



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

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BEKI Introduces New "Snow Days - No School Days" Program

Elementary schools close for scheduled "teacher training" and "parent conference" days as well as unplanned "snow days." Many families need placement for their children on such days. BEKI has a comfortable children's room and library, conveniently located on a State snow emergency route, with ample and convenient parking.

The BEKI "Snow Days - No School Days" program provides an educational and recreational

Judaic activity day on scheduled school-closed days when businesses are normally open, and on unplanned "snow days" for the New Haven Public Schools or [Ezra Academy](#). Space is limited. The Program will be held regardless of weather conditions. The Program does not guarantee that streets, sidewalks or the BEKI driveway will be passable. Only the parents determine whether they can safely transport their children to and from the program in inclement weather.

The "Snow Days - No School Days" program will use the Claire Goodwin Youth Room and BEKI's Rosenkrantz Library. Participants bring their own dairy lunch. Snacks are provided. Activities are lead by Anne Johnston, a Jewish educator, as well as others under her supervision.

Scheduled days of operation include Monday 2 November 1998 12:00 to 5:00p (Ezra PT Conference); Tuesday 3 November 1998 8:00p to 3:00p (Ezra TIS Day); Wednesday 11 November 1998 12:00 to 5:00p (Ezra PT Conference); Monday 18 January 1999 8:00a to 3:00p (MLK Day; Ezra TIS Day); Monday 19 April 1999 12:00 to 5:00p (Ezra PT Conference); Tuesday 27 April 1999 12:00 to 5:00p (Ezra PT Conference); and Thursday 17 June 1999 12:00 to 5:00p (Ezra Early Dismissal). Additional days will be added to accommodate the New Haven Public Schools "no school" days as well. And, the program will be available when school is canceled due to inclement weather. Parents will have a "hot line" phone number, 389-2108 ext. 33, for last-minute information on program plans.

The participation fee is \$20 per day or part thereof per child; or \$140 for all seven of the days listed above plus the first "snow day" when paid in advance. Pre-payment reserves a space; otherwise, spaces are available on a first-come-first-served basis. Payment is required before service. Reservations are non-transferable (except between siblings). A pre-payment of \$20 reserves a space for the first New Haven or Ezra "Snow Day." For more information or to register call the BEKI office at 389-2108 ext. 14.

Volunteer Spotlight -- Harriet Barstein: Woman of Valor

by Carole Bass

"I grew up in Sisterhood," Harriet Barstein (pictured at right) says by way of introduction. As a child in Auburn, Maine, she attended many a Sisterhood meeting -- "dragged along" by her mother, who was active in the local shul. "My mother's friend was the secretary, and I would sit with her when I was about 6 years old. She'd give me my own pad and pencil," and young Harriet would take her own "minutes."

She hasn't abandoned her devotion to Sisterhood. After moving to Connecticut 42 years ago, Harriet joined what was then Beth El. The Sisterhood was relatively inactive at the time, she recalls. But when a dedicated group of women revitalized it, Harriet was there.

She's still there. That dedication across the decades earned



her the honor of BEKI Sisterhood's [Woman of Valor](#) award this year. And it's earned her the gratitude -- knowing or unknowing -- of everyone who's browsed at the BEKI Giftshop, used the BEKI cookbook, admired the shiny silver on the synagogue's Torah scrolls or benefited from the countless other tasks Harriet has performed over the years.

A past president of BEKI's Sisterhood, Harriet used to run the [Giftshop](#). She still helps current Sisterhood president Adele Tyson on shopping trips to New York to stock the shop. She fondly remembers "silver-cleaning parties -- Sunday mornings, sometimes Monday nights" before the High Holy Days, when Sisterhood members would set up long tables at the back of the sanctuary and painstakingly polish the Torah scrolls' crowns and breastplates. "One girl in Sisterhood used to bring the polish. Somebody else would bring the rubber gloves. And they'd work until everything sparkled." She'd polish silver trays and *qiddush* cups for Shabbat, too. Now, she concedes, her arthritis makes that job more difficult.

