Honoring Tradition, Celebrating Diversity, and Building a Jewish Future

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MOTOWN Rhythm & Jews
February 7, 2015
6:00 - 10:00 pm
FROM THE RABBI

What are you reading?
A short round-up of Jewish periodicals
by Rabbi Yoel Kahn

MANY YEARS AGO, I WROTE a Rabbi’s column about my favorite Jewish magazines; a brief, recent survey showed — to my surprise — that not only are my personal favorites, Sh’ma and The Jewish Daily Forward, still being published, but so are the stalwarts of my parent’s home, Commentary and its more liberal alternative, Moment, as well as the Yiddish edition of the Forverts.

While the Union for Reform Judaism apparently intends to discontinue its outstanding Reform Judaism magazine, independent Jewish journalism continues to flourish. Reading a Jewish magazine can broaden our Jewish horizons, introduce new people, places and ideas, and serve to support and encourage the continuing creation of Jewish culture, community and learning. While I am old-school and prefer to read all of these the last-millennium way, I was delighted to find out that all are available online. You can check them out on their websites; each offers some combination of print and web subscriptions.

While far from the first American Jewish periodical, for the Ellis Island-generation of American immigrants, “the Forverts,” founded in 1897) was the indispensable guide to America and Jewish life. The paper later purchased and ran the famous, mostly Yiddish radio station WEVD in New York. (Bonus history question: Do you know what EVD stands for?) The Yiddish daily was overtaken by the weekly English Forward in 1990. For many years, it was an indispensable guide to its readers’ most urgent concerns: current events in Israel and nursing home reform in New York. It has always remained, in my opinion, our most important national Jewish newspaper and my favorite place to turn for a wider perspective on the Jewish world (www.forward.com).

Our local Jewish newspaper is, of course, the j. weekly. While independent, its editorial page reflects the mainstream of the organized Jewish community. Its columnists and op-ed pages reflect the diversity of Bay Area Jewish life, and the j. provides reliable coverage of the Bay Area Jewish community. The j. offers a free trial subscription of the print edition and a free subscription to Jewish Community Federation donors. If you don’t already receive it, check it out (www.jweekly.com).

Sh’ma magazine was founded in 1970 as a “journal of Jewish ideas.” Each issue is a curated “conversation” in print, digital and online forms that bring together an array of perspectives on the Jewish world (www.forward.com).
Employing Jewish “Glue” to Bring the Tribe Together
by Elisabeth Wechsler, Editor

JESSICA WOLIN SEES HERSELF as “Jewish glue” — bringing friends together in community to celebrate Jewish holidays and Shabbat for as long as she can remember. And she has applied her magnetic talents to several volunteer projects at Congregation Beth El.

Jessica has been the co-chair of the annual Beth El Shabbaton for two years. She’s worked with Anna Fogelman, committee co-chair, to address multigenerational community building for the offsite weekend, as well as helped plan and execute the myriad details involved, along with the committee. This year, the Shabbaton was held September 5-7 at Camp Newman and achieved record attendance of more than 300 individuals.

Another important accomplishment spearheaded by Jessica is Project Nechama (Hebrew for “comfort”), initiated a year ago to support families after pregnancy loss, stillbirth or the death of a child (Jessica’s infant son, Samuel, died in 2003). After a year of fundraising, Project Nechama created a garden for reflection and comfort along Codornices Creek on Beth El’s site. A special Yizkor service was held on October 12 for anyone who had lost a child.

“I wanted to create a different experience for others in our Jewish community in addressing pregnancy loss, stillbirth and neonatal death,” Jessica said. “Project Nechama is very meaningful to me. It influences how we treat pregnant women, but up to now we haven’t known how to honor babies who died. When we talk about death and grief, we usually are referring to older people.”

Born into a “non-practicing Jewish family,” Jessica was raised in Washington, D.C. Her parents sent her to Hebrew school at a Reconstructionist synagogue, where she learned to create her own Jewish identity.

Every year at Pesach, her mother would produce a different Haggadah with poems and pictures contributed by Jessica and her friends. “There was always an emphasis in our family on making your own Jewish experience,” Jessica said. Jessica’s bat mitzvah was also alternative — she, her mother and a Jewish educator wrote her service.

