



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

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Introducing: K-2 Kehila

Calling all kids in grades K through 2! There is a special service just for you on Shabbat mornings at BEKI beginning at 10:45a. Every second week (see calendar) the K-2 Kehila will meet for its own service. On the alternate weeks when K-2 Kehila does not meet separately, K-2 Kids will join the Junior Congregation for its Torah Service at 10:45a. All kids are always welcomed to be either in the children's program for their age group or with their adult caretaker in the main sanctuary.

A Message from Rabbi Tilsen

Plastics! The Mitzva to Recycle

"Plastics!" The advice given to "the Graduate" some thirty years ago was sound. Plastics are great -- many wonderful life-enhancing products are made from plastic, including medical devices. Plastics is now big business -- and a lot of garbage.

We in the United States use about 25 million tons of plastic per year. That's a lot of baggies. Less than 10% of that is recycled; the rest ends up, at best, in landfills, and at worst,

everywhere else.

Plastic is forever, or nearly so. Most plastics take hundreds of years to decay. Unless we do something with them, plastics don't go away on their own.

Plastic pose a threat to domestic and wild animals alike. Goats can and do eat just about anything, except rocks. They seem to be biologically programmed to distinguish between rock and non-rock. Anything that is non-rock is food, including plastics. Unfortunately, while goats can handle just about anything that grows, they can't handle plastic. A large bag can block a goat's digestive tract and kill it. Other animals, including fish, get caught and die in plastic rings used to bind six-packs.

The mitzva of ba`al tashhit, "do not destroy," prohibits any behavior that destroys any feature in the natural world without justification. This mitzva, for example, prohibits killing of animals for sport, but allows the same for purposes of food or medicine, or to save people from danger. Applied to plastics, this mitzva means that we may use plastics when necessary, but we certainly may not cause environmental damage by failing to recycle them when possible. Fortunately, in New Haven and most of the surrounding communities, curbside recycling is available. On the bottom of most plastic packaging -- including bags, medicine bottles and milk bottles -- is a "plastics code," a triangle with a number 1-7 inside. That number indicates which type of plastic the container is made of. New Haven collects plastics 1 & 2 in the blue curbside bins, and will accept 3-7 at its facility on Middletown Avenue.

Recycling plastics 3-7 is somewhat less convenient, but a good opportunity for a mitzva project for someone interested in grass-roots organizing. Surely our synagogue should be in compliance with this mitzva. Even better than recycling, we can often avoid or reuse plastics. The mitzva of "ba`al tashhit" must be upheld if we are to improve the quality of life for future generations.

Recycle. It's a mitzva.

Dear Rabbi: Answers, Advice and Helpful Household Hints

Dear Rabbi,

Is the prayer "ya`ale ve-yavo" added to Birkat HaMazon during Hol HaMoed?

Signed, Prayerful

Dear Prayerful,

Yes. According to the early law code `Arba Turim ("The Tur"), O.H. 188, "...[O]n Rosh Hodesh and Hol HaMoed we say in it [birkat hamazon] 'ya`ale veyavo' and if Rosh Hodesh or Hol HaMoed falls on Shabbat we say 'retsei vехаHalitsenu' and afterwards 'ya`ale veyavo.' We do not mention Shabbat in 'yaele veyavo' nor Hol HaMoed or Rosh Hodesh in 'retsei vехаHalitsenu.'

Rabbi Yosef Karo in Beit Yosef comments that there seems to be a scribal error and the Tur should have said "on Rosh Hodesh, Hol HaMoed and on Yom Tov."

There is some disagreement as to whether and how to rectify an omission of "ya`ale veyavo," but by now it is certainly too late by all opinions!

Dear Rabbi,

I can't stand it. Whenever I come for food at a Bar Mitzva or Bat Mitzva or Wedding I have to stand in a long line. Can't you do something about it?

Signed, Tired of waiting in long lines.

Dear Tired,

Simply tell the people to stand closer together. Then the line will be shorter.

Dear Rabbi,

May Jews donate bodily organs?

