



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

July-August 1999 - Av-Elul 5759

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BEKI Awarded Grant for "Saul's Circle"

Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel has been awarded a one-year grant in the amount of \$5,000 by the [Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven](#) to initiate a program of outreach to Jewish adults with serious chronic mental illness.

The outreach program, named "Saul's Circle" after the first of Israel's kings in the Biblical

period (11th century BCE), will provide synagogue outreach and directed services to address the spiritual and Jewish communal religious needs of adult Jews with chronic debilitating mental illness. Programs will be located at the synagogue and at other sites in Greater New Haven. The project will serve to help these adults locate the resources in Jewish tradition and the synagogue community that add meaning and structure to their lives, and those that can be of particular value to those with mental illness.

Concomitantly, the project will help synagogue professionals and members learn to better understand and welcome this segment of our population. The project will aim to likewise educate and sensitize members of the Jewish community who are associated with institutions such as synagogues other than the host Congregation.



To be directed by Jewish Educator Anne Johnston, with the support of [Rabbi Tilsen](#), Saul's Circle joins a growing array of innovative targeted outreach programs by BEKI. To learn more about Saul's Circle or to offer to help, please contact Anne Johnston at 389-2108 ext. 33 ajohnsto@connix.com or Rabbi Tilsen at 389-2108 ext. 10 jjtilsen@aol.com.

Tisha Be'Av at BEKI

The fast day of Tisha Be'Av ("ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av") will be observed on Wednesday 21 July 8:30p & Thursday 22 July 9:00a. The traditional Maariv (evening) service begins at 8:30p Wednesday night, and the Shaharit (morning) service on Thursday 22 is from 9:00a to 10:30a. The evening and morning services include the reading of the Biblical Book of *Eikha* (Lamentations). The fast is observed from 7:20p Wednesday night until about 8:40p Thursday night. As a sign of mourning, many refrain from wearing leather shoes and ostentatious clothing. Tisha Be'Av commemorates the destruction of the first two Temples and other tragedies that have taken place in our long and glorious history. The fast is the only full-day fast on the Hebrew calendar besides Yom Kippur.

Master Rotation Schedule

The "Master Rotation List" for Shabbat & Festival service participation was mailed in June to all households on the BEKI membership list. (Additional copies are available from the BEKI office at 389-2108, on the counter by the coatroom, or at www.beki.org/rotate.html. The list is the compilation of parts to be lead by those who volunteered for the services listed. If you would like to lead a children's or adult service, or learn to do so, contact Rabbi Tilsen at 389-2108 ext. 10 jjtilsen@beki.org.

The list may be of interest to those who are not service leaders. Shabbat service leaders are chosen in part to present a coherent style of service leadership. For example, some leaders have a "classical cantorial" style, while others encourage the congregation to "sing along" to prayers set to contemporary melodies. Leaders with similar worship styles have been assigned to the same days. That way, those who wish to enjoy that particular style can make a point to attend. (Those who must switch their parts -- especially for Pesuqei DeZimra, Shaharit and Musaf -- are encouraged to find a substitute with a similar "style" whenever possible to facilitate this system.)

BEKI has a long history of volunteerism. Over the past decades, much of the building was built and maintained by its members' own labor. Food preparation for programs and cleanup was done by members. In our day, many have now extended this "Jew-it-yourself" approach to the worship and teaching services as well. This has earned BEKI the epithet of "The People's Temple."

A Message from Rabbi Tilsen

Inter-Synagogue Cooperation

In this day of heightened conflict between the institutional Jewish religious movements, some have pointed to the [United Hebrew School](#) as a shining example of "inter-denominational" cooperation. As a graduate of such a community school myself (the Talmud Torah in St. Paul, MN), I personally share that value. Attention has been turned to this intersection of institutions recently because some have urged that BEKI develop its own congregational religious school instead of continuing the United Hebrew School in its current form. In another forum we will look more closely at the merits and demerits of that proposal. For the moment, let's look at the question of cooperation.

First, the background. BEKI and Temple Sinai, then a "Conservative-style" congregation in West Haven, organized the United Hebrew School (UHS) in the early 1980s. The next year, the Westville Synagogue (an Orthodox congregation) joined the school. Then in 1996, Temple Sinai withdrew due to its declining enrollment and financial difficulties. That left one Conservative and one Orthodox congregation involved in the school.

