



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

Heshvan 5760 - October 1999

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### Festival Services

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#### **Hoshana! Hoshana!**

The **Hoshana Rabba** ("Great Hosannah") morning service this year occurs on Friday 1 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 (palm and

cytron) 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 Friday 1 October at 9:15a and concludes by 11:00a.

Hoshana Rabba is a semi-festival on which work is not strictly prohibited as it is on the major festivals. It serves as a "closing ceremony" for the weeklong Sukkot observance in preparation for the concluding festival of Shemini Atseret (see following item).

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### **Shemini Atseret & Yizkor Memorial Service**

The Festival of **Shemini Atseret** ("Eighth Day of Assembly") serves as a conclusion to the autumn pilgrimage Festival of Sukkot ("Booths"). It is marked by reading selections from the Biblical Book of Qohelet (*Ecclesiastes*) during the 9:15a service on Shabbat 2 October. 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 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.

The **Yizkor Memorial Service** is also incorporated into the Shemini Atseret liturgy. In the Yizkor service we call upon the memories of our ancestors and loved ones who, while not physically present, are part of our "Assembly." 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 on Friday night immediately before lighting the Shabbat & Festival candles.

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### **Simhat Torah Celebrations**

Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel is the place to be for the evening and morning of **Simhat Torah**. Festival Evening services begin at 7:30p on Saturday 2 October. Festival Morning services begin at 9:15a on Sunday 3 October. Goodie Bags will be presented by the [Sisterhood](#) to all the children at services evening and morning.

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### **Renaissance Campaign**

The 1999-2000 BEKI Renaissance Campaign is underway!

The BEKI Renaissance Campaign is a new way of planning for BEKI's future. Its goal is to insure that BEKI has the financial strength to meet the challenges of a vibrant and growing community. It will achieve this goal in two ways. First, it will heighten awareness of BEKI's immediate and long-term needs. Second, it will encourage all BEKI members to consider

how they can participate in ensuring BEKI's strength and stability in a manner consistent with their means.

The financial goal of the 1999-2000 Renaissance Campaign is to raise a minimum of \$93,000 in gifts to BEKI. This amount is in addition to members' dues and other fundraising efforts but does include the Kol Nidre Appeal. The \$93,000 figure is the exact amount needed to balance this year's bare operating budget. Even before the official kickoff during the Kol Nidre Appeal, many members responded to this challenge with generous contributions.

Why do we need a BEKI Renaissance Campaign now? For years BEKI operated on a budget so spare that year-to-year we operated with a deficit. Even then, however, we could not afford many essentials ranging from enhanced office support to repairing broken windows and worn-out carpets to replacing antiquated air conditioning and heating units. With declining membership and mounting problems, many people began to speak about BEKI's eventual closing.

And then...something miraculous happened. Scores of BEKI members joined together to build for the future. We balanced the budget. Debts were slowly paid. A few critical repairs were made. And, the synagogue began to fill with children....lots of them.

Today, we are looking forward to a bright future. But, major challenges remain. Our religious school is growing by leaps and bounds, requiring additional funds. Our infrastructure is suffering because of deferred maintenance accompanied by an annual budget that is not sufficient to cover basic upkeep. Our membership is growing rapidly, but we have no resources with which to expand services. In other words, our success is the source of our challenge.

The BEKI Renaissance Campaign is about much more than raising money. It is an effort to help us all better understand BEKI's needs and then consider the role we each wish to play in meeting them. It is about moving BEKI from a hand-to-mouth operation to a healthy community, which confidently weighs its needs and prepares for the future.

If you would like to learn more about the BEKI Renaissance Campaign, please feel free to contact Stephen Pincus at 397-8816 or at [sapincus@snet.net](mailto:sapincus@snet.net).

*Stephen Pincus & Robert Leikind*

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### **Posener, Freidman Scholarships Awarded**

It has been estimated that close to half of the Jewish children in the Greater New Haven area receive no formal Jewish education. BEKI's commitment to the Jewish education of our children continues to be a top priority. We are fortunate to have very generous benefactors who have established funds specifically for the education of our youth.



This year, seven children were awarded scholarships to study at BEKI's religious school thanks to the generosity of George G. Posener (pictured at left in early photo with the late Leah Posener). Posener has long been a supporter of Jewish education for youth, and was among the founders of the Hebrew School Endowment Fund at BEKI in 1983. Since that time, Posener has presented each student with a gift at the annual Graduation and Promotion exercises. Seeing the continuing success and growth of the School and sensing the need for

assured funding, he established the [George G. & Leah E. Posener Endowment for the Jewish Education of BEKI Youth](#) in May 1997 and added to it generously subsequently. George Posener has generously provided for both the immediate and the long-term needs of the School's children.