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A Prayer of Healing for Mental Illness

Many members of our congregation, our families and our community live with or have experienced mental illness. In our Mi shebeirach prayer, we yearn for “healing of body, healing of spirit, healing of mind.” The Torah and the rest of the Hebrew Bible include stories of individuals whose lives resonate with our own struggles and challenges. You can find resources about mental health and Judaism on a dedicated shelf in the Beth El library.

MAY THE ONE WHO BLESSED OUR ANCESTORS bless all who live with mental illness, our caregivers, families and friends. May we walk in the footsteps of Jacob, King Saul, Miriam, Hannah and Naomi, who struggled with dark moods, hopelessness, isolation, and terrors, but survived and led our people. Just as our father, Jacob, spent the night wrestling with an angel and prevailed, may all who live with mental illness be granted the endurance to wrestle with pain and prevail night upon night. Grace us with the faith to know that though, like Jacob, we may be wounded, shaped, and renamed by this struggle, still we will live on to continue an ever-unfolding, unpredictable path toward healing. May we not be alone on this path, but accompanied by our families, friends, caregivers, ancestors and the divine presence. Surround us with lovingkindness, grace and companionship and spread over us a sukkat shalom, a shelter of peace and wholeness. And let us say: Amen.

Prayer composed by Rabbi Elliot Kukla, Bay Area Jewish Healing Center
Congregation Beth El’s B’nei Mitzvah Program

by Paul Sugarman, President of the Board of Directors

IN MODERN PROGRESSIVE Jewish communities, the rite of passage known as “becoming a bar or bat mitzvah” often dominates many synagogue agendas. Indeed, many parents’ key motivation for joining a synagogue is the desire to secure for their children the Jewish education and preparation needed to participate in this early adolescent ceremony. Parents also treasure the experience of the emotionally-laden ritual of passing the Torah (literally) to their child while standing on the bimah in front of the open ark.

The concept of becoming a bar mitzvah originated in the late Middle Ages. (The bat mitzvah did not arrive on the scene until many centuries later, as Judaism began to embrace gender egalitarianism.) No special ceremony, let alone no special party, was necessary then for a boy to become a bar mitzvah: turning 13 was all that was required to be considered a Jewish adult obligated to observe the mitzvot (the commandments) of Jewish practice, just as no special ceremony is required today for one turning 18 to become eligible to vote. Only later did the bar mitzvah ritual begin to acquire some of its modern trappings: being called to the Torah for an aliya, delivering a d’var Torah (a commentary on the weekly Torah portion), and leading the Shabbat service.

I suspect that my own experience becoming a bar mitzvah may be typical of that of many adult members of Beth El. I grew up in a suburban Jewish ghetto, with only Jewish friends and neighbors. Like all my friends, at age 13 I became a bar mitzvah at our local synagogue, with the Shabbat service that I led followed by the de rigueur catered party. I gave little thought to the meaning of the ritual in which I had just participated, let alone to the notion that it constituted some sort of public affirmation of my Jewish identity or commitment. I became a bar mitzvah because everyone else my age did. For me, refusing to become a bar mitzvah would have been a far more conscious act of self-identity than simply moving with the flow of my homogeneous community.

The potential for the bar or bat mitzvah ritual to constitute a public statement of choice; to embrace a commitment to Jewish study and practice; and to represent an unequivocal affirmation of one’s Jewishness, is now perhaps most fully realized in the case of those who choose to become b’nei mitzvah as adults many years after they turned 13. I have been privileged to observe this transformative process in my own home, as my wife Susan began preparing for her bat mitzvah some 15 months ago. Since September 2013, Susan, along with the other women becoming b’not mitzvah this month at Beth El, has been mastering the phonetics of the Hebrew language; becoming familiar with the structure and format of the Shabbat service; learning to lead the morning prayers; and studying how to chant both the Torah and haftarah trope; and to decipher the calligraphy of the Torah. Susan has also been writing a d’Var Torah that I am confident will be thoughtful and provocative (though she won’t share it with me in advance!), and also researching the early Jewish communities of the American South where her paternal ancestors first settled after emigrating from Europe.

