



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

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In this Issue:

- [Borick Family Endowment Established](#)
- [LaMaazel meeting in April](#)
- [Bar Mitzva: Matthew Weiner](#)
- [Pesah \(Passover\) at BEKI](#)
 - [Selling of Hametz](#)
 - [Siyyum Bekhorot](#)
 - [Yizkor Memorial Service](#)
 - [Shir HaShirim: Song of Songs](#)
 - [A Message from Rabbi Tilsen:](#)
 - [Dear Rabbi: Answers, Advice and Helpful Household Hints](#)
 - [New PlayGroup](#)
 - [Letters](#)
 - [Sisterhood News](#)
 - [LifeCycle](#)
 - [Ramah Scholaships](#)
 - [USY News](#)
 - [Purim Thank Yous](#)

Borick Family Endowment Established

The Borick family through the Liatis Foundation has endowed a fund to benefit children with special learning needs at our Congregation. The Borick Family Endowment for Special Education for Youth at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel will provide a continuing funding stream to provide for children with the greatest needs.

The Houston-based Liatis Foundation supports numerous local, national and international causes. The Foundation has taken a particular interest in providing for children in challenging environments and difficult circumstances.

The Congregation has been at the forefront of addressing the special needs of children and adults in our region. In 1995, the Congregation initiated the [Talmud Torah Meyuhad](#) (TTM) Special Education Hebrew School as part of its religious school; it was the first program of

its kind in the region. Tailored to the needs and abilities of each student, the TTM provides for a "protected" learning environment as well as for individualized degrees of "mainstreaming" in the context of the larger religious school which meets concurrently. The TTM program at BEKI, now supported and directed by the Department of Jewish Education, has continued to serve the special needs of our students.

Since 1983, the BEKI [Sisterhood](#) has hosted a [Special Needs Model Seder](#) for Adults with Special Needs in conjunction with the Jewish Family Service. In 1997, the Congregation initiated the [Kulanu Ke'Ehad Havura](#) for adults with special needs, with major funding from a grant from the [Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven](#). Kulanu is directed by BEKI member Anne Johnston.

The Borick Family Endowment is managed by the [Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven](#) for the benefit of the Congregation. Only the interest from the Endowment will be used so that children with special needs will be supported in perpetuity. "This is a wonderful boost to our children," commented Rabbi Tilsen. "The Borick family has combined compassion with a vision of leadership in helping children. While our Congregation still has a long way to go to adequately fund our programs, this represents a significant step. Hopefully, others will be inspired to follow suit."

LaMaazel meeting in April

The next meeting of [LaMaazel--the Jewish Spiritual Way of Childbirth](#) will be on Sunday 11 April 1999 at 4:00p to 5:20p at the Benson-Tilsen residence in Westville. *LaMaazel* is a program for expectant parents and others to share their concerns and explore the Jewish approach to pregnancy and birth.

If you would like to attend or know of someone who might like an invitation, please contact Rabbi Tilsen at 389-2108 ext 10. If you would like to bring an older child along who will need supervision be sure to let us know as babysitting can be provided.

Bar Mitzva: Matthew Weiner



Matthew Weiner (pictured at left), son of Stanton & Marjorie Weiner, will participate in and lead services as a bar mitzva on Friday Night 16 April during the 6:00p service and on Shabbat Morning 17 April during the 9:15a service. Matthew is a student at the [United Hebrew School](#) of New Haven.

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 at 10:00a the morning before Pesah. Please sign and return the authorization form at your earliest opportunity.

Siyum Bekhorot

The Fast of the First Born is Wednesday 31 March 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 8:00a. 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 Festival morning service on Thursday 8 April. The Festival service includes a Shoharim 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 3 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.

A Message from Rabbi Tilsen: Material and Spiritual Emancipation

A Jewish definition of *messiah* can be based on a statement of our sages recorded in the Talmud: "The only difference between the world today and the world after the messiah comes is that when the messiah comes we will be free of foreign subjugation."

Given this definition there are no grounds for debate with Christians over the authenticity of their messiah. It was clear to all that the Christian leader was not politically the "King of the Jews," as he failed to provide physical or "political" salvation to them. In declaring him messiah, the early Christians were re-defining messiah as one who brings spiritual salvation, not political salvation. Whether or not their leader brought spiritual salvation is another question; but it is clear that he did not meet the Jewish definition of messiah.