Like so much of Sisterhood's contribution, Harriet's volunteer work at BEKI has often been behind the scenes. She shepherded the synagogue cookbook through two printings, in 1974 and 1980. ("From the first printing I set aside three copies for my children for when they got married," she confides.) She made sandwiches for pre-bar and bat mitzva kids after Shabbat morning services. She made kids' goody bags for Purim, cooked for the Purim Carnival run by the Men's Club, and helped the Mr. and Mrs. Club set up for dances. "I did a lot of a little things. If somebody needed help, I was there."

She even got one of her daughters involved. "I shlepped her to meetings the way my mother did to me." When Sisterhood held its silver-cleaning parties, Harriet's daughter's job was to collect the tiny bells that had fallen off the crowns of some of the scrolls and under the bimah, in front of the ark.

Her daughters now -- one in Texas, the other in Connecticut-- are "not as active as I *think*" they could be in Sisterhood, Harriet says. She'd like to see more young women get involved in BEKI's Sisterhood as well. The active members are mostly older, like Harriet, and decades of volunteer work have tired them out. They'd like to pass the torch.

It's true that more women work outside the home than in the past, Harriet acknowledges. And the popularity of single-sex organizations has waned. Still, the simple fact remains that Sisterhood performs an enormous amount of work at BEKI and raises a significant amount of money for the synagogue. Whether it's done by women or men, through Sisterhood or not, that work needs to get done. People like Harriet Barstein, Woman of Valor, have shown the way.

Selihot at BEKI

A Selihot ("Forgiveness") Service will be held at our Congregation presented jointly by the area Conservative-Masorti synagogues on Saturday night 12 September. The evening begins with a Maariv Evening & Havdala service at 8:00p. Then two hours of programs will be offered, featuring the teaching of Rabbis Richard Eisenberg, Benjamin Scolnic, Jon-Jay Tilsen and Alvin Wainhaus. A refreshment interlude will be offered for 30 minutes before the 11:00p Selihot service.

Participating Congregations include BEKI, B'nai Jacob, Or Shalom and Beth Sholom. All are members of the [United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism](#).

Wizners to Host Get Acquainted Brunch

The Membership Committee will present the annual "Get Acquainted Brunch" on Sunday 13 September at 11:00a. Stephen and Rachel Wizner are graciously opening their home at 49 McKinley Avenue in New Haven to all of us for this wonderful haimish get together. New and prospective BEKI members are being invited, and we would love to have veteran BEKI members come as well. For several years, this brunch has been a highlight of the Membership Committee's work. Please let Susie Voigt (387-3421 or susan.voigt@yale.edu) or the BEKI office know if you are coming or if you would like us to send an invitation to someone you know. This brunch is a great informal opportunity for those in our area to meet us and discover what a vibrant Jewish community we are. *SV*

A Message from Rabbi Tilsen

Don't call me non-Orthodox

We don't normally call people non-men, non-Democrats, or non-tall. It seems strange, even offensive, therefore, to call Jewish people or ideologies "non-Orthodox." Yet so often the press refers to the Conservative (and Reform) Movements as "non-Orthodox."

Describing Conservative Judaism as "non-Orthodox" implies that Orthodox Judaism is some standard from which it deviates. When used by some writers, it is meant intentionally to negate the validity of any school of thought within Judaism that the writer does not consider "Orthodox." The widespread use of the term indicates that many in the Jewish world have unwittingly adopted an "Orthodox-centric" view of Judaism.

This happens in part because we occasionally use the term "orthodox" to mean "traditional, observant, Judaism." Sometimes there is confusion because "Orthodox" (with a capital "O") is also incorporated into the name of many Jewish institutions. But the orthodox practice (in the first sense) is often not best represented by the Orthodox (in the second sense). In the same way, the Democratic party, despite its name, does not always represent the most democratic policies. For that reason we do well to avoid the confusing word "orthodox" unless referring to formally Orthodox institutions, in which case it should be capitalized.

