hodesh - Hanukkah VI 9:15am Shabbat Service 11am Children's Havura, K-2 Kehila, Jr. Congregation 30 Kislev
21 Rosh Hodesh - Hanukkah VII 9:30am BINA 9:30am In-person/Zoom service 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 1 Tevet	22 Hanukkah VIII 7am In-person/Zoom service 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 2 Tevet	23 7am In-person/Zoom service 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 3 Tevet	24 7am In-person/Zoom service No BINA 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 4 Tevet	25 Office Closed 9am In-person/Zoom service 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 5 Tevet	26 7am In-person/Zoom service 4:10pm Candle Lighting 5pm Kabbalat Shabbat 6 Tevet	27 9:15am Shabbat Service 11am Children's Havura, K-2 Kehila, Jr. Congregation 7 Tevet
28 No BINA 9:30am In-person/Zoom service 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 8 Tevet	29 7am In-person/Zoom service 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 9 Tevet	30 Fast of Tevet 10 7am In-person/Zoom service 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 10 Tevet	31 7am In-person/Zoom service No BINA 5:45pm In-person/Zoom service 11 Tevet	Mark Your Calendar Jan. 10 Bar Mitzvah of Asher Jacoby Jan. 10 Yiddish folk duo Reynhartsik Jan. 31 Bat Mitzvah of Naomi Rivers		

Service Times

Sundays	Mondays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Thursdays	Fridays	Saturdays
9:30 am Shaharit 5:45 pm Maariv	7am Shaharit 5:45 pm Maariv	7am Shaharit 5:45 pm Maariv	7 am Shaharit 5:45 pm Maariv	8:15am Shaharit 5:45 pm Maariv	7 am Shaharit 5 pm Kabbalat Shabbat	9:15am Shaharit



Join BEKI on Facebook

Everyone is encouraged to join the [BEKI Facebook group](#). You'll enjoy the humor, community information, and links to cultural opportunities. You'll want to choose the private group with the stained-glass window image. Just ask to join. (The BEKI page with the hamsa is the public-facing page, which has few postings).

E-Statements

Due to rising costs and BEKI's efforts to be more Earth-friendly, we have transitioned to e-statements and e-yahrzeits. If you prefer to receive them by paper, please contact the BEKI office at office@beki.org or 203-389-2108 x114. The BEKI Green Team supports BEKI's movement toward paperless communications and hopes the community will also.

Services

All services are also available on Zoom except Friday night and Saturday morning.

Sunday 9: 30 am	Wednesday 7 am
Sunday 5:45 pm	Wednesday 5:45 pm
Monday 7 am	Thursday 8:15 am
Monday 5:45 pm	Thursday 5:45 pm
Tuesday 7 am	Friday 7 am
Tuesday 5:45 pm	Friday 5 pm
	Saturday 9:15 am

For the latest information on services, check [Happenings](#) or email bekitefilla@gmail.com