



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

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In this Issue:

- [Purim at BEKI](#)
- [Israel: The Coexistence Challenge](#)
- [A Message from Rabbi Tilsen: \*Cosmic Zoom\*](#)
- [Dear Rabbi: Answers, Advice and Helpful Household Hints](#)
- [Bar Mitzva](#)
- [Library News](#)
- [LifeCycle](#)
- [Computers Needed](#)

### **Purim at BEKI**

The Megilla (Book of Esther) will be read at 6:30p on Wednesday 11 March and 7:00a Thursday 12 March. Come one, come all! Hearing the reading of the Megilla (or reading it oneself) is a Biblical commandment (mitzva). Other Purim mitzvot (imperatives) include sending food gifts to a neighbor, alms for the poor, and a feast on Purim day. Children are reminded to keep their adults from talking or making too much ruckus during the actual megilla reading at BEKI. Black tie optional.

### **Israel: The Coexistence Challenge**

On Sunday 22 March at 11:00 AM, the Congregation will host an important event as part of the wider community's celebration of Israel 50 Jubilee: "Israel's Next 50 Years: The Coexistence Challenge." This topic will be addressed by two Israeli educators, an Israeli Arab and an Israeli Jew, who will invite community response and dialogue.

Mohammed Abu-Nimer, an Israeli native and citizen, received BA and MA degrees from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He went on to earn a Ph.D. in Conflict Resolution from George Mason University in Fairfax, VA. He also received a certificate in "facilitation training" from the Neve Shalom School in Jerusalem. Dr. Abu-Nimer has held several teaching, research, and curricular positions relating to conflict resolution, with particular focus on the Middle East. He is presently Assistant Professor in the School of International

Service, and Director of the Conflict Resolutions Skills Institute at the American University, Washington, DC.

Ron Kitrei, also an Israeli native and citizen, earned a BA from Tel-Aviv University and an MA from Haifa University. He was a career officer in the Israeli Defense Forces for twenty-six years, rising to the rank of Colonel in the Central Command, with specific responsibility in army intelligence analysis and training. Since 1996 Mr. Kitrei has been Principal of the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa, an independent public twelve-year school, with a progressive philosophy.

This program is being cosponsored by the Abraham Fund, an organization which promotes Arab-Jewish cooperation within the State of Israel, and the Connecticut Coalition of Arabs and Jews for Peace, a local organization which facilitates dialogue between area Jews and Arabs. This special event will take place in the synagogue's upstairs social hall, will be open to the public free of charge, and will include brunch.

Please set aside the date and be sure to join us for what promises to be a stimulating learning opportunity. For further information, call the synagogue office at 389-2108 or Steven Fraade at 397-9430.

## **A Message from Rabbi Tilsen**

### *Cosmic Zoom*

Several recent films, including "Contact," "First Contact," "Men in Black" and "Space Kid" open or conclude with a "cosmic zoom" whereby the "camera" zooms out from a familiar earth scene to an arial view of the city, then state, then continent, then planet, solar system, solar neighborhood, galaxy, and neighborhood of galaxies, or else zooms in from this "far out" perspective. These awesome scenes impart a sense that we are incomprehensibly small.

In the Book of Job, God answers Job "out of the tempest": "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Speak if you have understanding. Have you ever commanded the day to break, known the place of dawn? Have you been brought to the depths of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have you surveyed the expanses of the earth? Tell Me if you know all of these. Can you tie cords to Pleiades or undo the reigns of Orion? Do you know the laws of heaven or impose its authority on earth?"

Today we can answer "yes" to more of those rhetorical questions than could Job. But along with our nascent understand of the deepest depths of the sea, the working of subatomic particles, and the extent and shape of the cosmos, comes if anything an even greater sense of awe at this universe.

God's incredible and wonderful gift of consciousness, or limited self-awareness, gives us the ability to understand the possibility that we are more than insignificant infinitesimal particles in a vast universe. As a character states it in "Contact," if there is no other intelligent life in the universe, it would be a tremendous "waste of space." And if there is no meaning or purpose to our lives, our toil and suffering, indeed the whole creation would seem a waste.