As adult b’not mitzvah, these adult members of our community are joining thousands of other modern American Jews who have embraced the concept of adult b’nei mitzvah following its introduction a few decades ago. In most cases, they either did not, or could not, become b’nei mitzvah when young. Some were raised in secular homes; some chose Judaism as adults; some grew up in non-egalitarian synagogues where girls were not allowed to become bat mitzvah; and some simply declined the opportunity to become b’nei mitzvah when younger. For all of these adults, to become b’nei mitzvah is a public ritual act of identification with Judaism and with one’s community — an act that makes a clarion statement about choice and commitment.

I hope that many Beth El members will attend our congregation’s adult b’nei mitzvah services on the Shabbat mornings of December 6 and 13 to celebrate with Katherine Haynes Sanstad, Susan Sugarman, Susan Zarchy and Jennifer Robinson when each becomes a bat mitzvah. And, if you are interested in embarking on this spiritual path yourself by joining the next adult b’nei mitzvah class (commencing in Fall 2015), please speak with Rabbi Kahn or Rabbi Stern.

L’shalom.
**Bereishit Banner**

This 108-foot banner, created by artist Arella Barlev for Simchat Torah, depicts the first two verses of the book of Genesis in the Torah. The banner was draped over six of the wooden ribs in the sanctuary ceiling. It was dedicated to our rabbis, to Debra Sagan Massey and all of our Beth El educators. The banner was installed just before Simchat Torah in October. Arella spent “a marathon week of intense work free-cutting the words and backing the banner with gardening fabric,” as she described the process. She has been a member of Congregation Beth El since 2007.

*Photo by Shoey Sindel Photography*
**Beth El’s Gala: Rhythm & Jews**

Save the date for the Beth El Gala on **Saturday, February 7 6:00-10:00 pm**, as we celebrate the music of Motown and remember our dear friend and late member, Max Cooperstein.

We invite the entire Beth El community to come together to raise money for our Youth and Family Education (YAFE) program scholarships, including Beth El Nursery School, Camp Kee Tov, Kadima, Chug Mishpacha, the congregational Shabbaton, BESTY, Sababa and Ruach youth groups. Please join us on February 7 as we transform Beth El into a music-filled wonderland and dance the night away. We look forward to seeing you there as we take it to the Max!

Max was involved in so many aspects of the synagogue, including the Open Sukkah parties, Chardonnay Shabbat and the Shabbaton. But where Max truly was an outstanding volunteer was in his support of the Gala. Months before the event, Max took to the streets of Berkeley and approached every business owner he knew to ask for auction donations. He helped raise thousands of dollars in scholarship money each year so that Jewish education could be open and accessible to all. Just this May, he volunteered to co-chair this year’s Gala. When Max passed away in June, we decided to honor his memory by dedicating this year’s Gala to him. We will enjoy music of the 1960s, an era when Max worked in the music business with Chess Records and knew many of the music greats.

We are seeking donations for our silent auction: theater tickets, vacation rentals and excursions. Please contact allie@bethelberkeley.org to offer a tax-deductible donation.

**The Hebrew Bible: Ketuvim**

**Session I of Roots and Branches,** Rabbi Yoel Kahn’s open-ended, on-going exploration of the texts and ideas of the Jewish tradition, continues on **Sundays, December 7 and 14, 9:15-10:30 am**. This session’s topic is Ketuvim (The Writings), the third section of the Hebrew Bible. We have been reading the Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job. All sessions are free and open to the public. No prerequisites; no homework; all texts are in English.

**“People of the Book” Seeks New Presenters**

On **Thursday, December 18 at noon**, Sara Kupor will present *The Dovekeepers*, by Alice Hoffman. At Masada, “[t]he lives of...four complex and fiercely independent women intersect in the desperate days of the siege. All are dovekeepers, and all are also keeping secrets — about who they are, where they come from, who fathered them and whom they love. The Dovekeepers is Alice Hoffman’s masterpiece.”

There are openings available for book suggestions for the next session, January through May. Please contact Barry Silverblatt at barry_s@pacbell.net. First-timers are particularly encouraged to present your favorite books!
Celebrate Chanukah and Shabbat
Join your Beth El and Camp Kee Tov (CKT) family on Friday, December 19 for a blowout Chanukah and Shabbat evening begins with latkes flipped and fried by Beth El’s Men’s Club and served with a light dinner. Next, choose either our rockin’ CKT Reunion Shabbat or our Yismechu service led by Rabbi Stern and Eric Schoen, or our Chanting Service led by Rabbi Kahn and Miriam Schwartz. We will be lighting candles together; please bring your chanukiyah. We only storytelling hour (like the Moth Radio Hour on NPR). We can’t wait to see you all there! Contact Norm Frankel to sign up to tell a story.

