



Selections from *BEKI Bulletin: The Newsletter of Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel*

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New "Healing & Wellness" and "Sympathy" Cards Available

Self-mailing "Healing & Wellness" and "Sympathy" cards are now available from the BEKI Sisterhood Giftshop and Office. The cards feature the original artwork of New Haven Judaica Artist **Herman Braginsky** (father of BEKI member **Dorothea Braginsky**) and were designed by professional Graphic Designer and BEKI member **Howard Gralla**.

The "Healing & Wellness" card depicts a Torah cabinet hand-carved of mahogany, symbolizing the Torah as a source of life and blessing. Just as the cabinet contains the Sacred Writ, the human body is the home of the soul, and is for that reason so very precious. The "Sympathy" card depicts a tzedaqa (charity) box, suggesting that acts of tzedaqa are a most fitting memorial to a departed soul. Along with each card a matching envelope is supplied.

Cards are available from the BEKI [Sisterhood Giftshop](#) (389-9599) in single or bulk orders. Please call for information on the minimum donation. Cards are also available from the BEKI office in orders of \$50 or more. These are "self-mailing" cards, meaning that at the

time of the donation the donor is given a pre-printed card and envelope to complete and mail. Donors who wish the dedication of the card printed in the BEKI Bulletin are supplied with mail-in (or fax-in) coupons for this purpose.

A Message from Rabbi Tilsen

Hunting in Law & Tradition

In Western civilization, hunting is seen as a noble and manly pursuit. In Greek and Nordic mythology hunters are heroes; in popular culture hunting is the epitome of manliness.

Twenty-five million people in the US hunt, killing over 100 million animals each year. In a typical year, several hundred people are killed and 1,500 are injured by hunters in this country. Hunting is a significant and celebrated part of American culture. Whether he's a Davey Crockett or a Buffalo Bill, a real man has a dead animal's head on his wall.

Jewish culture & law, however, take a different view of hunting. The "Great Hunters" of the Bible are viewed by the Sages of Israel as wicked men: Nimrod, whose very name means "one who rebels [against God]," and Esau, who is the utter antithesis of the spirit of Jewish Civilization.

Rashi, who lived some 900 years ago in France, comments on the first verse of Psalms, "Happy is the one who has not walked in the path of sinners" by saying that this means "one who does not hunt with dogs for sport or entertainment."

Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg, the most influential German rabbi of the 13th century, declared that "כל מי שצד חיות בכלבים כעין הגוים לא יראה בשמחת לויתן" (whoever hunts animals with dogs, as do the gentiles, will not [partake of the pleasures of the World to Come]) (*Sefer Shaarei Teshuva*, Bloch ed. (Berlin), #27).

The Shemesh Tzedaqa, writing in the early 18th century [1681-1740], forbade hunting as a profession and for sport. He said that those who hunt "have taken hold of the occupation of Esau the wicked, and are guilty of cruelty in putting to death God's creatures for no reason. It is a doubled and redoubled duty upon people to engage in matters which make for civilization, not in the destruction of creatures for sport or entertainment." He concludes that killing for purposes of trade would constitute trading in forbidden merchandise.

Our sages teach that the Torah forbids hunting on several grounds. First, it represents cruelty to animals (tsa'ar ba'alei hayyim). Second, it violates the prohibition against wanton destruction. Third, it constitutes "spilling of blood." Fourth, it is a forbidden act of "copying the ways of the gentiles." These four grounds represent Biblical prohibitions (Isurei deOraita). One who hunts would thus violate four distinct Biblical commandments and numerous secondary rules.

How we view and treat animals is not unrelated to how we treat people. As part of God's creation, life is of immense value. When we take life for pleasure, we sink to the lowest levels of human existence.

Our Torah was given to us as a gift from God to enhance and add holiness to our lives. To live according to our Torah and as one with our world, we must actively incorporate Torah values and laws (halakha) into our lives.

Reader response is welcomed to "Editor, BEKI Bulletin, 85 Harrison St., New Haven CT 06515" or to jjtilsen@beki.org

Dear Rabbi: Answers, Advice and Helpful Household Hints

Dear Rabbi,

I like to brush my teeth after every meal. Do I need separate toothbrushes for meat and dairy?

Signed, Choppers

Dear Compulsive Cavity Curber,

The rules of *kashrut* (keeping kosher) require the strict separation of meat and milk. To answer your question, we must ask two more. Do actual meat or dairy pieces remain in the toothbrush? Does the toothbrush take on the property of being a *fleshig* (meat) or *milchig* (dairy) utensil?