In addition, through the generosity of the Dr. Ralph Friedman Family and other supporters (noted on the Contributions page in this and other issues of the print edition of the *BEKI Bulletin*), scholarships were provided by the Louis Friedman Scholarship Fund enabling two students to meet their tuition expenses this year. Mr. Friedman's tenure as Ritual Director ("Shamash") spanned several generations. Renowned for his wisdom, dedication, erudition, phenomenal memory and deep love for his people and Torah, Mr. Friedman (pictured at left) gave the gift of Torah to hundreds of students.

To support the education of Jewish children through the Louis Friedman Scholarship Fund at Beth El-Keser Israel, please send your check to "Louis Friedman Scholarship Fund at BEKI," 85 Harrison Street, New Haven CT 06515. To support the Congregation's ability in insure Jewish education to all children long into the future, please send your check (minimum \$100) payable to BEKI to "Posener Endowment for the Jewish Education of BEKI Youth, BEKI, 85 Harrison Street, New Haven CT 06515." If your children might need tuition assistance to attend religious school at Beth El-Keser Israel in 2000-2001, contact [Mary Ellen Mack](#) at the same address.

### Let's Eat! Brunch & Dinner at BEKI

There will be a Congregational Brunch on Sunday 17 October beginning immediately after the 9:00a shaharit morning service (i.e. at about 9:30a). All are welcomed. The brunch is open to all; reservations are not required.

Reservations are required for a Friday Night Shabbat Dinner to be held immediately following the 6:00p Shabbat Evening service (which ends about 7:00p) on 22 October. Please mail your reservation form with payment to BEKI or call Mary Ellen Mack at 389-2108 x14 or [beki@snet.net](mailto:beki@snet.net).

## Rosh Hodesh Heshvan - Columbus Day

Rosh Hodesh (New Month) services will be held at 9:00a to 9:45a on Monday 11 October in the Posener Daily Chapel. The special time marks the observance of the Federal Columbus Day holiday. The Rosh Hodesh service includes the recitation of Hallel (a collection of Biblical poems) and a brief Torah service. The [Rashi Study Group](#), to which all are invited, will meet from 9:45a to 10:30a in the [Rosenkrantz Library](#).

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### A Message from Rabbi Tilsen

#### *Hold on Tight*

During a service some years ago a new father present for a baby naming almost (God forbid) dropped a Torah scroll. I had previously seen scrolls wobble, wiggle and writhe, but this one came within inches of the carpet. After gasps, screams and swoons, the congregation quickly regained its composure and proceeded as if nothing had happened.

Dropping a Torah scroll is no minor violation of shul etiquette. The Torah scroll represents the revelation on Sinai, the gift of God to humanity through the Jewish People. It is hand written on parchment with a quill pen, which takes nine months. A Sefer Torah (Torah scroll) is not sold; it is not thrown away when it wears out, but rather is buried as a person would be. We rise in the presence of the Torah as a sign of respect. And so fumbles are viewed most severely.

The father felt terrible after the service. He knew something bad had happened. "Rabbi," he asked in great distress, "is it true that if you drop a Torah the whole congregation has to fast for forty days? Tell me, just how bad is it?"

I explained that dropping a Sefer Torah is bad, but not as bad as dropping a baby. Immediately his anxiety eased as he was able to put the incident in perspective.

Most of us were raised appropriately with a sense of awe and respect for Torah scrolls and all that pertains to tefilot (services in the shul). But when that respect causes a level of anxiety so great that one is afraid to participate in tefilot, have an aliya to the Torah, or otherwise participate, then it is time to ease that discomfort. A combination of embarrassment at not knowing what to do and anxiety about doing the wrong thing is for some a major impediment to meaningful and comfortable participation in shul.

At BEKI we address these concerns in several ways. The "[Shabbat Shalom Learners' Minyan](#)," which meets every other Saturday morning at 10:45a in BEKI's [Rosenkrantz Library](#), is an ideal setting for veteran and novice shul-goers alike to become more comfortable and expert in the shaharit and Torah services in a supportive setting. Lead by Steve Fraade, who teaches Jewish History at Yale, and Rabbi Alan Lovins, who works as a psychotherapist in private practice, the Learners' Minyan has helped many feel a deeper sense of awe born of greater understanding while increasing the level of comfort through nurturing step-by-step practice.