What, then, is the meaning of our lives, our purpose in creation? In science and in Torah, it would seem, the Almighty has planted the clues for us to figure this out.

## Dear Rabbi: Answers, Advice and Helpful Household Hints

**Dear Rabbi,**

Quick question: Kids want a cat. Is kitty required to keep kosher?

Signed, Kitty Query

**Dear Cat Kashrut Questioner,**

Cats can keep kosher but are not required to. Keep the cat chow out of the kitchen. Cats (or, more correctly, cat owners) must observe the restriction against possessing or eating hametz (leavened food) on Pesah (Passover) but they (the cats) do not have to eat matza.

**Dear Rabbi,**

I read that if President Clinton were Jewish his [alleged] affair with Lewinsky would not have been a sin. Is what Clinton did okay?

Signed, Leader Beater

**Dear Leader Beater,**

If President Clinton were Jewish.... Well, that's quite a proposition in itself.

If Clinton were Jewish, and his wife were Jewish, they would be bound by Rabbinic law which strictly forbids non-marital sexual relations. If Clinton were unmarried, sexual relations would still be "frowned upon" with another non-married person. The offense comes in that he is alleged to have violated the protected relationship between a worker and her employer, or an intern and her mentor, a student and her teacher. It is the "sanctity" of that relationship, not the marital relationship, that is so troubling to many. Worse is the accusation of him supposedly urging her to commit perjury by lying about the affair. That is the only allegation of a crime.

Is it okay what he allegedly did? No, I would call it *shtupid*.

**And now, for this month's Household Hint:**

Do you have flies, wasps, and other flying insects in you house?

Don't use poisonous environmentally-unsound commercial insect sprays to kill them. Instead use a mixture of 50% water and 50% vinegar to knock them down. One good spritz of this formula from a spray bottle will knock them down. Wipe them away with a soft cloth, your bug is gone and your window shines like new. Add oil and oregano to taste and use the remainder on your salad.

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**Bar Mitzva**

On Shabbat morning 28 March, **David Berlin**, son of Mark & Cynthia Berlin, will lead services and be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzva during the 9:15a morning service.

## Library News

The following books have been acquired through donations to the Ari Nathan Levine Fund, and are available on a non-lending basis in the Claire Goodwin Youth Room:

Glaser, *The Borrowed Hanukkah Latkes*

Zalben, *Pearl's Marigolds for Grandpa*

Yolen, *Milk and Honey: A Year of Jewish Holidays*

Waldman, *The Two Brothers: A Legend of Jerusalem*

Gerstein, *Jonah and the Two Great Fish*

Davis and Petricic, *Bone Button Borscht*

Gellman, *God's Mailbox*

Simon, *The Story of Passover*

Konigsburg, *The View from Saturday*

Schwarz and Rush, *The Wonder Child and Other Jewish Fairy Tales*

Serwer-Bernstein, *In the Tradition of Moses and Mohammed: Jewish and Arab Folktales*

Cohn, *The Christmas Menorahs: How a Town Fought Hate*

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## 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*.

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## LifeCycle

*With Sorrow we note the passing of*

Ada Levin Guttenberg  
*mother of Dr. Irving Guttenberg*

Abraham Bettigole  
*brother of Ida Bettigole*

***Mazal Tov*** to

- To Ivan & Rita Sachs, Ken & Linda Buckman, and Mark & Ilene Sachs on the birth of

their granddaughter and niece, Elissa Joy Sachs, to Robert & Betsy Sachs.

- To Morton & Ruth Silver on the birth of their grandson.

### **BEKI Welcomes New Members & their Families:**

- **Sarah Putney & Minnie & Abigail**
- **Judith Resnik & Dennis Curtis, & Jonathan Curtis-Resnik**
- **Rick Goodwin & Dr. Rachel Lampert**

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### **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](mailto:jjtilsen@beki.org).

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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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