Signed, Liver Giver

Dear Liver Giver,

Medical ethics are a controversial area in Jewish law. I advocate donating organs when the harvesting is done after proper certification of death (according to Jewish law) and when the organ will be used to help an individual in great need. Normally one is not allowed to tamper with the body of a dead person, but this rule is superceded when doing so will bring life to another.

Speakers & Benei Mitzva in January

Jeremy Golding will present and teach inspirational nigunim (melodies) during the 9:15a Shabbat morning services on 3 January.

Justin Weinstein, son of Natan & Lori Weinstein, will lead services and present a Devar Torah as a bar mitzva on Friday 9 January 8:00p & Shabbat morning 10 January 9:15a.

Daniel Rosenberg, son of Gary & Betsy Rosenberg, will lead services and speak as a bar mitzva on Shabbat morning 17 January 9:15a.

Shoshana Zax & John Weiser will be the darshanim on Shabbat morning 24 January 9:15a. Their Devar Torah, "On Hesed and Healing," will draw both from traditional sources as well as their own personal experiences over the past year. John is a management consultant working with nonprofit and socially-purposed businesses, and serves as a leader of the BEKI 2000 Committee. Shoshana is a nurse-midwife working with the practice of Fine and Gillette in Hamden, and serves as an officer of the United Hebrew School. John and Shoshana and their two children, Sam and Ariel, live in Hamden and joined BEKI in 1993.

Stephen Fraade, vice-president of the Congregation, will present a Devar Torah (Torah discussion) during the 9:15a Shabbat morning service 31 January.

Library Acquisitions

The following titles have been acquired through contributions to the Arie Nathan Levine Fund. They are available on a non-lending basis in the Claire Goodwin Youth Room.

The Kids' Catalog of Jewish Holidays by David Adler
Let's Celebrate our Jewish Holidays by Alfred J. Kolatch
Sharing Blessings by Rahel Musleah
God Sent a Rainbow by Yona Zeldis
Genesis: the Jewish Children's Bible by Sheryl Prenzlau
A Prayer for the Earth: the Story of Naamah, Noah's Wife by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

New Phone System Activated

Readers of the BEKI Bulletin were informed over the summer of a gift in memory of [Frederick Leonard Stutz](#) of blessed memory (pictured at right) by his daughter Eleanor Stutz Lowell to provide an advanced telephone system to the Congregation. That system has been installed and its features are being activated.



Some things remain the same. Our phone number remains (203) 389-2108. And when you call during office hours, the phone will normally be answered by a real person. If all lines are being used, you might even still get the same old busy signal.

So what is new? If you call for someone who is on another call or in a meeting during office hours (such as UHS Principal Terri Stern or Rabbi Tilsen), you will have a choice of leaving a message with the staff person who answered your call or leaving a message on your intended party's "voice mail." If you call after hours, you can leave a message directly for the person you are trying to reach -- or if you're lucky, you can even reach them at their desk after hours, avoiding another round of "telephone tag."

Callers are now assured of greater privacy as their calls can no longer be accidentally interrupted by someone picking up another extension. Our staff can even transfer your call to another phone in the building.

During severe weather, information on Hebrew School or Adult Studies closings or delays can be retrieved easily through a phone call. Service times can be found on an up-to-date recording, as well as other informational messages. You can even send a fax 24-hours a day to 389-5899.

The payphone in the lower lobby has been replaced with a free telephone for local calls during synagogue events. (Contrary to what one might expect, this costs the Synagogue much less than operating the payphone.) Those wishing to place long distance credit card calls can do so from this phone by calling the 800 or 888 number printed on their calling cards or by following the posted instructions. On Shabbat and Festivals, this phone is restricted to emergency or medical use.

Authorized users of the BEKI kitchen now enjoy the safety and convenience of a phone located in the lower level kitchen. A telephone (restricted to local and credit card calls) is also available in the [Rosenkrantz Library](#) for use during Sisterhood Board meetings and other scheduled activities in that room.