At its inception, the UHS was envisioned as being truly a community school, following the Talmud Torah model used in some communities. In this model, one large community school serves in place of several smaller synagogue-based schools, just as MAKOM serves our high school students today. Indeed, it came as a disappointment that B'nai Jacob and other area synagogues declined the invitation to participate in UHS. Other steps, such as separate incorporation and independent financing, were never taken. What was originally intended to be an independent community institution became, by accident of history, a small school run by two neighboring synagogues with different movement affiliations. (In the incoming class of '99-'00, about 60 students are from BEKI families and about 10 from Westville families.)

Many good things have been invented "by accident." In the field of supplemental congregational schools, UHS is fairly successful. At the classroom level, in most ways it offers educational opportunities as good as or better than do other such schools.

Structurally, the UHS has its own Board, of which BEKI member Shoshana Zax is chairperson and Natan Weinstein serves as Treasurer. There are three voting members from each synagogue, including the rabbi and two representatives appointed by the synagogue's president. The two synagogues' Boards must approve the School's annual budget. But beyond that point, there is little institutional contact between the two synagogues in managing the school, for better and for worse. That is, while the cooperative nature of the School is an important symbol, there is little actual collaboration between the two synagogues as institutions in managing the School.

The parents involved in UHS, from all that I have observed, have had absolutely no conflict based on synagogue affiliation. Likewise, the students are largely unaware of which

synagogue their fellow students attend. I don't think this is to the credit of the synagogues as institutions or their rabbis. Rather it reflects the refusal of the faculty and the Westville and BEKI families to let movement identity or synagogue affiliation divide them, despite every effort of religious leaders and institutions to the contrary.

The relationship between the "Westville Synagogue" and "BEKI" communities is particularly close. When "the Rose Street Shul," one of BEKI's predecessor congregations, moved from the old Jewish neighborhood to our current location at Harrison Street in 1960, about ten families left and joined Westville Synagogue. Members of the two shuls are in many cases relatives or neighbors. Indeed, several families are formal members of both congregations. But the high value placed on respect and peaceful relationships draw from deeply held religious ideals, not just personal politics.

Fortunately, this sort of goodwill is evident elsewhere in the Greater New Haven Jewish community. The Federation, Jewish Home, Tower One/Tower East, Jewish Family Services and other agencies all enjoy support and active involvement from people across a wide range of religious perspectives. Orthodox-controlled institutions such as the New Haven Eruv and the New Haven Mikvah Society have made efforts to include the concerns of the Conservative community, beyond merely seeking financial support. And BEKI's Kadima youth group and United Synagogue Youth (USY) group have been very welcoming to non-Conservative affiliated youth, including some whose families belong to Westville Synagogue. And, above all, Westville Synagogue's softball team welcomes BEKI and other players regardless of their religious approach or even their batting average.

If our Congregation is serious about collaborative projects with local non-Conservative synagogues, then we need to consider activities such as joint adult education classes and social service or social action projects. Perhaps the Sisterhoods or Men's Clubs of these synagogues could have leading roles in such projects. These could forge deeper and more meaningful relationships than the mostly symbolic "inter-synagogue" cooperation of the United Hebrew School.

Whatever direction our Congregation chooses for the future to ensure the best supplemental religious education it can provide, it must take into account the School's important symbolic value as a point of communal cooperation. But my position is that the real educational needs of the children should be the primary consideration in setting our course for that future.

Darshanim (Speakers) in July-August

On 3 July, Jay Sokolow will be the darshan (Torah commentator) during Shabbat morning services, which begin at 9:15a. Jay lives with his wife, Ina Silverman, and their children in New Haven.

On 21 August, William Hallo will be the darshan (Torah commentator) during Shabbat morning services, which begin at 9:15a. Bill lives with his wife, Nanette Stahl, in Hamden.

Kulanu Planning Meeting

[Kulanu](#), BEKI's outreach program to adults with special needs stemming from

developmental disabilities, will hold a programming and planning meeting on 8 July 1999 at 7:00p in the Rosenkrantz Library. Those interested in offering help in developing this program are urged to attend. Kulanu is now entering its third year and has proved a valuable program for the general Congregation as well as our members and neighbors with developmental disabilities.

UHS Registration Opens

Registration is open for the [United Hebrew School](#) for children entering K through 7th grade this fall. Registration deadline is 16 August; after that date a late-registration fee is required. Classes will meet at BEKI in refreshed classrooms.

