



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

March 1999 - Adar 5759

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### Purim Megilla Readings and Feast

The *Megilla* (Book of Esther) will be read at 6:30p on Monday 1 March and 7:00a Tuesday 2 March 1999. Come one, come all! Hearing the reading of the *Megilla* (or reading it oneself) is a Biblical commandment (mitzva). Other Purim *mitzvot* (religious 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.

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, for those who have preregistered by Thursday 25 February 1999. To register, call 389-2108 ext. 14 or send email to Mary Ellen at [beki@snet.net](mailto:beki@snet.net)

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"; magic by Andrew Weinstein; a Purim Shpiel written, produced, or 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.

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### **Scroll cover for Jeremiah dedicated in memory of Emanuel and Anna Cohen**

The Sacred Scroll Cover for the Book of Jeremiah has been dedicated in memory of Emanuel & Anna Cohen (of blessed memory), the parents of Morris Cohen. The Book of Jeremiah represents the prophecy of Yirmiahu during the period of our exile in Babylonia (present day Iraq) after the destruction of the First Temple and the occupation of Israel in the sixth century BCE. The Scroll is one of a set of nine unique sacred books of the Hebrew Bible hand-written on parchment by a trained scribe, just as a Torah scroll is written.

The Cover was designed by local Judaica Artist Judith Sirota Rosenthal. The needlepoint was done by Linda Schultz. Sewing was done by Judy Weingarden, Trish Loving & Sharon Lovett-Graff. Rebbetzin Malka Levine, of blessed memory, served as the project coordinator.

The artist describes the symbolic art on the Cover: "Man is in agony, on the outs with those around him. It is a time of gloom and doom, of catastrophe. Then there is some consolation – a hopeful line: 'Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, and whose trust the Lord is.' Jeremiah survived catastrophe. We can survive tragedy and despair. We can ask God to be healed, and remember our reverence and trust, and we can be 'trees planted by the waters, and spread our roots....'

Emanuel and Anna Cohen, whose names are memorialized on the Scroll Cover, built a legacy of learning, good deeds and philanthropy.

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### **A Message from Rabbi Tilsen**

#### *Amazing Bible Science*

For the past 3,500 years the Jewish People have been removing male babies' foreskins in the rite of *brit mila* ("bris"), in fulfillment of Divine Command. But all those years we didn't know what we were supposed to do with those foreskins after the ceremony. Now a medical breakthrough has discovered a life-saving use for these foreskins: Skin generation. Two of the hottest biotech startups are growing large sheets of replacement skin from babyies' foreskins for burn victims and others needing skin grafts. Jewish babies' foreskins are in the forefront of the donor movement. There is a great potential here for humor, but this is a family-oriented synagogue newsletter. So we are just sharing this tip from a clipping in our file.

The current medical wisdom among cardiologists is that a little bit of red wine daily significantly reduces the risk of heart attack and stroke. This seems to explain why the French, who eat a fatty diet but also drink table wine daily, have a much lower incidence of heart disease than do Americans. But the Jewish People have known that all along. As the Good Book says (Psalm 104:15), "Wine makes glad the heart of man...."

We are all too familiar with the heart-rending accounts of the violent attacks on Israelis by the *Hamas* terrorist group (which the Palestinians view as a social service provider, as Hamas also sponsors day care centers and the like). Ironically, there was a time when the Israeli Government was openly promoting the Muslim Brotherhood and other *Hamas* forerunners, as a "religious" alternative to the nationalist PLO, which was at that time viewed as Israel's mortal enemy. But they should have foreseen the dangers of *Hamas*, for it is written in the flood story in Genesis (2:11): "*Va-timale ha-aretz Hamas* -- The earth was filled with *Hamas* (violence)." And, in a Biblical tip of the hat to you Cold Warriors, the sound "*russia*" in Biblical Hebrew (at least as pronounced by Ashkenazim) means "wicked one."