The Christian ideal of a messiah is in many ways a good idea; after all, we certainly need spiritual redemption and salvation as much as we need political salvation. But our sages believed that we can be *spiritually* strong only when our *material* needs are met. For them this meant the absence of poverty and political oppression. Our sages saw the end of political oppression as a prerequisite to spiritual health, just as God saw the end of our Slavery in Egypt as necessary before we could begin to accept God's mitzvot and our role as God's workers in this world.

The refrain "Let My People Go" rings in our ears from one Pesah to the next, but famous as the line is, it is not the complete quotation. The complete phrase in the Torah is "*shelah et ami veyaavduni* -- Let My People Go so that they may serve me." *So that they may serve Me.*

At BEKI we justifiably pride ourselves in the degree to which we have emphasized the spiritual well-being of our community. We remain committed to our spiritual mission of Torah (learning and teaching), Avoda (worship and service) and Gemilut Hasadim (kindness and social justice). Over the years this community has not squandered its resources building a diamond-studded edifice at the expense of our education, worship or social action. This emphasis on the spiritual is laudable.

I empathize with those spiritually and intellectually hungry individuals who see their precious time and energy, which could be dedicated to the spiritual goals of BEKI (or their own), eaten up by the material concerns of shul administration and management. Those who accept this sacrifice do so because they are confident that the Congregation can be brought to a new level of operation, as the "BEKI 2000" planning process concludes and the next phase begins.

It is with this in mind that BEKI members and supporters have been asked to envision our shul with a well-maintained renovated building and an adequate endowment that would allow us to focus on our spiritual mission. God freed you from slavery in Egypt so that you could do God's work in the world. Help us bring that work forward by investing in the spiritual continuity of Beth El-Keser Israel.

Dear Rabbi: Answers, Advice and Helpful Household Hints

Dear Rabbi,

How early can we make our house kosher for Pesah? Can we eat kosher for Pesah foods on our Pesah dishes before Pesah?

Signed, Early Bird

Dear Early Bird,

You can make your kitchen kosher for Pesah anytime you want. You can even keep it kosher for Pesah all year if you want. Just don't eat matza in the couple of weeks before Pesah.

Dear Rabbi,

Can somebody married to a non-Jew sell their hametz [leavening] to them on Passover?

Signed, All in the family

Dear All,

No. Since under civil law spouses have some form of joint or co-ownership, one should not try to sell one's hametz to a non-Jewish spouse. One should not try to sell one's hametz to a non-Jewish business partner for the same reason. The best way to sell hametz is to grant power of attorney to an "authorized dealer" such as Rabbi Tilsen to sell your hametz for you. That way you can be sure that the law is strictly observed and the sale is valid.

New PlayGroup

Believe it or not, Spring is here! Let's do something new! A few of us discussed the idea of starting a play group for infant-toddlers to meet once a week at BEKI Children's Room. How about Wednesdays, 10a to 11:30a.

We would like to hear from you and your baby and start after Pesah. If you are interested, please contact Liora Lew at 389-1048.

Letters

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all of our friends at BEKI for their warm and generous expressions of sympathy during this time of sadness for our family.

Darryl, David, Dina and Aliza Kuperstock

I wish to thank all of my dear friends at BEKI for the many donations, get-well cards, and flowers which I received while hospitalized as a result of my fall and injury. This has prevented me from acknowledging these kindness and expressing my gratitude for your thoughtfulness.

With much affection,

Betty Zelen

BEKI Sisterhood News

Reminder: Mark Tuesday 22 June 1999 for the Book of Life Luncheon.

Connecticut Valley Branch of Women's League will hold Spring Conference in Beth El, Fairfield, on Wednesday, May 19, 1999. TGIS (Thank Goodness It's Sisterhood) is the theme. Call President Adele Tyson (389-9599) if you would like to attend this very interesting event.

Recent donations to [Sisterhood](#) were received from Bette Merriam and from the Jordan Goldberg family.

LifeCycle

HaMaqom Yinahem Etkhem: We Mourn the Passing of **Bertha Dworski Pear**, sister of BEKI member Tillie Horwitz; and **Newton Michael**, father of BEKI member Daniel Michael.

May the memory of our departed be for a blessing.