Workshops and courses on prayer and Torah reading offered from time to time through our [Torah for the Hungry Mind Adult Studies](#) program similarly offer interested individuals

ways to learn more about our liturgy and davening (prayer). A new [Singer's Group](#) has begun to help people learn to join in and enjoy the musical parts of our services. More such study opportunities will be offered in the coming months.

In our daily and Shabbat services, we generally stress broad participation above proficiency or musical expertise. While it is nice for those leading tefilot to sound confident and melodious, we must remember that the tefilot are to a large extent (although not exclusively) directed toward God, and God (say our sages) values the prayers of those who are decent, kind and sincere above those who are only intellectually or musically talented. For the sake of our greater goal we can accept miscues, mispronunciations and missed melodies, and with this outlook we can keep such bumps in perspective. BEKI aims to be supportive toward those learning to lead the davening. At the same time, each person who leads the service or reads Torah must make a commitment to improving their proficiency and seek perfection in every way.

In educating our youth we try to maintain a measure of awe while providing familiarity and expertise. Every child ought to see an open Sefer Torah up close at least once a year.

And so, while it is bad to drop a Torah scroll, it would be even worse to let the fear of dropping it keep one from holding fast to it in the first place.

*It is a Tree of Life to all who hold fast to it.*

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

Dear Rabbi,

Deuteronomy 22:28-29 reads: "If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, that is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty sheqels of silver, and she shall be his wife, because he hath humbled her; he may not put her away all his days."

I'm having a hard time explaining this passage to an unbeliever and even to myself. Is there some background to it that explains the apparent brutality to the virgin woman who must marry her rapist?

Signed,  
Believer in disbelief

Dear Believer,

The law based on these verses is explained this way by Rabbi Moses Maimonides (Rambam), writing some 800 years ago, in Mishnei Torah, Hilkhos Na'ara Betula, 1:3:

"...As for the raped woman who does not want to marry the raper, whether she or her father does not want her to be married to the raper: it is permitted to either the woman or her father to refuse the marriage, and the raper pays a fine and the matter is settled. If she wants [to marry the raper] and this is also her father's wish, they force him to, and he pays a fine, as it says in Scripture, '...and she shall be his wife,' and this is a mitzvat `asei (prescription). Even if she is lame or blind or leprous, he is forced to marry her and can not send her out by his

own will ever, as Scripture says, "... and he may not put her away all his days,' and this is a mitzvat lo ta'ase (prohibition)."

This reading of the law is perfectly consistent with the Biblical verse. Nowhere does the law suggest that she must marry the perpetrator. The law simply needs to be read in the context of a larger legal framework and functioning social system.

Imagine if we read traffic signs without knowing their context. "Slow Down Get Ticket" (the sign you see approaching a New York toll plaza) might mean, "Don't slow down or else you'll get a ticket." "Slow Children Ahead" might mean, "You can drive fast since these children are moving slowly." "Do Not Pass" might mean, "You must stop here as you can't drive past the sign." "Stop" might mean, "You stop, but it never tells you that you can go again."

Dear Rabbi,

Do nursing mothers fast on Yom Kippur? If not, what do they eat?

Signed,  
Eating for Two

Dear for Two,

The sources say that nursing mothers do fast on Yom Kippur, unless there is some particular medical condition involved that would preclude doing so (Shulhan Arukh O.H. 617). One who must eat on Yom Kippur should eat the simplest foods in the minimum quantity or drink water only as necessary. For Tisha Be'av, in contrast, there is greater basis for leniency in observing the fast.

Fasting on Yom Kippur is only one of the forms of abstinence observed on that day. Others include bathing, using makeup, wearing shoes, watching television, using the telephone, and sexual activity. A person who cannot fast may be able to observe the other practices.

The next letter comes from a student in our religious school -- but many parents ask the same question:

Dear Rabbi,

Why can't we chew gum and eat candy during services? Does the Torah forbid that, too?

Signed,  
Bazooka Yosi.

Dear Bazooka Yosi,

I hate to be the one to burst your bubble, but the Torah does forbid you from chewing gum and eating during services. As the Good Book says, "My mouth shall be filled with praises of the Lord." Now, if your mouth is stuffed with gum, candy, or other illicit substances, it could not possibly be completely filled with praises of the Lord. Therefore we are forbidden to chew gum or eat during prayer.