Meat stuck in your teeth retains the property of meat for a short time, as is suggested by the Good Book: "While the flesh was still between their teeth," etc. (Numbers 11:33). Partly for that reason we are enjoined to wait a period of time after eating meat before eating dairy.

But after some time, the "food" in your mouth (and stuck on or between your teeth) ceases to be "food." Who would eat it? If your toothbrush is used at that point, it is not really in contact with "meat" or "dairy" and thus, strictly speaking, you would not need to consider its kashrut status.

On the other hand, if you brush right after eating, the toothbrush could obtain actual particles of meat or dairy. That can be solved by rinsing your toothbrush after each use. Any remaining particles would be too small to be a kashrut problem.

If your toothbrush remains wet between uses, it could be in persistent contact with meat or dairy in a moist environment and thereby take on the property of "meat" or "dairy." Even if the brush is not in contact with actual food, you might equate a toothbrush with an eating utensil or think of the particles on your teeth as being "like" food. So for "esthetic" reasons one might want to add the stringency of keeping separate toothbrushes. (Don't even ask about a separate set of dentures.)

There is another basis for requiring a second toothbrush. According to **Dr. Alan Gelbert**, a prominent local dentist and past president of BEKI, “It is considered a good idea to have more than one brush so it can dry completely between uses, resulting in less transmission of bacteria.” Caring for one's body is itself a religious obligation, as the Good Book says: “Only take good care of yourself, and guard your life diligently,” etc. (Deut. 4:9). To the extent that separate toothbrushes promote health, they would be required.

Indeed, the Torah was concerned with poor dental hygiene, as we read in Job 41:14: “Who can open the doors of his face? His teeth are terrible round about.” Failure to maintain dental hygiene may result in hearing your dentist quote the verse, “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it” (Psalm 81:11).

See more Dear Rabbi

Speakers in April

Eva Landau, daughter of **Helen Rosenberg** and of Charles Landau, will be called to the Torah and lead services as a *bat mitzva* on Shabbat morning 4 April during the 9:15a morning service. All are urged to attend to help celebrate this important moment in the life of the Congregation. Eva is a student at the [United Hebrew School](#).

United Hebrew School News

As many of you have probably noticed, the [United Hebrew School](#) has been in full swing at BEKI since the fall. Many people put in hours of work to paint classrooms, replace ceiling tiles, move furniture and generally spruce up the classrooms. Special thanks to **Lenny Stern**, who organized the volunteers, and to **Gary Rosenberg** who put in countless hours and muscle power transforming the space.

United Hebrew School is a supplementary religious school open to the community. Students are generally members of BEKI or Westville Synagogue, though we do accept students who are not synagogue affiliated. In addition, we host the [Talmud Torah Meyuhad](#) program, which helps meet the needs of students with special educational needs.

Highlights of the school-year include holiday celebrations. During our recent Hanuka family celebration, there were demonstrations of pressing olives to make olive oil, preparing sufganiyot (Middle Eastern donuts!), making arts and crafts projects and eating latkes.

The Dalet class kashered the kitchenette in the teachers' lounge under the supervision of UHS teacher (and BEKI president) **Dr. Brian Karsif**. Not only did they learn a hands-on lesson about kashrut, but they did a terrific job — and they looked like they were having fun too!

If you happen to be near the lobby, you will hear our students chanting the prayers at Tefila.

In March we held our Purim Carnival, complete with costumes, games, prizes and food. We are now preparing for Pesah. The younger children have already begun learning or reviewing the “four questions,” while older students prepare to participate in their own seders. We will have our annual family Pesah event which this year will include a demonstration of how matza is made.

On 2 May, UHS students, faculty and families will celebrate UHS Shabbat at BEKI by leading services and sponsoring kiddush. Our Principal, **Terri Stern**, will present a *Devar Torah* (“sermon”). We hope you will all join us as we kvell over the accomplishments of our Hebrew School and its students.

If you or anyone you know is interested in learning more about UHS please call Terri Stern at BEKI (389-2108, ext. 13). We will be happy to answer questions and set up a time to visit the school.

An important note to parents and other people who drop off and pick up students at UHS: Please observe the signs pertaining to parking. Do not park directly in front of or next to BEKI, as this makes for a very narrow passageway for cars and children and may create unsafe conditions. Thank you.

Shoshana Zax, UHS Board Chairperson

Qiddush Sponsorships

New Monthly Birthday Qiddush Begins in July

BEKI is now taking reservations for sponsorship of Shabbat Morning Qiddushim through June 1999. Reserve your dates now to celebrate with your friends and family or to honor the memory of a loved one. Your contribution commemorating this life event is an act of tzedaka (charity). The minimum donation to sponsor a regular qiddush is now \$75. Please contact the office to reserve your date or to inquire about larger options (including cakes) or special events such as bar- and bat-mitzva, baby namings, aufrauf (pre-wedding observance) and others.