TU B’Shevat Seder
Tu B’Shevat, the fifteenth day of the month of Shevat, is the Jewish New Year for the trees. At our Tu B’Shevat Seder on Tuesday, February 3 at 6:30 pm, we will study and reflect on the connections between trees, fruit and our own spiritual dormancy and growth—as well as nibbling on fruits and nuts, familiar and new, which allude to the themes of the seder and the holiday. We will study historical and modern texts on the real and symbolic significance of trees, explore the Kabbalistic imagery of the Tree of Life, learn how the “Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge” calls us to the work of justice and tikkun (healing), and join together in song. Dinner is included! The program will wrap up by 8:30 pm. The cost is $10/member; $18/guest. Sign-up information will be in an upcoming e-update!

Men’s Club Heats Up This Winter
Friday, December 19 is our annual LatkeFest! The event starts at 5:30 pm but you can join us early to make latkes for the evening’s Shabbat Chanukah festivities. It’s a great time to bond as we mix, cook and eat this delicious holiday treat! Prep volunteers should contact Allan Sobel at 510-878-2726 or absebs@gmail.com.

Sunday, January 18 is our annual Cal Kids’ Day with the Championship Golden Bears women’s basketball team vs. University of Arizona. The game starts at 1:00 pm at Haas Pavilion, but Kids’ Day festivities start earlier. Join other Beth El families and have a great time. To buy your tickets, contact Allan Sobel.

The Men’s Club is pleased to announce that Rabbi Rebekah Stern will lead an interactive discussion about “Reform California” at Beth El on Thursday, February 12 at 7:00 pm.

A reminder to all Men’s Club members: Please send in your annual dues of $25 to Bob Goldstein (2921 Forest Avenue, Berkeley 94705). Men’s Club dues help sustain our events and support its donations.

New Life Stories Group Begins on January 8
A new Life Stories group will begin in January. It will meet at Beth El for eight weeks on Thursday evenings at 7:00 pm, starting on January 8. This is an interactive program for men and women who would like to begin a guided autobiography or have dedicated time to write whatever they like, and to share their work with other members of the group. There will be short motivation questions at the beginning of each session. These are fun and easy to answer, and will help participants begin the process. Many of the Life Stories pieces from past groups have been published in The Builder (see pages X and Y). The fee is $50 for all eight weeks. The program is limited to eight participants, and there are already three people signed up. We will try to achieve a balance of men and women on a first-come, first-served basis.

To reserve your place, please send in a check payable to “Congregation Beth El/Life Stories, and write “Attn: Marilyn Margulius” on the memo line. Contact Marilyn (mmargulius@comcast.net; 510-525-5010) with any questions.

Come to the Mitzvah Corps’ Stone Soup Party
The Mitzvah Corps will be hosting a unique event on Sunday, January 11 at 2:00 pm in the Beth El Social Hall. The event is open to all current Mitzvah Corps volunteers and any Beth El member who would like to join the Corps. As a labor of love, we will work together to make a large batch of soup to stock our freezer for congregants in need of a meal. While cooking, we plan to schmooze, share easy-to-make recipes and refreshments and enjoy a surprise entertainment. To top it off, Rabbi Stern will enlighten and inspire us with a prayer and teaching appropriate to the occasion.

To learn more about the Mitzvah Corps, go to our website: www.bethelberkeley.org/getinvolved/volunteer or pick up one of our colorful rack cards from the member resource table in the synagogue gallery. If you have questions about the Mitzvah Corps or the Stone Soup event, feel free to contact one of our Mitzvah Corps coordinators. We are:

Susan Zarchy, susanzarchy@gmail.com
Laura Turbow, laura@ltphoto.com
Susan Sugarman, susansugarmanicsw@gmail.com

Have an Idea for a Great New Beth El Program?
Beth El’s Program Council is always interested in hearing about ideas for new programs in our community. Join us for our next meeting on Tuesday, February 17 at 7:15 pm in the Beit Midrash to share your idea. Questions? Email Rabbi Stern at rabbistern@bethelberkeley.org.
LAST MARCH, Leigh Marymor and I traveled to the central Negev Desert to participate in an international rock art conference at Ben Gurion University in Sede Boker, Israel. Leigh was presenting his views about Biblical Israelites on the “Mountain of G-d.” Our visit included a broad range of nature, history and interesting people.

