



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

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Build Your Own Sukka!

Building a sukka (hut) can be fun for the whole family, and it's a mitzva! If you've always wanted to build your own, now is the time. Sukka Kits are available from Steve Henry Woodcraft at 919-489-7325. Members of the [Men's Club](#) can be available to help a little, too. The BEKI sukka is also available for your use during the week, on a first-come-first-served basis.

Children's Sukka Crafts Hour

BEKI and neighborhood kids are all invited to the BEKI sukka (hut) for crafts and fun on Sunday 4 October from 4:30p to 5:30p. The program will be held outside in the sukka unless it rains, in which case we'll be inside. Dress accordingly. Please feel free to invite friends and neighborhood children with their adults to join us and help decorate the BEKI sukka! Children are welcomed to take home their creations or leave them in the sukka.

Hol HaMoed: What is it all about?

"Hol HaMoed," also known as the "intermediate" days of the festival, are those days between the first two and last two days of Sukkot (and of Pesah). They have a "semi-holiday" status. The rules against *melakha* ("work") that apply on Shabbat and Festival are not in force during this period, although we are encouraged to take this time as a holiday and to avoid work as much as possible. Our weekday morning services are enhanced with a brief Torah reading, the recitation of the musical "Hallel" section of Psalms, and a brief Musaf (additional) service. Weekday morning services thus take 55 to 60 minutes, instead of our usual 30 to 45 minutes. Afternoon and evening services are their usual length. The *lulav* (branches) and *etrog* (citron) are waved each morning of Hol HaMoed Sukkot (except Shabbat), and one is obliged to dwell (especially to eat) in a sukka.

Sukkot Singers' Service

On Shabbat Hol HaMoed Sukkot, Saturday 10 October, a special musically-enhanced "havura-style" service will take place in the main sanctuary. The service will follow the

traditional liturgy with the addition of high-energy singing, some new melodies, *nigunim* (wordless melodies), and chants. The recitation of *Hallel* (a series of joyous Psalms) and reading *Qohelet* (Ecclesiastes) are included as part of the Festival liturgy. The *lulav* (palm branch) and *etrog* (citron) are *not* used on Shabbat. All are encouraged to attend this and every service.

This "Singers' Service" follows on the heels of two well-attended "Singers' Minyanim" held during the Summer in an educational setting. Many expressed interest in holding this type of service within the main Shabbat morning service. The service is being coordinated by Jeremy Golding, [Alan Lovins](#), and Marc Schwartz.

"We hope that this kind of *davenning* will catch on - the use of melody and harmony to infuse energy and a sense of transcendence in prayer," said Jeremy Golding. "Our hope is that a community 'Singers' Service' will become a regular occurrence on the BEKI calendar." The service itself will be conducted in accordance with the traditional order used weekly at BEKI.

For further information, please contact Jeremy Golding through the synagogue office.

Qohelet Read on Sukkot

Selections from the Biblical Book of *Qohelet* ("Ecclesiastes") will be read on the Shabbat morning of Hol HaMoed Sukkot, 10 October, during the 9:15a service. *Qohelet*, attributed by tradition to King Solomon in his old age, is a "wisdom" book that many see as being out of step with the rest of the Torah. While it includes such well-known passages as "To everything there is a season," it also contains statements that may seem cynical or nihilistic. The Book will be chanted according to its beautiful and ancient melody. In addition, Hallel will be chanted, and other musical enhancements will be made to the services.

Hosannah! Hosannah!

The Hoshana Rabba ("Great Hosannah") morning service this year occurs on Sunday 11 October. This is one of the most colorful, fun and tactile services of the year, featuring seven circuits around the shul with *lulav* and *etrog* and the *hoshana* service in which willow twigs are beaten on the chairs. Special holiday melodies make this an unforgettable spiritual experience. Be sure to come to this service for all ages. Hoshana Rabba service begins Sunday 11 October at 9:00a and concludes by 10:30a.

Yizkor Memorial Service on Shemini Atseret

There will be a Yizkor Memorial Service on the Festival of Shemini Atseret, the morning of Monday 12 October. During that memorial service individual and communal prayers and remembrances will be offered for all of our departed loved ones. It is also appropriate to light a memorial candle before the onset of the Holy Day the previous evening.

Simhat Torah Celebration

Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel is the place to be for the evening and morning of Simhat Torah. Festival Afternoon and Evening services begin at 6:00p on Monday 12 October. Festival Morning services begin at 9:15a on Tuesday 13 October, and also include dancing. Goodie Bags will be presented by the [Sisterhood](#) to all the children at services evening and morning.