The term "Orthodox" (capitalized) is the institutional name shared by a broad range of movements within the Jewish world. As an adjective, it describes that which belongs to or pertains to those movements. There are no degrees of being Orthodox any more than there are degrees of being a citizen or degrees of membership in a political party. To say, by analogy, that someone is "very Republican" is objectionable to anyone who considers himself or herself a Republican located somewhere else on the spectrum of Republican approaches. In the same way, the term "ultra-Orthodox" or "very Orthodox" is offensive to many, because it implies that those who are not "ultra" or "very" are somehow deficient or less fervent in their belief or practice. It implies that whatever beliefs or practices are ascribed to those who are "very" or "ultra" are the essence of Orthodoxy.

Orthodox Judaism is a modern innovation, having emerged about 150 years ago in Europe. In their general approach to *halakha* (Jewish law) and in specific issues of applying Jewish law, most of our great sages over the past two thousand years more closely resembled our present Conservative scholars and sages. Respect for science and secular knowledge, the willingness to consciously develop law in consonance with a changing society, and an appreciation of legitimate diversity within the Jewish world are examples of the former. The

permission for women to wear tallit and tefillin, read Torah as part of a service, and a more "liberal" approach to granting gittin (divorce) to women -- all positions held by our great sages -- are examples of the latter.

People in our community often speak, with pride or great sentiment, of their "orthodox" upbringing or "orthodox" grandparents. We should be clear that in many cases, they must have in mind "orthodox" with a small "o" as defined above. During the early part of this century, the Conservative Movement was considered to be "orthodox" (with a very small "o"), and indeed was described as such in the writings of the Movement's leaders as well as by the general public. But the institutions that rejected Conservative practices such as sermons in English (instead of Yiddish) or synagogue seating without a mehitsa (physical barrier between men and women) took for themselves the name "Orthodox" (capitalized). The Conservative Movement honored two essential parts of Judaism: change and tradition. If this was a part of the "orthodoxy" of our childhood or of our grandparents, then perhaps we should start thinking of our parents or grandparents as having been Conservative.

It is dubious history to project the ideology of present-day Orthodox institutions onto our ancestors. Our "orthodox" grandparents did not keep "glatt kosher," did not view the sound of a women's voice as licentious, and did not think their rebbe was the messiah. This is not to devalue current distinctly Orthodox Jewish ideas and practices, many of which are extraordinarily valuable contributions to the Jewish People and the world, but simply to give lie to a persistent myth which has implied a "normative" status of Orthodox Judaism.

Our Conservative Movement has its own name, as do the Reform and Reconstructionist Movements. It is demeaning to be called -- or even worse, to refer to ourselves -- as "non-Orthodox." My ideological commitment to Conservative Judaism is not a rejection of Orthodox Judaism but rather an affirmation of ancient rabbinic ideas and practices that are best represented by the formal ideology of Conservative Judaism. I embrace these ideas and practices without much regard to the fact that Orthodox Judaism is at variance with some of these ideas and practices. This is what it means to be a Conservative Jew.

Dear Rabbi: Answers, Advice and Helpful Household Hints

Dear Rabbi,

How does the repetition of the Amida work? It seems to be different each time I'm at services.

Signed, Amida Amida

Dear Amida,

The Amida or *shemona esrei* prayer, a part of each service, is repeated in the presence of a *minyan* (quorum) during *shaharit* (morning), *musaf* (additional) and *minha* (afternoon) services, but not during *maariv* (evening) service.

There are two ways this can be done, at the discretion of the officiant or *shaliah tsibur* (reader or leader). First, when the congregation reaches the Amida, each person (including the shaliah tsibur) recites it individually in a whisper, omitting the Qedusha section. Then, the *shaliah tsibur* recites the entire Amida aloud, with the Qedusha section recited

responsively with the congregation leading and the *shaliah tsibur* following. At the end of the Qedusha section the *shaliah tsibur* continues reciting aloud to the end of the Amida.