We arrived a couple of days before the conference to meet our guide and friend from a previous trip, Yehuda Rotblum. He took us to both rock art sites and geological wonders. First on the agenda was the Ramon Crater — called the world's largest erosion crater — located just outside of the town of Mitzpe Ramon.

We saw a 250 million-year-old fossil of a dinosaur protecting its egg adjacent to prehistoric rock circles and ancient chipped flint. Yehuda talked about the Earth’s crust and how it contains the deposits of life, so that we all contribute to the scenery around us. We stood on the boundary of the crater looking at the subtle colors inside compared to the tan colors of Nubian sands that cover the Negev Desert.

The landscape at our first petroglyph site showed signs of a recent rain that brightened the valleys with green, where terraces were built by the Nabatean as early as the fourth century B.C.E. to help hold the moisture. Now, the Bedouin take advantage of the greenery to graze their sheep and goats.

The rock art of the Negev Desert is found on low-lying Eocene limestone boulders located on the mountaintops to be closer to the heavens and, presumably, G-d. The images are both abstract and representational. Ibex with exaggerated arching horns dominate the rock art imagery.

There is also a wide variety of sandal prints depicting toes, laces and decorated soles, as well as ancient script on the rocks accompanied by modern wasam symbols (Bedouin marks). Script that has been transcribed are prayers written in Nabataen, Safaitic, Thamudic and other Arabic inscriptions from the Umayyad and Early Abbasid periods, dating to about 800-1000 CE.

During some time that Leigh and I had for exploring, we returned to Har Michia, a rock art site we had visited on our last trip. We knew we had not reached the boundaries of the site, so we drove to where we judged the far edge could be and began looking.

Right off the road we found a set of large tumuli at the crest of the hill where large rocks were organized into circles. One rock circle led us to another, dozens of them — a whole complex. Each was constructed slightly differently. Perhaps there was a stone in a standing position, a small area on the outside for a fire. A single layer of rock arranged in a circle, or many layers tall. The diameter of a circle could be several meters across with an inner circle of less than one meter. At the apex were two prominent hills, each built up with a substantial stone tumuli (see photo above right).

The culminating conference activity took place at Shivta, an ancient city along the 2,400-kilometer Incense Route. Camel caravans transported spices, frankincense, myrrh and other merchandise from Oman and Yemen to the ports at Gaza. Now Shivta is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Tali Erickson-Gini, an archaeologist who led excavation projects there, explained Shivta’s features and the life from times long past. The city had wine presses, churches and an extensive irrigation system with cisterns to collect enough water for farming, maintaining the population and for travelers with their animals.

Some of the holes that opened to cisterns below had score marks along the edges of the limestone worn by ropes lowering and raising buckets. Of particular interest to many of us were the carved ornamental stones and the remnants of painted decorations, especially in the churches or archways.

The day ended with a lavish meal consisting of many delicious courses served by the Bedouin caretakers who live at the site. Our visit left us captivated by the sweeping desert views, the hospitality and the archaeology around us.
THE ISRAEL RELIGIOUS ACTION CENTER (IRAC) is the public and legal advocacy arm of the Reform Movement in Israel. IRAC (www.irac.org) works to strengthen the democratic character of Israeli society, based on principles of social justice and equality. The following are a few examples of the important work that IRAC is doing in Israel today.

**Advocating for Gender Equality**

IRAC won the first class action suit addressing gender exclusion in Israel. The Jerusalem District Court approved IRAC’s claim against the ultra-Orthodox Kol Barama radio station for excluding women from the station’s broadcasts. Kol Barama, an Israeli public radio station, had refused to employ women, feature women as anchors or allow women to call-in or be interviewed on shows. IRAC also helped a group of Orthodox women sue the Beit Shemesh municipality for the modesty signs lining the streets.