A Message from Rabbi Tilsen

Chews by Choice

In this country, people normally eat cows. But in India, one would sooner eat their brother-in-law than eat a cow. Here they eat Kentucky Fried Chicken; in France they eat Kentucky Fried Frogs. The Chinese have as many recipes for cats and rats as your Bubbie has for eggplant. When we find a bug in our bedroom, we have to call daddy to kill it and remove its carcass; in some places, that insect would be added to the salad for dinner.

Insects, reptiles and rodents are disgusting; kittens and calves are cute. There is little logical reason for that. What we think is okay to touch or eat is a cultural aesthetic deeply ingrained in our psyche.

As relatively sophisticated middle-class Americans, we are almost unique in the world in that we feel comparatively comfortable accommodating and tolerating other people's dietary patterns. If you had a *seder* with your extended family or guests, you no doubt had at least one diner demanding a low sodium, diabetic, vegetarian, low-cholesterol, lactose-intolerant, or low-calorie diet. Twenty years ago it was a big deal if a dinner guest had some special needs; today we take it in stride.

But in most of the world, if you live among a certain people and don't eat their food, you won't fit in. If you are served rat in Rangoon and you refuse, your hosts will be deeply offended. If the French farmer offers fresh frog legs and you refuse, you will not be offered dessert. People are really touchy if you don't eat their food.

And if you offer the wrong rations to a guest, you can also get in trouble. Don't serve beef to a Hindu, pig to a Muslim, shrimp to a Jew, or cat to an Egyptian. It is not a way to make your guest feel welcomed.

Kashrut (keeping kosher) is an aesthetic for eating. And the aesthetic of kashrut is one of the seven reasons why a Jew should keep kosher.

The Torah itself indicates that kashrut is a matter of aesthetics. After a list of animals we are forbidden to eat, the Torah says, "They are detestable to you, and you shall not eat of their flesh, and their carcasses shall be disgusting to you."

Why does the Torah have to tell us that eating these certain things is disgusting? Either you feel disgusted or you don't. How can the Torah tell us it's disgusting? Not every individual will feel disgust at crab or pork. And so the Torah speaks not about an individual Jew, but about Jews in general: Jews find these treif (non-kosher) foods disgusting! So be aware of that! Don't give beef to a Hindu, don't give rats to an American, and don't give crab to a Jew. That's what the Torah is telling us.

And so the Torah says, "*to you*." These things are impure *to you*, these things are disgusting *to you*. The Torah says "*to you*" because these things are not impure or disgusting in any absolute or objective sense; rather, they are defined as impure and disgusting to *us*.

Recognizing this disgust gives us an insight into the partially non-logical world of keeping kosher. Why do dishes and pots and pans have to be kosher? After all, we know from science that if you wash a surface thoroughly in hot water, there is virtually no residue. Why isn't that good enough?

Logic dictates that it is clean enough, but aesthetics insist it is unclean. Let's say, God forbid, and I mean *God forbid*, you find a dead mouse in a pot in your kitchen. Many people would not want to eat food cooked in that pot, even if it were washed thoroughly. The question of kashering pots and pans is, what would you have to do to that pot so you'd feel comfortable eating from it? It's not just a matter of logic, it's a matter of aesthetics, at least in part.

People joke about it, but food is a very important part of defining a culture. It says who you are, where you fit in. Food rules touch a very elemental part of our psyche known as the stomach.

To be Jewish we have to step inside the circle, the circle of Jewish aesthetics, the circle of the Mitzva System. We have to say that some things are not for us. We have to feel confident enough to say to someone, "I don't eat that because I'm Jewish."

The aesthetics of kashrut is the fourth of seven reasons for keeping kosher. Our Jewish way of eating shapes our souls at the deepest level and identifies us as a distinct people. Leaving aside other ethical or religious considerations, eating the Jewish way defines us as and makes us Jews.

The majority of BEKI households observe kashrut in some degree (like most mitzvot, keeping kosher is not an "all or nothing" observance). In the past few years, many of our families have accepted the appellation "Chews by Choice" and converted their kitchens to kosher. We applaud them in their effort to sanctify their lives through upholding the Jewish dietary laws.

Dear Rabbi: Answers, Advice and Helpful Household Hints

Dear Rabbi,

What is the "Lieberman clause" in the *ketuba*?

Signed, 'clause I care

Dear 'clause,

The "Lieberman clause" is a passage added to the *ketuba* (marriage contract) to help insure that Jewish law will be respected in case of divorce. The passage is based on the wording developed by Rabbi Saul Lieberman, considered by many the leading scholar of this century, a professor at the [Jewish Theological Seminary](#).