Mazal tov to **Ruth Rosner** and to **Hillel & Sara-Ann Auerbach** on the birth of her great-grandson and grandson Ron Auerbach

Mazal tov to **Joy Kaufman & Stewart Frankel** on the birth of their son **Ari Yaacov Kaufman-Frankel**

Mazal tov to **Sharon & Bennett Lovett-Graff**, and to **Shoshana Lovett-Graff**, on the birth of their son and brother **Joshua Lovett-Graff**

Mazal tov to **April & Matthew Lieberman** and to **Tennessee Lieberman** on the birth of their daughter and sister **Willie D. Dorya Lieberman**

BEKI Welcomes New Members and their families

- **Daniel Abraham**

Ramah Scholarships

Are you thinking of sending your child to Camp Ramah this summer? We may be able to help. The [Men's Club](#) is offering the [Camp Ramah Scholarship](#) Awards this year for the

Summer 1999 season. The fund was originally established by the late Harold Ratner and Jack Geisinger of Keser Israel before the merger that produced BEKI, and it has been maintained by the Men's Club through annual contributions by its members. Its purpose is to help provide young people of the Congregation the unique experience of a summer at Camp Ramah. The Men's Club is offering assistance again this year with token awards to families who need some help to send a child.

To apply, send a note to "BEKI Camp Ramah Scholarship, attention Saul Bell, 85 Harrison St, New Haven CT 06515." **The deadline is 15 April.** Awards and distribution will be made in May.

We hope that awards by the Men's Club can be made again next year and continued annually. But to do so we will need to revive the Men's Club from its present state of inactivity. If you can provide the the leadership and direction that will be essential for a revitalized Men's Club, call Saul Bell at 398-1647. He eagerly awaits your calls.

USY Deli Boxes a Success...Again!

Again this year the BEKI/B'nai Jacob Chapter of [United Synagogue Youth](#) was able to sell about 115 Superbowl Deli Boxes on Sunday 31 January 1999. The proceeds of from the sale of the dinners is used to support chapter events, scholarships and the USY Tzedaka Fund called Tikun Olam. We hope that everybody enjoyed their dinners.

Why Cook? We hope to do this again next year, so tell your friends! Better yet, follow the example of stalwart Deli Box supporters Mikki Ratner and Adele Tyson: have a Deli Box Party! You don't have to watch the Superbowl to have a great time, eat a great kosher meal, and lend support to your local United Synagogue Youth group. Thank you to all who supported us!

Darryl Kuperstock

Purim Thank Yous

Thank you to those who helped prepare and celebrate Purim at BEKI: Megilla Readers Steven Fraade, Shoshana Cohen-Fraade, Michael Stern, Valerie Sandler, Marsha Beller, Paula Hyman, Stuart Serkin, Tammy Edelkind, Elizabeth Alexander, Rabbi Tilsen; Torah Reader Sarah Serkin; At the Sedua, Food Committee chairperson Janet Brown, and committee members Adele Tyson, Mikki Ratner, Lori Weinstein, Brian Karsif, Jay Brown, Liora Lew; Decorations Committee chairperson Lynn Brotmanm, and committee members Adele Tyson and Sisterhood, Gwen Weltman and Netanya Lerner, Liora & Daphne & Dana Lew, and Becca Levy; Registration Committee, Janet Felton and Marty Gilens; Clean-up Committee, Robert and Janice Lettick, Jay Sokolow, Jay Brown, Carolyn Kone, Morris Bell, David, Janet, and Rebecca Golden, Kathy Rosenbluh, Carole Bass; Shtiklers, Ruthie Greenblatt as Cutesie the Clown; Andy Weinstein, Magician; The Silverman-Sokolow Purim Shpiel; The Bass Family in "Barney Meets Haman"; BEKI Purim Shpiel by Robert Lettick, Steven Stoll, Sharon and Bennett Lovett-Graff, Rabbi Tilsen, Maggie & Eve Roberts, Brian Karsif, and Marty Gilens; N.G. and Aubrey Graham in "A Brief Lesson on Purim"; Purim Songs Singalong led by Steven Fraade and Anne Johnston; Special Purim Birkat Hamazon

lead by Michael Stern; Mary Ellen Mack office support; Clarence for custodial support;
Seuda Chairperson Miriam Benson.

For more information call or write to:

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[Go to News & Events List Page](#)

[Return to BEKI welcome page](#)

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