**Combatting Racist Incitement**

IRAC, along with others, sent thousands of emails to Jerusalem mayor Nir Barkat opposing the appointment of Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu as Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Jerusalem because he has demonstrated long standing anti-Arab behavior. As a result of the pressure, his candidacy was dropped. IRAC helped launch a cyber unit to target racist incitement on the internet and a new hotline to report racist incidents to the Ministry of Justice.

**Promoting Religious Pluralism**

Five non-Orthodox rabbis are now recognized by the state and are receiving state funding. Legal cases to secure recognition of non-Orthodox conversions and challenge the ultra-Orthodox monopoly over kashrut are in process.

To quote Anat Hoffman, the executive director of IRAC, “The struggle may be sticky but the results are always sweet.”

Help us to build a pluralistic and democratic Israeli society by becoming a supporter. Please join me in supporting IRAC with a $36 (or more) contribution to Congregation Beth El’s IRAC Fund.

Mail your check to Beth El with a note that your donation is for the Beth El IRAC Fund, or go to our website at www.bethelberkeley.org, click on the donate button and select the IRAC fund from the list of funds.
Welcome to Our New Members!

We welcome the following people to our Beth El community

Compiled by Elisabeth Wechsler, Editor

Mimi Abraham
After college, Mimi Abraham moved to San Francisco, Cabo San Lucas, Los Angeles and Mexico again from Gary, IN. In 2012 a job opportunity brought Mimi to Berkeley. She was attracted to Beth El because she kept meeting people from the congregation wherever she went. Mimi wanted to find a community that made her feel welcome, since she was so far from home. The diversity and emphasis on acceptance of those of different backgrounds, lifestyles and points-of-view was a huge draw for her. Mimi joined the Beth El choir, noting that “music has always been the great love of my life.” She also enjoys gardening, cooking, crocheting/knitting and walking in Tilden Park with her Chihuahua loca, Frida. Her son, Alexander Moore (14), is active in music and theater at the Berkeley Repertory School of Theater and is now writing a column critiquing video games for the Berkeley Jacket.

Marcia Diaz
Marcia Diaz grew up in Los Angeles (San Fernando Valley) and came north to attend UC Berkeley in 1961. She has lived in the Bay Area ever since. Marcia attended Torah Study for several weeks and then came to Talmud Study on Friday afternoons before joining Beth El. Everything about Beth El, she said, was “appealing, from the friendliness of the members, the quality of the discussions, the spiritual depth of the rabbis and the services.” In 1999 Marcia retired after 33 years with the Social Security Administration. She spends her time gardening, studying, doing yoga, volunteering and enjoying life. She noted that she is part of a group of women friends who have been studying Torah once a month for almost 20 years.

Eran & Shanit Edri
Eran & Shanit Edri moved to Berkeley from Kibbutz Tzuba in Israel, a cooperative community of some 300 members. The Edris engaged in many activities there, mostly cultural and educational. They came to Berkeley so that Eran, a materials scientist, could start his postdoctorate study at Lawrence Berkeley National Lab. He will be developing an “artificial photosynthesis” system, based on his PhD work at the Weizmann Institute. In Israel, Shanit worked for 10 years as an educator in both formal and informal programs. In her last position she was a high school teacher of Hebrew literature and math. Their twins, Yair and Rhona, are two years old.

Rabbi Jennifer Flam & Jason Schwartz
Rabbi Jennifer Flam, the new director of Berkeley Midrasha, & Jason Schwartz live in Concord with their twins, Eli and Mia (3).

Jeff & Samantha Golden
Jeff Golden grew up locally in Oakland, & Samantha Golden moved to Emeryville from Los Angeles in May 2013. They were married by Rabbi Yoel Kahn on October 19. Jeff’s parents, Vivian and Sandy Golden, have been members of Beth El since the 80s. Jeff and his older brother, Daniel, both became b’nei mitvah at the old synagogue location. Jeff is very passionate about music and plays the guitar and writes songs. He also paints and enjoys outdoor activities such as golfing, skiing, camping, hiking and swimming. Samantha enjoys crafting and reading, and also likes to spend time outdoors. Jeff works as a family therapist and has nearly completed requirements to become licensed. Samantha currently works in retail management. Jeff is interested in joining the synagogue band and Samantha is interested in community service.