In its current form, the clause reads (translated from the Aramaic): "And the Groom (name) and the Bride (name and appellation) agreed that if one of them were to contemplate or seek the termination of their marriage or if one of them were to terminate it in civil court, then either may summon the other to appear before the Beit Din (Court) of the Rabbinical Assembly and of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America or its designate or successor, and that both of them will abide by the decisions of this Beit Din in order that both may be able to live according to the rule of Torah."

It may seem strange to speak of divorce in a marriage document. But the primary purpose of the *ketuba* is to protect the rights of the woman in the event of divorce. The Lieberman clause provides a basis for legal remedy should one of the parties fail to cooperate in Jewish divorce proceedings. It has also been suggested that the clause could be taken as a mechanism to bring a couple or individual to marriage or individual counseling or psychotherapy, although we are not aware of such an implementation.

While the language and form of the *ketuba* we use today is essentially the same as that used since the time of Shimon ben Shatah (over 2000 years ago), each generation has adapted it to meet their own circumstances. The Lieberman clause represents a continuation of that essential tradition.

Attention Grandparents: Holiday Gift Suggestion

Hanuka is just around your sukka's corner. In addition to giving fine Judaica items and toys purchased at the [Sisterhood Giftshop](#) (open Sunday mornings and by appointment), consider giving your grandchild the gift of a Jewish education. You can make a direct contribution toward your grandchild's tuition at the [United Hebrew School](#) (or [Ezra Academy](#), or another Jewish religious school), which will be credited to the family's account. (This gift is not tax-deductible.) If you don't have little ones of your own in school, consider a generous tax-deductible donation to the Louis Friedman Scholarship Fund to help us provide a formal education to all Jewish kids regardless of their parents' ability to pay.

BEKI Youth to attend International Convention

Representatives of BEKI [United Synagogue Youth](#) (USY) will be attending the 1998 International Convention in Chicago from 27-31 December. Those interested in attending or supporting our youth can call 389-2108 ext. 33 for more information.

Need a letter for Employer or School?

Shul members occasionally need letters to employers or principals explaining the nature of the Jewish holiday observance. Despite the high level of understanding in our community, there is still a need for education and information. It is important that our children be in shul for all of Yontiff.

If you would like such a letter for the festivals, call Rabbi Tilsen at 389-2108 ext. 10 or email to jjtilsen@beki.org.

Mishna Class to Finish *Berakhot*

The final meeting of the Mishna Class will be on Sunday 25 October from 9:30a to 11:30a. The final two chapters of *Berakhot* will be studied. Those who are interested in Mishna but missed the series are welcome to attend in order to get a "taste."

Benei Mitzva in October

Jeremy Miller, son of Phillip B. and Lynn Coleman Miller, will participate in and lead services on Shabbat Bereshit, 16-17 October, as a bar mitzva.

Karen Berlin, daughter of Mark & Cynthia Berlin, will participate in and lead services on Shabbat Noah, 23-24 October, as a bat mitzva.

Letters

LifeCycle

HaMaqom Yinahem Etkhem: We Mourn the Passing of BEKI member **Rose Pergament**

May the memory of our departed be for a blessing.

BEKI Future Needs

Our Synagogue has several needs that are beyond our conservative budget. Among the priority items identified by the Officers are installation of an elevator, renovation of the washrooms to enable handicap accessibility, and repaving of the parking lot. Each of these is in the \$50,000 to \$100,000 range. The Congregation also has many needs for annual

sponsorships, named endowments and debt retirement at all levels of giving. If you would like to fund any of these or if you would like more information, please contact Vice President Stephen Pincus at 787-3513 (day) or Rabbi Tilsen at 389-2108 ext. 10.

Walk-a-thon for Hunger 18 October

Walk to fight hunger with BEKI and other members of the Interfaith Cooperative Ministries' twenty-seven congregations in the second annual "Cook and Care Walk-a-thon." The walk-a-thon will take place on Sunday 18 October starting at Edgerton Park (corner of Whitney Avenue & Cliff Street). Registration is at 1:00 at Edgerton Park, the walk is at 2:00, refreshments at 3:00. This walk-a-thon, co-sponsored by BEKI's Social Action Committee, will benefit Community Soup Kitchen, Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen and Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers. This is the first year BEKI has been a member of ICM, the cooperative organization of Greater New Haven congregations, and the first major event we have participated in with them. It's an important opportunity to show our commitment to feeding the hungry in our community through these wonderful organizations. We need walkers, pledgers, publicists, and anyone who wants to help. Contact Rob Forbes at 782-9101 for more information.

Blood Drive

It has been several years since BEKI conducted a blood drive, and the need is greater than ever. And it's easy. The Red Cross will organize all the logistics; all we have to do is provide the donors. If this is a project you would like to help to coordinate, please contact Rob Forbes of the Social Action Committee at 782-9101.

For more information contact:

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