The scientists among our people have spent the last few generations trying to explain away the frequent Biblical references to very long lifespans, some of hundreds of years. Many geneticists today believe that aging, as we now experience it, may be nothing more than a hereditary birth defect from a now-universal gene mutation. Let's get cracking on that gene therapy, you guys.

And as **Alicia Hopkinson** explained in her *Devar Torah* (sermon) a few weeks ago at her *bat mitzva* observance at BEKI, the description of the resuscitation performed by the Biblical Prophet Elisha on the "dead" Shunamite boy recorded in 2 Kings 4 sounds almost exactly like mouth-to-mouth resuscitation as we practice it today.

With all of this, who needs "Bible Codes"? It's all there in black-on-white.

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

The following comments or questions were actually directed to Dear Rabbi, but these answers are either afterthoughts or were, when the opportunity arose, censored by better judgment. For most of the questions, I've supplied two answers; let me know if you think of others.

*Congregant on seeing the Rabbi in the grocery store:* Rabbi! Can you *posqin a shaila* [answer a technical religious question] in the Stop'n'Shop?

Answer: Only if you put down that Swanson's TV Dinner.

Answer: Was that the question?

*Congregant on seeing Rabbi in a public washroom:* Rabbi! So you guys have to do it, too!

Answer: Are you kidding? It's a mitzva!

Answer: Actually I was looking for the miqva.

*Congregant on seeing Rabbi in casual clothes in the grocery store:* Rabbi! You're out of uniform!

Answer: My *kittel* is at the cleaners.

Answer: I think my *tallis* got caught on a kumquat.

*Congregant on seeing Rabbi on Tuesday in the grocery store: **Good shabbes!***

Answer: And a *Gut Yahr!*

Answer: *Gut Shabbes!* My sermon begins in checkout lane 4 in ten minutes.

*Congregant to Rabbi:* Rabbi! Your name sure doesn't sound Jewish!

Answer: It does in Norway.

Answer: Moses' last name wasn't Goldstein either.

*Visitor:* Are you the Rabbi?

Answer: I would say I'm *the* Rabbi, but my wife reminds me that I'm just *a* Rabbi.

### **Planning a bar- or bat-mitzva observance at BEKI?**

Parents planning or contemplating a Bar- or Bat Mitzva Observance for their child at BEKI are invited to "Parents' Orientation to Benei Mitzva Observance at BEKI" on Thursday 4 March 1999, 7:30p to 9:00p in BEKI's Rosenkrantz Library (enter through front doors to lobby or driveway doors). Join representatives of the Ritual Committee, the Administration and Rabbi Tilsen to find out how you can most effectively plan a bar- or bat-mitzva observance. This is an opportunity for parents to ask questions and raise any concerns about the process, and to share ways of making the benei mitzva celebrations most meaningful. While the meeting is addressed to parents, benei mitzva candidates may attend as well. Copies of the ["Guide to Benei Mitzva Observance at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel"](#) are available on this website and in print from the synagogue office for those who wish to review the Guide before the meeting.

### **Siyyum '98 Celebration**

Over the past nine months, participants in the Siyyum '98 project studied Hebrew Language, Liturgy, and the *Mishna* tractate *Berakhot*. The coursework consisted of dozens of classroom hours of study, individual reading, and practice. Now the participants in this "adult Benei Mitzva" program (as it were) will celebrate a *siyyum* on Shabbat HaHodesh 12-13 March 1999. In addition to leading and participating in services, they will also host a Qiddush following the services.

A "*Siyyum*" is a traditional celebration in which celebrants share a small part of what they have learned. It marks the conclusion of the reading of a rabbinic text, especially the Mishna (a law compendium edited in the second century of the common era) or the Talmud (compiled in the subsequent four or five centuries). The Mishna studied in the program, tractate *Berakhot*, deals in large part with prayer, blessings and liturgy. Students read the entire Mishna in its original Hebrew. The "conclusion" that the *Siyyum* celebrates includes

the hope that we will "return" to the text and study it again.