Josh & Barbara Goldstein
Josh & Barbara Goldstein moved to Berkeley last year from Germany, where their family has lived the past seven years. Josh is originally from Oregon and Barbara is Austrian. Their children, Susanne (10), David (9) and Miriam (9), were born in Trenton, NJ. “We were drawn to Beth El by the vibrant Jewish education programs for our children and by a bar mitzvah we attended last year that made us feel right at home,” Josh said. Barbara is a historian, and Josh is a demographer; they both teach at UC Berkeley. Their main family activities are music and enjoying the outdoors.
**Tatiana Olenina & Kennedy Behrman**

Tatiana Olenina & Kennedy Behrman have lived in the Bay Area since 2008, mostly in Berkeley. Tatiana is from Kharkov, Ukraine and left what was then the USSR in 1989. She has lived in several U.S. cities including Philadelphia, where she met Kennedy. They moved to the Bay Area for Kennedy’s employment. Tatiana said, “We were always drawn to the wonderful community, its inclusiveness and high spirits. We have a lot of friends who are members of Beth El, and we wanted to further our daughter Itta’s Jewish education (she just started Kadima at Beth El).” Itta loves to swim, do science projects and travel. Kennedy, a movie industry software developer, is interested in painting, playing musical instruments and agonizing about Philly’s sports teams. He has a BA in painting from University of Pennsylvania and a Master’s degree in computer and information technology. Tatiana enjoys reading, exploring new places and meeting people. She has a first degree in foreign languages from Kharkov (Ukraine) State University, a second degree from the University of Illinois and an MBA from the University of Chicago. Tatiana is now involved in a new consulting company. She and Kennedy are interested in volunteering for youth services at Beth El.

**Rachel Ostroy & Tommy Harp**

Rachel Ostroy & Tommy Harp are both from Los Angeles and have lived in the Bay Area on and off for 15 years. Tommy went to UC Berkeley. They moved back from LA in June and are “all very happy to be in Berkeley,” Rachel said. Their children were born in Berkeley; Lena (11), Amelia (10) and Leo (5) went to Camp Kee Tov after preschool. Some of the family are into sports — playing and watching — others cook and garden.

**Tomer Schetrit & Dana Ben Shushan**

Native Israelis Tomer Schetrit & Dana Ben Shushan have been in Berkeley since 2010, after living in Davis for two years where Tomer did graduate work in civil and environmental engineering. He now works in that field at a small consulting firm in Oakland. Tomer and Dana were drawn to Beth El because of BENS, where their two-year-old son, Tai, started this fall. Their daughter, Shai, was born in August. Dana is originally from a small kibbutz in northern Israel (Kibbutz Hagoshrim). Tomer grew up in Santa Clara, before moving back to Israel to serve in the military. Dana is an interior architect with her own business, a mix of home remodels and commercial design. The Edris enjoy spending time outdoors and have backpacked in the Sierra Nevada and elsewhere. In addition, Tomer enjoys surfing, mountain biking and running, while Dana likes to bake and do artistic projects.

**Yoav Sharon & Anat Perry**

Originally from Israel, Yoav Sharon & Anat Perry moved to Berkeley a year ago for Anat’s postdoctoral training in psychology and neuroscience at UC Berkeley. Yoav, after working more than a decade in Tel Aviv tech start-ups, joined an Oakland-based start-up to lead product management efforts. The couple have two-year-old twins, Yuval and Amit, who were born in Tel Aviv and just joined BENS in September. The family loves to tour urban and rural areas, discover new places and people and socialize with friends. “We love the Bay Area and Berkeley, in particular, and are looking forward to meeting new people in the Beth El community and taking part in Jewish holidays and events,” Anat said.

**Michael “Misha” & Irina “Ira” Smolkin**

Michael “Misha” & Irina “Ira” Smolkin were raised in Eastern Ukraine. They both moved to Israel in the 90s and consider themselves “fully Israeli.” The Smolkins relocated to the Bay Area a year ago from Canada, where Misha completed his first postdoctoral training in physics. Their older son, Nathaniel (4), joined BENS this year, while Adam (1) is still at home. The family enjoys outdoor activities, such as hiking and biking, and finds it exciting to explore California and the Bay Area, in particular. Misha is a postdoctoral researcher in theoretical physics at UC Berkeley. Ira is a computer programmer and holds a Master’s degree for teaching math and physics. These days, however, she spends her time with Adam at home. Misha writes, “We would love to hear about various ways we can volunteer and contribute to the community. We are looking forward to meeting new people and become an integral part of Beth El.”