The second way this can be done will vary slightly by service. For *shaharit*, when the congregation reaches the Amida, all begin reciting it in unison aloud. Qedusha is recited as described above. After Qedusha, each person, including the *shaliah tsibur*, continues with their individual whispered prayer from the point immediately after Qedusha. For *musaf* and *minha*, the *shaliah tsibur* begins reciting the Amida aloud alone, and then the Qedusha is recited as described above. After Qedusha, the *shaliah tsibur* continues reciting the Amida in a whisper from the point immediately after Qedusha. But the congregation goes back to the beginning of the Amida and recites it in its entirety individually in a whisper, omitting the Qedusha.

Men's Club Miqva Meet

All Jewish men and boys are invited to the New Haven Mikvah at 86 Hubinger Street on the morning before Rosh HaShana, Sunday 20 September from 9:30a to 10:30a, and again on the morning before Yom Kippur, Tuesday 29 September from 7:30a to 8:30a.

On the morning before each of the Festivals (High Holy Days, Sukkot, Pesah and Shavuot) Jewish men and boys of the BEKI [Men's Club](#) go to the New Haven Mikvah for private individual immersion. (Fathers may enter with their sons.) The *miqva* ("ritual bath") is a hygienic and warm setting for a "rebirth" experience. The *miqva* immersion is one way to help us enter a heightened state of purity and spiritual awareness as we prepare for the High Holy Days.

The New Haven Mikvah was designed by BEKI Men's Club member architect Arthur Ratner. The *miqva* has showers and dressing rooms. Those who would like to participate should bring a \$5 user fee (cash or check payable to "New Haven Mikvah") and a comb.

Qever Avot Cemetery Memorial Service

The annual **Qever Avot Cemetery Memorial Services** will be held at the [Beth El Memorial Park](#) cemetery in Hamden at 10:00a and at the [Keser Israel Memorial Park](#) in West Haven cemetery at 11:00a on Sunday 20 September 1998. [Rabbi Tilsen](#) will lead us in communal prayer and there will be time for individual memorial prayers. Rabbi Tilsen is available for individual prayers as well. There is no charge for this service.

Renovated Lower Level Social Hall to be Rededicated

During Shabbat morning services on 12 September 1998, the Congregation will formally rededicate the renovated Lower Social Hall and honor those BEKI members who volunteered or contributed to the project. The renovations which were completed earlier this year ensures that BEKI will have a beautiful space to celebrate life-cycle affairs and other Synagogue events for years to come.

Following services, a special *qiddush* will be held in the Lower Social Hall in honor of the

subcommittee, chaired by Helen Rosenberg, who supervised the renovation. Please join us for this special event. *SP*

Yamim Noraim: Days of Awe

Rabbi Alan H. Lovins (pictured at right) will again serve as our Hazzan Rishon (lead cantor) for the High Holy Days. Dr. Alan Lovins, a BEKI member, is a graduate of Yale University and holds a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Columbia University. He was ordained as a rabbi by the [Jewish Theological Seminary of America](#) and lives in New Haven with his wife, Trish Loving. In addition to Rabbi Lovins, the services will again be lead by BEKI members serving as volunteer hazzanim. For the sixth year, the services will be conducted by [Rabbi Tilsen](#).



Tickets are required for adult entrance to most services. Among other reasons, this is to ensure the safety and security of the Congregation. Full-time students and military personnel on active duty may enter upon presentation of proper identification. Every person in the building must be known and cleared. For information on seating and ticketing call 389-2108 ext. 14.

