



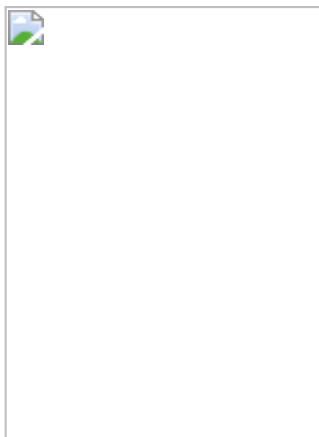
Selections from *BEKI Bulletin: The Newsletter of Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel*

February 1999 - Adar 5759

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Posener Endowment Funds Doubled



The [Posener Family Memorial Fund](#) was established by BEKI Board Member George G. Posener three years ago to honor the memory of his loved ones by maintaining the Synagogue building as a house of worship, study and communal activity. As Chairperson of the Building Committee during the mid-1990s George managed major building restoration projects, including the replacement of the roof and pointing of the brickwork. In addition, George oversaw the repair and maintenance of many parts of the synagogue building, often providing his own labor. Posener was honored with the Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel [Distinguished Service Award](#) in 1995 in recognition of his extraordinary and exemplary volunteer effort for our shul. He was the first

recipient of the award. Now, George has added significantly to the principal of the Fund, doubling his initial contribution.

But that's not all.

George G. Posener has long been a supporter of Jewish education for youth, and was among the founders of the Hebrew School Endowment Fund at BEKI in 1983. Since the establishment of the BEKI religious school, Posener has presented each student with a gift at the annual Graduation and Promotion Exercises. Seeing the continuing success and growth of the School and sensing the need for assured funding, he established the [George G. & Leah](#)

[E. Posener Endowment for the Jewish Education of BEKI Youth](#) in May 1997. To express their appreciation, the students, alumni, parents and faculty of the [United Hebrew School](#) designated Shabbat morning 17 May 1997 as the United Hebrew School Shabbat at BEKI Honoring George G. Posener. Now, George has added significantly to the principal of this Fund as well, doubling his initial contribution.



Both The Posener Family Memorial Fund and George G. & Leah E. Posener Endowment for the Jewish Education of BEKI Youth are managed by the [Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven](#). Only the interest from the Posener Funds is used, so the support of the synagogue and of religious education for children will continue in perpetuity. The Congregation must create a significant endowment base to assure its fiscal strength into the next century.



If you would like information about contributing to or establishing an endowment, please contact Rabbi Tilsen at (203) 389-2108 ext. 10 or jjtilsen@aol.com. For information on the Jewish Foundation or a confidential consultation contact its Director, Deborah Kaplan Polivy, at (203) 387-2424 ext. 304 or debpol@jon.cjfn.org

Purim Se`uda

On Purim afternoon, Tuesday 2 March 1999, a Se`uda (Feast) will take place from 5:00p to 8:00p, including a light dairy dinner. Preregistration is required by Thursday 25 Feb 1999. The cost is \$8 per adult, \$4 per child, \$22 maximum per household.

Highlights may include Ruth Greenblatt as Cutesie the Clown; face-painting and balloon animals; the Silverman-Sokolow Purim Shpiel; the Bass Family in "Barney Meets Haman"; a Purim Shpiel written, produced, and directed by Robert Lettick, Sharon Lovett-Graff, Rabbi Tilsen and others; Amy Pincus leading a Purim Songs Singalong; a special Purim Birkat Hamazon (Grace), and more.

Actors and performers of all ages needed; call Rabbi Tilsen 389-2108, ext. 10 or jjtilsen@aol.com. If you would like to present a purim shpiel, or if you would like to help in another way, call Miriam Benson at 389-6137. Registration forms will be in the mid-month mailing and are available from the BEKI office.

Prepare for Purim

This year we will again help you celebrate the Purim mitzva of mishloah manot - the sending of gifts - and matanot la-evyonim - presents to the poor - with our beautiful BEKI Purim Baskets.

No worry! No fuss! No shopping!

Send in an order form (sent in the mid-month mailing) by 10 February. If you can help with deliveries on Purim Day, Tuesday 2 March, please call Gloria Cohen in the evening or Sundays at 389-2070.

For an order form, call the BEKI office at 389-2108 ext. 14 with your name and address or fax us your request to 389-3899. Forms are also available on the counter by the coatroom in the synagogue, opposite the Rosenkrantz Library.

A Message from Rabbi Tilsen

The Dangers of Success

The greatest danger to Orthodoxy...comes from...a group of non-Orthodox Jews who are widely perceived as Orthodox. Precisely because most of Orthodoxy sees them as within the fold, Lubavitch Messianists threaten to undermine a key element of the Messianic faith of Judaism by having us recognize the Second Coming as a legitimate Jewish belief.