As these features are implemented, we ask that you help us by letting Myra know of any problems you encounter or suggestions you might have. All ideas are welcomed and will be conveyed to the appropriate parties. And, we ask your forbearance, especially in the first few

weeks, if your call is accidentally lost or misdirected. The generosity of Eleanor Stutz Lowell and the efforts of Jay Brotman and the BEKI staff are all intended to benefit the entire community by helping all of us work together more efficiently.

See our online [Phone Directory](#).

Old Becomes New: Tefilin Available

A set of kosher *tefilin* is available in the *tallit* box in the small chapel for public use in the small chapel. In addition, sets of kosher *tefilin* are available from Rabbi Tilsen. These sets are made of older *parshiyot* (scrolls) inside new *batim* (boxes) with new *retsu`ot* (straps). The *tefillin* made of older *parshiyot* -- some over 100 years old -- and new *batim* are a striking example of the continuity of religious practice spanning the generations, and seems so fitting for our Congregation, as old becomes new.

What is the Rabbi's Tzedaka Fund?

The Rabbi's Tzedaka Fund is maintained to support families in need, provide educational materials for adults and children, and meet special needs of the shul and community. Contributions are tax-deductible and may be directed to the attention of Rabbi Tilsen. All gifts are appreciated and donations of \$25 or more are noted in the BEKI *Bulletin*.

BEKI Sisterhood News

Adele Tyson, our sisterhood president, speaks for all of us when she says we are all deeply bereaved by the passing of Mimi Kahn. To her family we extend our sincerest condolences. She will be sorely missed by Sisterhood and the BEKI congregation. May she rest in peace.

LifeCycle

With Sorrow we note the passing of

- Robert Suslew

brother of Lillian Silverman
uncle of Ina Silverman

- Miriam "Mimi" Kahn
- Hilda Geller

sister of Robert Merriam

BEKI Welcomes New Members & their Families who joined during recent weeks:

- Arnold & Naomi Lehrer

and Alan & Elana

- Donald & Ann Green

and Aaron & Rachel

- Oliver Holmes & Hannah Sokal-Holmes

and Yafa, Hadassah & Aaron

- Jennifer Rosenberg

The Doorposts of Your Home

"And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates." The *mitzva* (obligation) to affix kosher *mezuzah* scrolls to the doorposts in our homes (excluding closets, washrooms and garages) is found in the Book of Devarim (Deuteronomy), in the passage known as "The Shema" (chapter 6). The word "mezuzah" originally meant the doorpost itself, but over time came to be the name for the scroll which Jewish families affix to their doorways. The kosher mezuzah scroll is made of parchment and written with a quill pen with special ink, just like a Torah scroll. The Biblical passage on the mezuzah is the Shema -- and so there is "a Shema" on the mezuzah, as well as the word "mezuzah" in the Shema. The mezuzah scroll has a degree of sanctity approaching that of a Torah scroll.

Beyond fulfilling the *mitzva* of having kosher mezuzah scrolls on the doorposts, many take joy in the additional *mitzva* of "*hidur mitzva*," that is, "beautification of the mitzva." This means that we get "extra credit," as it were, for performing a mitzva in an aesthetically pleasing way. To facilitate this second mitzva, beautiful mezuzah cases are available from the BEKI [Sisterhood Giftshop](#); come by on Sunday mornings, Wednesday afternoons or call Adele Tyson at 389-2108. Rabbi Tilsen has quality kosher mezuzah scrolls from 2.75" and larger, ranging from "basic kosher" to very nice looking scrolls. (Warning: Some mezuzah cases come with photocopied filler paper could be mistaken for a mezuzah scroll. Those fillers are meant only to show how a real scroll is placed in the case. Don't buy a fake! Also, be sure your new case is large enough to hold a real hand-written mezuzah scroll.)

Computers needed

The United Hebrew School and BEKI offices are in need of several computers. 486-based units (or better), color monitors and laser printers can all be put to good use. If you or your company has used equipment to donate, please contact Rabbi Tilsen at 389-2108 or email jjtilsen@beki.org.

For more information call or write to:

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85 Harrison Street

New Haven, CT USA 06515-1724

(203) 389-2108

Fax (203) 389-5899

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