"Healing Service" featured at High Holy Days

"Refu`a Shelema: A Healing Service" will be held on the afternoon of Yom Kippur, Wednesday 30 September 1998, from 4:00p to 4:25p, in the small chapel. The service is designed to help participants find ways to overcome the pain, isolation, fear and anguish of dealing with illness and disability, and to find sources of strength within tradition and within themselves. All are welcome; reservations or ticket are not required. The service will be lead by Rabbi [Jon-Jay Tilsen](#) & Amy Pincus.

High Holy Days Children's Programs Memorialize Malka Levine



The outstanding High Holy Days programs for children at Beth El-Keser Israel are being sponsored in memory of Malka Levine (pictured at left) by the Rabbi Murray Levine Family. Malka, who died in May 1996, was a renowned Jewish educator and wife of Rabbi Murray Levine.

The sponsored children's programs include the [Children's Havura](#) for preschoolers, [K-2 Kehila](#) and [Junior Congregations](#) for differing age groups, and babysitting on each of the three Holy Days. These programs enjoy a reputation for excellence.

These programs are open to all children. For safety and planning reasons, children must be pre-registered to participate in these services. For registration information call 389-2108 ext. 14.

For Benei Mitzva Parents: The Inside Scoop

Parents planning or contemplating a Bar- or Bat Mitzva Observance for their child at BEKI are invited to "The Inside Scoop: Parents' Orientation to Benei Mitzva Observance at BEKI" on Sunday 27 September 1998, 7:00p to 8:30p in BEKI's Rosenkrantz Library (enter through front doors to lobby or driveway doors). Join representatives of the Ritual Committee and the Administration 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 for distribution from the synagogue office (and at this web site) for those who wish to review the *Guide* before the meeting.

Haftara Practicum



A "Haftara Practicum" will be taught by Amy Pincus (pictured second from left, with students) for beginners on Monday 28 September 1998, 7:30p 9:00p in the small chapel. Participants will learn the fundamentals of reciting the Haftara in the traditional manner. Participants should bring a tape recorder and blank tape. Registration \$5 in advance or \$8 at the door.

The Haftara is the selection from the Prophets read on Shabbat and Festivals after the Torah reading. It can be read from a printed text which includes vowels, punctuation and trope (musical notation), or it can be read directly from the Scroll which is printed like a Torah Scroll without the vowels, punctuation or trope.

The system of trope is the same as that used for all of the Hebrew Bible (with the exception of Job, Proverbs and Psalms) although the notes vary by book or occasion. Men and women alike are welcome to the Haftara Practicum regardless of age, religion or congregational affiliation. Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel encourages all adult Jews to join a synagogue community of their choice.

This program is made possible by the [Morris & Sara Oppenheim Endowment for Sacred Music at Beth El-Keser Israel](#).

UHS Classes Begin

[United Hebrew School](#) classes begin on Sunday 13 September at 9:30a at BEKI. For

registration information call the BEKI office at 389-2108 ext. 14. For more information about the School and its program, call UHS Principal Ms Terri Stern at 389-2108 ext. 13. The UHS is run collaboratively by BEKI and the Westville Synagogue. Its officers include Shoshana Zax, Barbara Stern, and Natan Weinstein.

Darshanim in September

During the month of September, Shabbat morning services will be enriched by the teaching of Bar Mitzva Benjamin Karsif (5 September), Dr. Marc Schwartz (12 September), Stephen Wizner (19 September), and Rabbi Murray Levine (26 September). Shabbat morning services begin at 9:15a and end about noon.

Bar Mitzva in September

On Shabbat Ki Tetse (5 September), Benjamin Karsif will be called to the Torah and lead services as a Bar Mitzva. Benjamin is the son of BEKI President Dr. Brian Karsif and United Hebrew School Principal Terri Stern. All are encouraged to attend services to celebrate with Benjamin and his family.

Letters

Miriam Benson, Rabbi Tilsen and family thank the entire community for your expressions of sympathy and support following the death of Morton Benson. Thanks to all those who are attending afternoon and evening services to help make the minyan. The outpouring of love provided a measure of comfort at a most difficult time.