Terri Stern will continue to serve as UHS Principal. Ms Stern is a BEKI member along with her husband Brian Karsif. Their oldest child is a UHS graduate and their youngest is currently an enrollee. Terri has retained a superb faculty with some additions and continuing educational excellence is expected. Jewish educator Anne Johnston has joined the faculty.

In addition, several BEKI members are serving as officers on the UHS Board. Shoshana Zax is Chairperson of the UHS Board; Jessey Palumbo is Recording Secretary; and Natan Weinstein is Treasurer. Rabbi Tilsen serves on the Board as well. Additional BEKI members are expected to be recruited to serve on the Board or its working subcommittees during the summer. If you would like to volunteer to serve on the Board or in another capacity, please contact Shoshana Zax at 389-0931.

Again this fall the United Hebrew School will offer the [Talmud Torah Meyuhad](#) for students with special education needs. If your child might benefit from this program, please call Principal Terri Stern (387-9268) at your earliest opportunity. Talmud Torah Meyuhad is supported by the Department of Jewish Education of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven.

The tuition parents are charged for UHS represents only a portion of the actual cost to Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel. If you can contribute to BEKI toward the cost of operating the School, your generosity would be appreciated and would be tax-deductible to the full extent provided by law.

A limited number of Louis Friedman Scholarships are available to students whose families have demonstrable financial need. To apply please complete the Scholarship Application form which is included in the BEKI UHS registration packet. The deadline for Scholarship applications is 16 August 1999. Due to the limitation on funds, we must receive Scholarship applications by that date for your child(ren) to be considered. The Scholarship funds will be fully distributed at that time so do not miss the deadline. All scholarship applications are strictly confidential.

We urge your children's participation in either the [Children's Shabbat Havura](#) (for kids up to first grade) or Junior Congregation every Shabbat morning year-round at 10:45a. There is no additional charge for these programs, which reinforce and supplement the School's curriculum.

For registration material or additional information please call the BEKI office at 389-2108, email Mary Ellen Mack at beki@snet.net or visit during office hours.

Independence Day Holiday Schedule

BEKI Offices will be closed on Monday 5 July for Independence Day. Morning services at 9:00a that day, and the Rashi Study Group will meet from 9:45a to 10:30a. All other services will be at their usual times.

Attend Daily Services

The Shoharim (morning) service is held at BEKI every Sunday morning at 9:00a and every Monday through Friday morning at 7:00a in the George G. Posener Daily Chapel. Mincha (afternoon) and Maariv (evening) services are held at 5:45p Sunday through Thursday. These daily services provide the opportunity to fulfill numerous mitzvot (religious imperatives) such as daily recitation of the Shema and Amidah prayers, Torah study, Tzedakah (charity), *nihum aveilim* (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.

Sometimes there are services for which attendance is one or two short of the "minyan" (quorum) needed to recite certain communal prayers. If you'd like to be that "tenth" (or maybe eighth...) person, come on a Tuesday or Friday morning. 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 both for their own sake and for the sake of adding to the spiritual strength of the Congregation.

Honor Roll to be Published

BEKI will publish its annual Honor Roll to recognize and thank contributors throughout the 1998-1999 fiscal year in an upcoming BEKI *Bulletin*. Contributors from 1 July 1998 through 30 June 1999 will be recognized in the following categories: \$20,000 and above (Gibor); \$10,000 to \$19,999 (Shomer); \$5,000 to \$9,999 (Boneh); \$3,600 to \$4,999 (Parnas); \$2,500 to \$3,499 (Nadiv); \$1,800 to \$2,499 (Madrach); \$1,200 to \$1,799 (Yedid); and Up to \$1,200 (Haver).

If you do not want your name listed in the Honor Roll, please write the BEKI office, send an email (beki@snet.net), or leave a message for Office Manager Mary Ellen Mack at 389-2108 ext. 14 or beki@snet.net. SP

Sim & Slim

Thanks to the generosity of Ellen Cohen, Ann Green, Judy Hoberman, Tanina Rostain, Barbara Stern, and Shoshana Zax and their families, the new edition of *Siddur Sim Shalom*, a Shabbat and Festival edition of the Conservative Movement's prayerbook, made its debut in BEKI's sanctuary on Shavuot. Nicknamed "Slim Shalom" for its handier size and lighter weight, the new siddur features more gender-inclusive language, clearer layout, and more transliteration. The new siddurim, it is hoped, will enhance the religious spiritual experience of all worshipers.