Beginning in July, BEKI members will be able to mark the birthdays of family members or friends at a special qiddush that will be held each month. For \$18 per honoree, members may co-sponsor the qiddush in the name of the person celebrating a birthday. For this qiddush, there will be a birthday cake in addition to the regular qiddush.

Please watch for the new variety of food at the regular qiddush. The Qiddush Committee would appreciate your comments and suggestions. To contact or join the Qiddush Committee, call the BEKI office at 389-2108.

Stephen Pincus, Vice President

Pesah at BEKI

- **Selling of Hametz**

During the eight days of Pesah (Passover) it is forbidden for Jews to eat or own edible *hametz*. Hametz is any product containing wheat, barley, oats, spelt or rye that has not been especially prepared kosher for Pesah. Ideally one physically disposes of all hametz by the morning before Pesah. In order to be sure that this has taken place, or to avoid the loss of expensive hametz such as liquor, one can sell their hametz for the period of Pesah. If you would like to authorize Rabbi Tilsen to sell your hametz on your behalf to someone who is allowed to own it, please sign the form available at each daily morning and evening service or sign and return the form included in a synagogue mailing for that purpose. The form is a power of attorney allowing Rabbi Tilsen to sell your hametz for you, which he will do in a sale that will be effective the morning before Pesah. Please sign and return the authorization form at your earliest opportunity.

- ***Siyyum Bekhorot* Firstborn Fast**

The Fast of the First Born is Friday 10 April beginning at dawn. But firstborn who attend the morning service at 7:00a may conclude their fast by partaking of the *seudat mitzva* (obligatory feast) celebrating a *siyyum*, the conclusion of a study project. Services and *siyyum* will end by 8:15a. All may attend. That time will also be the last available opportunity to authorize Rabbi Tilsen to sell your hametz.

- **Yizkor Memorial Service**

The Yizkor Memorial Service will be held during the 9:15a Shabbat Festival morning service on Saturday 18 April. The Festival service includes a Shacharit morning service, Hallel (Psalms of praise), a Torah reading and Haftara, and the Musaf additional service, and concludes by noon. The Yizkor memorial service is one of four such services during the year that help us recognize our feelings of loss, which are often especially intense during Pesah season, and to honor the memories of our loved ones.

- **Shir HaShirim Song of Songs**

The Biblical love poetry of “Shir HaShirim - Song of Songs” will be read on the morning of 18 April during the Shabbat Festival morning service. Tradition ascribes the work to King Solomon himself, writing 2,900 years ago. Celebrate the spring holiday of Pesah with this beautiful and moving reading.

LifeCycle

With Sorrow we note the passing of **Sallee Kaufmann** sister of BEKI member Norma Hodes

Mazal Tov to

- **Barbara Cushen** on the birth of her grandson Nathan George Moore on 4 February 1998
- **Noel & Harriet Barstein** on the birth of a grandson and on the birth of a granddaughter

BEKI Welcomes New Members & their Families:

- Lionel Rigler & Nancy Suchman
- Matthew Katz & Ronnie Rabin

Alexandra, Hannah, Sophia

Morning Minyans

The Shahrarit morning service is held at BEKI every Sunday morning at 9:00a, every Monday through Friday morning at 7:00a, and Shabbat at 9:15a. These daily services provide the opportunity to fulfill numerous *mitzvot* (religious imperatives) such as daily recitation of the Shema and Amida prayers, Torah study, *tzedaka* (charity), *nihum avelim* (comforting mourners), and attendance at the House of Study. In addition, the services provide a structure for personal spiritual development and fulfillment as well as an opportunity to improve one's facility in the Hebrew language.

An extra pair of *tefillin* (prayer amulets) is available in the tallit box in the small chapel. Rabbi Tilsen or another congregant are available every weekday morning to help with donning tefillin.

During this past February, there were six mornings on which attendance was one or two short of the *minyan* (quorum) needed to recite certain communal prayers. If you want to come on a day when you can be reasonably certain there will be a minyan, come on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday or Shabbat morning. If you'd like to be that "tenth" (or maybe eighth...) person, come on a Tuesday or Friday morning; in February, three Friday mornings were just one or two people "short." And if you just want to come regardless of what anyone else is doing, then just come. While only legally adult Jews are counted toward the quorum, all are encouraged to attend for their own sake and for the sake of adding to the spiritual strength of the Congregation.

See our [Schedule](#) for a complete timetable of services or call (203) 389-2108 ext. 88 or 99 for a recorded service schedule for the current month.

Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel

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