LifeCycle

HaMaqom Yinahem Etkhem

We Mourn the Passing of **Max Pencherek**, father of Yvonne Kolodny; **Rabbi Chana Timoner**, wife of Dr. Julian Timoner; **Martha Schneider**, wife of Dr. Leonard Schneider; **Morton Benson**, father of Miriam Benson.

May the memory of our departed be for a blessing.

BEKI Welcomes New & Returning Members & their Families:

Alan & Sally Abramovitz, Edward and Anna

David & Sharon Bender, Max and Nina

Dr. Julian & Rabbi Chana (z"l) Timoner

David & Cindy Smernoff, and Nathan

Eugene Burger & Alida Engel

Mazal tov

to Lewis Borofsky and Yael Wertheimer on their *qiddushin* (Jewish wedding) under a huppa at BEKI.

to Eugene Burger and Alida Engel on their *qiddushin* (Jewish wedding) under a huppa at BEKI.

to Julia Katz, Eva Landau, Emma Lehrer, and Justin Weinstein for being inducted into the National Honor Society.

to Julia Katz, daughter of Ivan & Barbara Katz, on celebrating becoming a *bat mitzva*.

"Healing & Wellness" and "Sympathy" Cards Available

Self-mailing "Healing & Wellness" and "Sympathy" cards are available from the BEKI [Sisterhood Giftshop](#) (389-9599) in any quantity and from the office (389-2108 ext. 14) for orders of \$50 or more. The cards feature the original artwork of New Haven Judaica Artist Herman Braginsky and are a wonderful way to let someone know you care while supporting the synagogue.

These are "self-mailing" cards, meaning that at the time of the donation the donor is given pre-printed cards and envelopes to complete and mail. Donors who wish the dedication of the card printed in the BEKI *Bulletin* (printed edition) are supplied with mail-in (or fax-in) coupons for this purpose.

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.

Men's Club Sukka Erection Sunday

Everyone is invited to join the BEKI [Men's Club](#) in erecting a Sukka at BEKI on Sunday morning 27 September. Participants will attend the shaharit morning service from 9:00a to 9:30a, and then spend up to 90 minutes in setting up a communal sukka (hut) for use during the Sukkot Festival.

Membership Committee News

Special Thanks to the Membership Committee and All Members for Making 1997-1998 Such A Successful Year!

Much thanks goes out to Susie Voigt and her '97-'98 Committee (Sid Levine, Carl Goldfield, Judy Hoberman, Marc Schwartz, Lew Borofsky) for making this past year's membership drive so successful. The year's events included a very enthusiastic "Get Acquainted Brunch" in the Fall and "Shabbat for Friends" in the Spring. Susie, as everyone knows, takes the time to speak to every new person who visits BEKI and encourages them to come again and again until they feel so comfortable in our shul that many eagerly join. This past year 39 new membership "units," comprising 60 adults and 43 children have joined the BEKI family. On any Shabbat you can see that the congregation is blooming.

The 1998-99 season is off to a good start with 4 new membership units joining us thus far. Several Committee members have taken on new responsibilities. Marc Schwartz is working with a group of congregants to enhance our ability to sing more and varied sacred music. Carl & Judy have taken on new positions on the Board of Directors. This year's Committee could use a few new members willing to work on new projects to make BEKI more responsive to members needs. One of our goals is to restart the Friday night Shabbat dinners at the shul so that we have opportunities to socialize and get to know each other better (any volunteers?).

Currently we are planning our annual "Get Acquainted Brunch" which will be hosted by Stephen and Rachel Wizner (see article). This is a wonderful opportunity for new and prospective members to meet and find out more about BEKI. Please come and bring a friend.

If you would like to join in or contribute ideas on Membership Committee projects, or have names of prospective members please contact Diane Dumigan, 393-1815 or Susie Voigt, 387-3421. Your comments are always welcome. *DGD*

For more information contact:

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