You might point out that during certain parts of the service, such as during the Haftara and,

yes, the Rabbi's sermon, your mouth, from the *halakhic* point of view, is in idle, that is, it is not uttering praises. And you might assume that during that time you ought to be able to chew your gum and eat your candy. To that I can only say, you're right. God presumably -- and Jewish law -- would not object if you chew gum during the Rabbi's sermon. But I can tell you that if *you* blow bubbles during the Rabbi's sermon, *the Rabbi* might blow bubbles during your Haftara.

A candidate for President would not chew gum during a televised debate. An attorney would not suck candy while arguing a case before the Supreme Court. A singer would not lick a lollipop during an opera. And so a Jew does not chew, suck or lick while praising or petitioning God.

So be patient, wait for the Qiddush after services, leave your gum at home, and wag your jaw in Praise of the Lord.

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### **Park Your Kids**

Parents who work on the Federal Columbus Day holiday (11 October) or on the [Ezra Academy](#) Conference Day may be wondering what to do with their young children who are normally at school during work hours. Wonder no longer. Send your children to BEKI's "Snow Day Program" which meets on Monday 11 October from 8:00a to 3:00p and on Tuesday 26 October from noon to 5:00p. Program tuition is \$20 per student per day (subscriber discount available). Reservations are not necessary, but space is limited. For information, a complete schedule of planned program days, and registration material, call Special Programs Director Anne Johnston at 389-2108 x33 ([ajohnsto@connix.com](mailto:ajohnsto@connix.com)) or Office Manager Mary Ellen Mack at x14.

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### **No Parking**



Members and visitors 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. When driving in the BEKI parking lot, please observe the 5 miles-per-hour speed limit, which is enforced by random speed bumps.

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### **Friday Night Services**

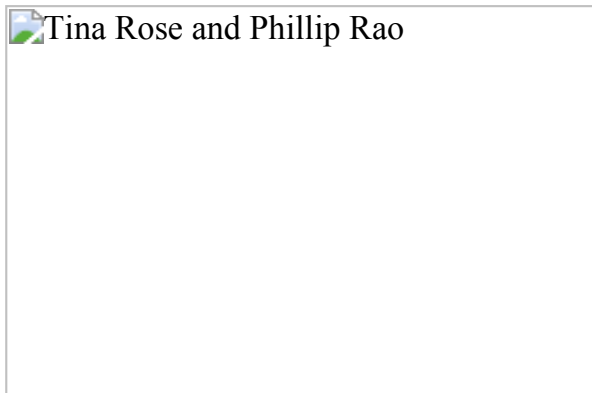
Join **Irving Weinstein, Kevin Mack & Rabbi Tilsen** for Late Friday Evening Services on 15 & 29 October at 8:00p. Services last one hour and are followed by an Oneg Shabbat Repast provided by Sisterhood. Late Services are also planned for 12 & 20 November and 3 & 17 December.

Early Services are held at 6:00p every Friday night year-round and last 45 minutes. The service is lead by a congregant based on the published rotation schedule.

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## Access at BEKI



Physical and spiritual [accessibility](#) has been identified by the leadership and membership of the Congregation as priorities for the synagogue's growth in the next five years. One recent implementation of that value was the installation of a new wheelchair-accessible washroom on the main floor of our building, through the generosity of **Tina Rose** and of **Phillip Rao** (pictured at left). The new washroom is next to the existing washrooms.

The new room will benefit everyone, especially people using wheelchairs, nursing parents, and others with special needs.

Looking to the future, other physical accessibility solutions might include the installation of an elevator linking the main floor with the Ballroom on the lower level, drinking fountains accessible to children and people using wheelchairs, more highchairs, and more varied seating options in the sanctuaries.

During the course of this year, the Congregation will engage an architect to design a master plan for building renewal. In this way, a prioritized and staged plan can be created.

## Children's Musical Coming for Purim

Parents and children of all ages are invited to an organizational meeting for BEKI's first musical extravaganza. Based on the stories of Chelm, the musical will use a script written by BEKI's own **Ruth Silver**.

Rehearsals will include Yiddish coaching and acting lessons from a professional actress. The musical will be produced at the congregational seudah (festive meal) on Purim afternoon, Tuesday, 21 March 2000. A light snack/lunch will be provided for famished religious school students (and others!). Call Anne Johnston at 389-9184 ([ajohnsto@connix.com](mailto:ajohnsto@connix.com)) for info or to volunteer to help.

*Anne Johnston*

## Sisterhood News

We hope everyone is enjoying, and will continue to enjoy, a Healthy, Happy New Year.