Our older copies of *Sim Shalom* ("Sim Shalom Classic Edition") will still continue to be used for Shabbat and weekday services in the Posener Daily Chapel. Unlike "Slim Shalom," our "Sim Shalom Classics" include the liturgy for weekdays, as well as the Shabbat and Festival liturgy. Now there are enough copies to meet the needs of up to 75 worshipers in that setting.

AA Open Meeting at BEKI marks second anniversary

A weekly AA Meeting has been held at BEKI since May 1997. Open to any person who can benefit from a recovery program, the meeting is held according to standard AA procedure. This is not a specifically Jewish recovery group, although a large proportion of participants are Jewish. For information on the weekly meeting call Jay at (203) 387-6019 or email Jay at jay@jacsw.org.

Parents of Interfaith Couples

Parents of interfaith couples who are interested in meeting with other parents with similar circumstances or with Rabbi Tilsen to discuss their concerns and share their experiences, are invited to contact Rabbi Tilsen at 389-2108 ext. 10 or jjtilsen@aol.com. If there is interest, a meeting will be scheduled.

Spring Fling Benefit Dance Enjoyed

Thanks to everyone who helped make the first Spring Fling BEKI Benefit Dance such a big success. Over one hundred people attended and danced the night away. It was a good party and helped support the synagogue. Very special thanks go to **Albert Mastrobuoni** and **Amity Wine & Spirits**, who provided all the soft drinks and liquor at cost.

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LifeCycle

With sorrow we note the passing of

Ruth Stern, mother of Leonard (& Barbara) Stern
Rita Saslow Podheiser, Sister of Harold (& Linda) Saslow
Louis Takacs, father of Richard (& Carol Ferency) Takacs
Paul M. Levine, son of Evelyn Levine

May their names always be mentioned for a blessing

Mazal tov to

David & Janet Golden, and Rebecca Golden, on the birth of their daughter and sister Sarah Esther Golden on Monday 10 May 1999 - 25 Iyar 5759

Paula Hyman for receiving the Akiba Award for scholarship and service to the Jewish community at the American Jewish Committee's annual meeting in

Washington

Justin Weinstein on receiving a Connecticut Association of Schools Scholar-Leader Award

Howard & Willa Needler on the birth of their grandson

Sisterhood News

Sisterhood's [Book of Life](#) luncheon was a success and enjoyed by all who attended. President Adele Tyson wishes all a happy, healthy summer. She is always receptive to new ideas and suggestions from Sisterhood's agenda for the coming year. It is never too early to start making plans. And, of course, if you're not yet a member of Sisterhood, join us! Just call Adele (389-9599). She'd love to hear from you!

Where there's A Will...

Tradition recommends that one bequeath at least 10% of their estate to *Tzedaka* (charity) such as to Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, although in many cases financial advisers and estate lawyers have shown how such gifts can be increased through careful planning that takes tax policies into account. Willing a proportion of one's estate to the Congregation is a concrete way of demonstrating one's commitment to Judaism and establishing a moral example for others.

For many, particularly senior citizens, it is possible to earn a guaranteed 8% or more annual return for life on a secured investment and help the Synagogue at the same time. With as little as \$10,000 you can make a charitable remainder gift that allows you and your spouse or other loved one to receive a guaranteed annual interest payment for the rest of your life, all or much of which is tax-free.

If you would like more information on how to make a bequest or a charitable remainder gift for the benefit of BEKI, contact your own attorney or financial consultant, or call estate planning attorney Donna Levine at 787-1633 for a confidential consultation. Attorney Levine will donate her time to help you establish a will or trust for the benefit of the Congregation. You may also contact Stephen Wizner at 432-4800 or Rabbi Tilsen at 389-2108 for more information on bequests and endowment opportunities, or call Deborah Kaplan Polivy at the [Jewish Foundation](#) (387-2424 ext. 304) for a confidential discussion.

Calling all Corporate Donors

Corporations and S-corporations paying Connecticut State income tax may be eligible for significant tax credits (in addition to federal and state charitable deductions) for contributions to approved programs at BEKI. Programs include providing Access to the Handicapped; [Kulanu](#) for Adults with Developmental Disabilities and Mental Illness; Energy Conservation; Children's Room Improvements; and Beautification of the BEKI Grounds. Programs also include Beautification and Maintenance of BEKI Cemeteries.