So says David Berger, President of the Association for Jewish Studies.

The Summer 1998 issue of *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* presented a symposium on American Orthodox Judaism. One of the questions asked the 33 respondents was, in part, "Which presents the most serious challenge to Orthodoxy: the deviationist religious movements, or secularism?" It was gratifying to read that in the opinion of many of the respondents, Conservative Judaism was not the single greatest danger to Orthodoxy. But we did rank high.

Let us ask the question of ourselves: What is the greatest danger to Conservative Judaism? In my view, one of the greatest dangers to Conservative Judaism -- or at least to the Conservative synagogue -- is its own success. Let me explain how this is.

The promoters of our movement are quick to claim that Conservative Judaism is the largest movement in the Americas, with anywhere from 1 to 2 million members. But such claims require closer examination.

A distinction must be made between synagogue affiliation ("membership") and actually living according to the teachings of the Movement ("adherence"). We would not call a person who does not observe Shabbat, kashrut (dietary laws), or recite blessings before eating an "Orthodox" Jew, even though he might attend and belong to an Orthodox synagogue. In the same way, we perhaps should not call a Jew who does not observe the mitzvot (religious imperatives) as taught by our teachers "Conservative," just because he or she might attend and belong to a Conservative shul. Instead, the latter might be called, more accurately, "a Conservative-affiliated" Jew.

To the credit of our Movement, many Conservative shuls -- including our own -- have been relatively successful in welcoming, involving and even nurturing Jews from a diverse background with respect to personal religious philosophy and observance of the mitzvot.

Indeed, there is much more that can and should -- and will -- be done toward making everyone feel welcomed and nurtured in our Congregation.

But this wonderful, welcoming attribute has a drawback. Those who have grown in their observance of mitzvot often experience a genuine need to be part of a group that is strongly dedicated to traditional observance and intensity of prayer and study. Such individuals often cannot feel enough "sustenance" from a larger group that includes many individuals at vastly different places in their spiritual journey. A dynamic is set in motion whereby such individuals may drift away from the Conservative community, not out of ideological difference, but out of a need to be part of a community without so much expression of doubt and disbelief, to be more fully surrounded by observant and knowledgeable Jews. The questions "where can my needs be best met" and "where can I contribute most" may yield different answers, yet both questions are valid and important. It is as if they climbed a spiritual ladder and are afraid that they might stumble if they look down. The Conservative community experiences a true loss when such individuals, with their great love of God and Torah, enthusiasm and knowledge, contribute less of themselves to those who need them most. That dynamic feeds upon itself.

At BEKI we are fortunate that there is a core of adults who are knowledgeable and dedicated to living according the demanding standards of Conservative Judaism. Far from being an elitist group, these individuals are clearly demonstrating their equally great commitment to bringing others close to Torah by maintaining an open atmosphere wherein each person's intellectual and religious integrity are respected. For many, they serve as a source of knowledge, inspiration and spiritual sustenance. It is these individuals, by their commitment to live as Conservative Jews, who both enable the great success of our synagogues in welcoming so many and insure that this success does not engender spiritual and institutional danger. They comprise a critical core radiating spiritual strength.

This is analogous to the commitment that many hold to live as Jews in a "mixed" Jewish neighborhood. Some feel the temptation to live in an exclusively Jewish environment -- and there are surely great advantages to that. Nothing can compare culturally and religiously to the exclusively Jewish areas of New York or Israel. But those who strive to live fully as Jews in an integrated environment such as we find in the Greater New Haven area are, minimally, no less admirable than those working to create homogeneous or segregated communities.

Paul Goodwin Darshan (Commentator) in February



BEKI "Founding Father" Paul Goodwin (*pictured at left*) will present a Devar Torah on Shabbat morning, 13 February 1999. The day is designated as "Shabbat Sheqalim," marking the practice of bringing the annual poll tax to the Temple in Biblical Jerusalem. (The sheqal is a unit of currency.) Paul Goodwin is marking his 80th birthday and will also sponsor the qiddush following the service.

LifeCycle

Mazal tov to Lloyd & Kai Yang Friedman on the birth of their son Alexander Daniel Friedman on 29 October 1998, and to Alex's big brothers Jonathan and David.

Mazal tov to Joseph Avni-Singer, MD, on the formation of his new practice "Child and Adolescent Health Care," 303 Whitney Avenue, New Haven, 776-1243.

BEKI Sisterhood News

[Sisterhood](#) President Adele Tyson and her board members are discussing various plans for the Spring season. But mark your calendars right away for the [Book of Life Luncheon](#) on Tuesday 20 June 1999.

For more information call or write to:

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