Sisterhood President **Adele Tyson** announces that the first [Sisterhood](#) meeting of the New Year will take place at BEKI on Monday 4 October at 7:45p.

Following a brief business meeting, the program for the evening will feature Dr. **Deborah Fried**, who is a Congregation member. She is an M.D. whose specialty is psychiatry. Dr. Fried will speak on "Anxiety and Depression - Common Symptoms and Treatment."

All members, spouse and guests are welcome. Refreshments will be served.

A card party is being planned for Sunday 7 November at 1:30p. Please save the date and mark your calendars! Details will be forthcoming.

*AT*

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## LifeCycle

*HaMaqom Yinahem Etkhem:* We Mourn the Passing of **Nathan Rosenkrantz**, brother of BEKI member Max Rosenkrantz and brother of BEKI supporters Louis & Mary Rosenkrantz. May the Almighty comfort all who mourn.

May the memory of our departed be for a blessing.

BEKI Welcomes New Members & Their Families:

- **Helene Sapadin & Molly**
  - **Don & Maggie Barkin & Eve**
  - **Jim Berger & Jennifer Klein**
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## Benei Mitzva in October

**Ilana Rachel Levine** (pictured at right) will be called to the Torah and lead services as a bat mitzva on Friday night 8 October at the 6:00p service, and on Shabbat morning 9 October at the 9:15a service. Ilana is the daughter of **Sid & Donna Levine** and a member of the graduating class of BEKI's [religious school](#). She is a seventh grade student at Hamden Hall Country Day School. Ilana's family has belonged to BEKI for over 15 years.



**Mark Rosenberg** will be called to the Torah and lead services as a bar mitzva on Friday night 15 October at the 8:00p service, and on Shabbat morning 16 October at the 9:15a service. Mark is the son of **Gary & Betsy Rosenberg** and a graduate of BEKI's [religious school](#).

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## Tree of Life

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, relatives and beloved friends. Inscriptions cost \$118.00 for a leaf and \$500.00 for a rock. Call Mikki Ratner (387-7882) [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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### **Midrasha Adult Ed Courses**

BEKI and neighboring synagogues are co-sponsoring the [Jewish Federation](#)'s Midrasha course series in its second year on Mondays, beginning 25 October and running through 6 December at Congregation B'nai Jacob in Woodbridge, and 15, 29 November and 6 December at Temple Beth David in Cheshire.

Dr. David S. Ariel, author of *Spiritual Judaism: Restoring Heart and Soul to Jewish Life*, will initiate the program on Monday 18 October at 7:00p at Congregation Or Shalom in Orange with his presentation, "A Ladder on Earth That Reaches to Heaven: Understanding Our Spiritual Growth as Jews." The talk is free of charge.

Classes will include sessions on Jewish prayer, fiction, classic texts, psychology, ethics, history, and culture, featuring many dynamic area teachers, including BEKI members Steven Fraade and Rabbi Murray Levine. Fees are very reasonable. For more information call Valerie Sandler, Midrasha Coordinator, at the [Jewish Federation](#), (203) 387-2424 x316.

*Helen Rosenberg*

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### **Calling All Parents**

The New Year is a time for self-examination and reflection on what we're doing, why and how. It's been a couple of years since BEKI parents came together to examine our Shabbat children's programming. Now, with the holidays behind us and 5760 ahead of us, is a good time to focus on those programs.

All parents of pre- bar and bat mitzvah-age children are invited to send their ideas, suggestions and concerns about the [Children's Shabbat Havura](#) (pre-school), the [K-2 Kehila](#) (grades K-2) or [Junior Congregation](#) (grades 3-7) to Anne Johnston at [ajohnsto@connix.com](mailto:ajohnsto@connix.com) or by phone at (203) 389-2018 x33.

A meeting will follow, probably in November, to discuss concrete steps we can take to make BEKI's [Shabbat children's programs](#) better than ever.

*CB*

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### **Tanks to You**

Thank you to Eric Beller, George Posener, Hugh Fryer, Stephen Pincus and Marc Casslar of GeoQuest, Inc. for all of their work in arranging for the removal of the underground oil tank and installation of new tanks. Marc Casslar is an oil tank removal consultant who graciously donated his services to BEKI.

Thank you to Tina Rose and Hugh Fryer for hosting parlor meetings in preparation for the BEKI Renaissance Campaign and to Sarah Gooen Chen for her desktop publishing work for the campaign.

*SP*

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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)