An individual or corporation can contribute toward any of these programs even if they are not able to take advantage of the tax credits. If you have a connection to a corporation that

might be willing to contribute toward any of these programs, or if you might like to contribute in an individual capacity, please contact Rabbi Tilsen at (203) 389-2108 or Dr. Brian Karsif at 387-9268.

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. Checks may be made to "BEKI Rabbi's Tzedaka Fund." All gifts are appreciated and donations of \$25 or more are noted in the *BEKI Bulletin*.

Children's Shabbat Havura

The [Children's Shabbat Havura](#) meets every Shabbat morning from 10:45a to noon in the Claire Goodwin Youth Room. Designed to address the spiritual and social needs of preschool children, the Havura meets concurrently with Junior Congregation for older children, a Learners' Minyan for adults and the main Sabbath service. Following the half-hour of songs, stories, prayers and dance, the children have their own qiddush refreshments and then enjoy supervised play until they join the adult worship for the Concluding Service and qiddush.

The Havura enjoys strong support from parents and the Synagogue. Currently about 70 children and their parents actively participate in the Havura. Visitors have come from across New England to observe this program as a model for their own synagogues.

Meeting the spiritual and social needs of preschool children is an obligation of the Jewish community and an important part of the Synagogue's mission. The Havura (Friendship Circle) links the children to one another, to other concerned Jewish parents, and to the Synagogue. The Havura enjoys the active participation of parents who themselves are enriched by the experience. For many adults, the Children's Shabbat Havura serves as their introduction to active participation in the Synagogue Community.

If you are interested in learning more about the BEKI Children's Shabbat Havura, come any Shabbat (Saturday) morning at 10:45a and see for yourself. Or contact Miriam Benson at 389-6137 or mirbenson@aol.com who along with Ellen Cohen coordinates the program.

Junior Congregation

Junior Congregation meets every Shabbat (Saturday) mornings from 10:45a to noon to address the spiritual, educational and social needs of children in grades 3-6. The Junior Congregation is led cooperatively by a group of talented and dedicated parents and educators.

Shabbat Shalom Learners' Minyan

The Shabbat Shalom Learners' Minyan meets every second Saturday morning year-round from 10:45 a.m. to noon. The Learners' Minyan combines study, prayer and discussion based on the weekly Scriptural readings and Sabbath prayers. Taught by Steven Fraade, Alan Lovins and others, the Learners' Minyan provides an open setting for religious enrichment for adults wishing to further their understanding of the texts and liturgy. See the calendar in this issue for meeting dates.

BEKI *Bulletin* On-Line

You can find past, current and future highlights of the BEKI Bulletin online at www.beki.org as well as a wealth of other information about the Congregation. Find email addresses of other congregants, service schedules, directions to cemeteries, bar- and bat-mitzva information, *devrei Torah* (sermons) and much more.

Buying Books on the Web?

Those buying books over the internet can find a registered referral link on BEKI's website to Amazon.com. If you are ordering books through Amazon.com, and you get there through our website, a 5% referral fee will go to BEKI. There is no cost to the book purchaser. The link is at BEKI's Website www.beki.org/linksofinterest.html at the bottom of the page -- you'll see the Amazon.com logo. And if you're ready to browse or order right now, just click



here: www.beki.org/linksofinterest.html If you are buying from Amazon.com. If you like, you can mark this reference link as a "bookmark" in your web browser.

Counter Information

Literature may be placed on the counter by the coatroom by permission only. To request permission for placement on this counter or on the Community Bulletin Board, please contact Synagogue Administrator Mary Ellen Mack at 389-2108 ext. 14. After office hours, you may leave one copy of your submission, with your phone number, under Mary Ellen's door (Room 2, next to the UHS office), or you may fax it to Mary Ellen at (203) 389-5899 (24-hours). Your cooperation in maintaining a fair and respectful policy is appreciated.

No Parking

Members and visitors to BEKI are advised that parking is prohibited at all times on the East side of Harrison Street as indicated by the "No Parking" signs. Parking is usually available across Harrison Street, and ample parking is available in the BEKI lot at the rear of the building.

For more information call or write to:

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85 Harrison Street at Whalley Avenue
New Haven, CT USA 06515-1724
(203) 389-2108
Fax (203) 389-5899

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Email to the BEKI Office: beki@snet.net

Email to Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen: jjtilsen@beki.org