This year's celebrants are Joanne Foodim, George G. Posener (pictured at right), Morton & Ruth Silver, Hugh Fryer, Stanley Saxe and Peter Lerner. As a result of completing this course, these graduates have achieved a deeper understanding of Torah, an ability to access the traditional texts, and the confidence to comfortably participate in both private and public worship. Kathy Rosenbluh, Ellen Jawitz, Steven Fraade, Amy Pincus and Rabbi Tilsen participated as teachers, and Ruth Greenblatt provided tutoring when requested.



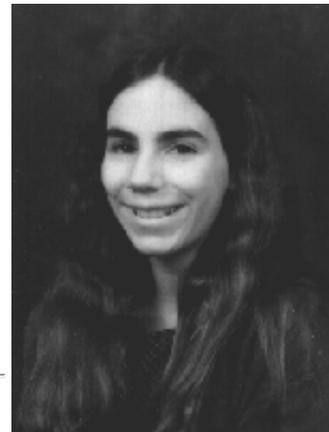
Some of these celebrants, for various reasons, did not celebrate becoming a bar- or bat-mitzva when they were youths. So, for some, this Siyym experience is an adult analog to the youth rite-of-passage. Please join them at the Early Evening Service on Friday 12 March at 6:00p, the Shabbat Morning Service on Saturday 13 March at 9:15a, and again for the Minha (afternoon) and Maariv (evening) services at 5:45p that same day.

### Benei Mitzva in March



**Johanna Hoberman Kinsley** (pictured at left) will be called to the Torah, recite the Haftara, present a Devar Torah (Torah Commentary) and lead services as a Bat Mitzva during Shabbat morning services on Shabbat Parah, 6 March 1999. Johanna is a daughter of Judy Hoberman and Dominic Kinsley, and granddaughter of Sylvia and Carl Hoberman of Valley Stream, New York, and Mary and Dick Kinsley of Alexandria, Virginia. She is a seventh-grader at West Hills Middle Magnet School in New Haven and a student at BEKI's Religious School. Johanna enjoys playing soccer and piano and spending time with her friends.

**Clararose Voigt** (pictured at right) will lead services as a Bat Mitzva during the Shabbat morning services on 20 March 1999. Clararose is the daughter of Susan and Philip Voigt and a student at BEKI's Religious School.



**Max Bender** will lead services as a Bar Mitva during the Shabbat morning services on 27 March 1999. Max is the son of Sharon & David Bender and is a student at BEKI's Religious School.

### Kashrut Advisory

The Purim product "**Humantaschen**" baked by the **Soylent Green Bakery** is *not* kosher certified and may contain meat-based ingredients. It is not recommended for the kosher consumer, and is not permitted at BEKI. Only baked goods produced under rabbinic supervision should be purchased.

## **BEKI Sisterhood News**

Important Notice: The "[Book of Life](#)" date had to be changed; the new date is Tuesday 22 June 1999. Please mark your calendars accordingly. Details will be forthcoming.

A card party has been tentatively set for Sunday, 2 May, 1999, 1p to 4p.

President Adele Tyson will announce various plans for the balance of the Sisterhood year.

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### **Qiddush Sponsorships**

Sponsoring a qiddush is a great way to honor a loved one with members of the congregation and support the synagogue. Sponsorships of the Shabbat morning qiddush through the spring are quickly filling up. The cost of a basic qiddush on Shabbat morning is \$75. Additional options, including cakes, are available.

If you would like to reserve a date or want further information, please contact Mary Ellen Mack at 389-2108 ext. 14 or [beki@snet.net](mailto:beki@snet.net).

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### **Birthday Qiddush**

BEKI members may commemorate the birthdays of family members and friends at a special qiddush that will be held once a month. For only \$18 per honoree, members may co-sponsor the qiddush in the name of the birthday person. For this qiddush, there will be a birthday cake in addition to the regular menu.

Upcoming dates for sponsorships are: 13 March, 17 April, 15 May, 12 June, 17 July. If you would like to reserve a date or want further information, please contact Mary Ellen Mack at 389-2108 ext. 14 or [beki@snet.net](mailto:beki@snet.net).

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### **Advertise in the BEKI Bulletin**

An advertisement in the BEKI Bulletin is a great way to support the synagogue and promote your business. Annual rates are very reasonable. If you are interested in placing an advertisement, please contact Sheila Gardner at 387-1376.

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### **Income Development Committee**

BEKI's Income Development Committee is seeking volunteers to help ensure the long-term financial health of the synagogue. Since its formation last year, the committee has been quite successful in its efforts including raising funds to balance last year's budget, increasing the amount raised at the annual Kol Nidre appeal, and establishing several new endowments with the Jewish Foundation of Greater New Haven.

If you would like to volunteer for this committee, please contact BEKI Vice President Stephen Pincus at 397-8816.

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## Tree of Life

In February we celebrated Tu beShevat which is the celebration for the New Year of the Trees. We have a beautiful Tree of Life in our synagogue. The fruit from our Tree of Life can serve as a great way to contribute to the life and strength of our synagogue. Inscribing a leaf on our magnificent tree is a thoughtful and meaningful way to commemorate a joyous event. Inscribe a leaf to celebrate an event like a Bar or Bat Mitzva and you will have a lasting memory of the great day. Inscribe a leaf to celebrate a milestone birthday. Inscribe a leaf because someone is near and dear to you. Inscribe a leaf to honor your mother, father, sister or brother. Inscribe a leaf for an anniversary. Inscribe a leaf for your good health. Do it now and enjoy looking at your special leaf.

Inscribe a leaf to memorialize a dear one. This is a beautiful way to remember your parents, relative and beloved friends. Inscriptions cost \$118.00 for a leaf and \$500.00 for a rock. Call Mikki Ratner (387-7882) or [mmrat22@aol.com](mailto:mmrat22@aol.com). I will be happy to assist you with the wording and also will acknowledge that a leaf has been inscribed. Let's fill our tree with engraved leaves.

*Mikki Ratner*

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## Letters

Dear Friends,

In the years I've been your office administrator, you have all become part of my life - some as casual friends, some as close and dear "family." I've shared with many of you births, Bar and Bat Mitzvas, weddings, good times and bad times and, sadly, deaths; the latter affecting me very personally and emotionally.

The outpouring of love and concern you have shown me at this time is overwhelming. Your loving good wishes, cards, letters, phone calls, flowers, gifts, books and fruit baskets were all a most meaningful expression of mutual friendship and affection that I have felt over the years and very much appreciated.

While I was at BEKI, my only concern was what was best for the Synagogue. The Synagogue always came first. As many of you know, I have taken on another challenge. Help and welcome the new administrator as you did me.

To my friends at BEKI, I will always remember all of your true concerns and kindnesses you have shown me, and I thank each and every one of you. I sincerely wish BEKI continued success. With gratitude and fondness,

Myra [Myers]

Stewart Frankel and Joy Kaufman would like to express their gratitude to members of the BEKI community for the support and comfort offered at the time of Stewart's father's death.

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## LifeCycle

*HaMaqom Yinahem Etkhem:* We Mourn the Passing of **Jordan Goldberg**, husband of Belle Goldberg; **Ruth Rotman**, mother of Darryl Kuperstock; **Curt Graf**, father of Cynthia Berlin; **Ida Kaminer Margolis**, mother of Bernice Margolis; **Mollie Olenik**, sister of Maurice "Moe" Miller and of Sam Miller; **Faye Weinstein Parker**, sister of Irving Weinstein.

May God Comfort All Who Mourn

*Mazal tov* to **Helene & Henry Kasha** on the birth of their granddaughter Sarah Alexandra Kasha.

*Mazal tov* to **Marvin & Helaine Lender** on the birth of their granddaughter Maya Tal Lender.

## BEKI Welcomes New & Returning Members

- Steven & Susan Wolfson
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For more information contact:

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Email to Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen: [jjtilsen@beki.org](mailto:jjtilsen@beki.org)