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
Jane & David Stern

Jane & David Stern have lived in Albany since 1978. They rejoined Congregation Beth El after several years away. Their two children, Alexander and Rebekah, went to BENS, Beth El religious school and Camp Kee Tov and had their b’nei mitzvah at Beth El. Jane was an elementary school teacher and principal in Vallejo. She now coaches new principals and vice-principals. David is professor emeritus at the UC Berkeley School of Education, where he directs the College and Career Academy Support Network working on high school reform. Both Sterns love being outdoors, singing in their choruses and being active grandparents to Leora (4) and Jonathan (18 months). The Sterns are excited about their reconnection to Beth El and all that it has to offer. Oh yes, and there’s one other Beth El connection: they are the proud parents of Rabbi Rebekah Stern!

We also welcome: Joyce Appelbaum of Kensington; Oliver (Ollie) Arnold & Susan Maslan of Kensington and their daughter, Daisy (12); Pamela Burdman and her daughter, Rikki (5); Itay Fishhendler & Leron Dean, of Albany, and their son, Itamar (4); Philipp Gollner & Cecelia Mauntner of Berkeley and their children, Emma (11) and Daniel (9); Stephanie Gruber and her son, Lev (10), of Berkeley; Matthew & Rebecca Jelen, and their children, Lily (4) and Felix (1.5), of Berkeley; Jaeame (pronounced “Jamie”) Koyil of Albany and his children, Noel (13) and Kyle (10); Halina & Hugo Lorman of Albany and their daughter, Allie (14); Shira Leeder of Berkeley; Rachael & Nat Lopes and their son Dimitri (2), who live in Oakland; Ofer & Moriel Moldavski and their sons, Stav (6) and Maayan (3), of Berkeley; Ran & Reut Nof and their children, Mika (6) and Tai (3), of Albany; Gali Ross-Hasson & Nir Hasson of Albany and their daughter, Or (2); Michael Schwarz & Bella Lurie, of Berkeley, and their daughter, Liya (5); and Rabbi Idit & Steven Solomon of Berkeley and their daughters, Nili and Orly (2).
ADL Confronts Contemporary Prejudice and Hatred as well as Classic Anti-Semitism

by Elisabeth Wechsler, Editor

LONG KNOWN FOR ITS BATTLE against anti-semitism in the U.S., the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has continued its fight against that threat, while furthering its efforts to eliminate other forms of prejudice and hatred.

ADL’s centennial last year brought out a new theme for the organization, set up in 1913 to protest verbal and physical abuse (including lynching) of Jews in the U.S. “Imagine A World Without Hate®” is the theme being applied to a range of areas, such as: school and cyber bullying; LGBT bias and diversity rights; training for law enforcement; monitoring of U.S.-based extremists; and securing voting rights, immigrants’ rights, education equity and equality for all.

Heading the Central Pacific Region for ADL is Congregation Beth El member, Seth Brysk. He administers a staff, based in San Francisco, covering Northern California, Utah and Hawaii.

Seth’s background fits ADL like a glove: he is a dual citizen of the U.S. and Israel, having spent five years in Israel as an adult. Born in Washington, D.C., Seth’s family moved a lot during his childhood before settling in San Diego.

He and his four siblings attended Habonim Camp, associated with the Israeli Labor Zionist Youth Movement. Seth became a bar mitzvah under the tutelage of an Orthodox rabbi, although his family identified more as cultural Jews and observed major Jewish holidays. Three of his siblings became b’nei mitvah in different Jewish religious traditions — Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist.

Seth’s father was born in Paris before the family, Holocaust refugees, fled to Portugal in 1940. His paternal grandfather had been a labor leader in Brysk, Poland and, because of his position, the family received coveted U.S. labor union association-arranged visas to enter this country in 1941.

Seth’s undergraduate degree from UC Berkeley is in political science with a minor in Hebrew, and his Master’s degree is from Tel Aviv University in international relations with a focus on conflict resolution. He was drafted into the Israel Defense Forces for six months and then worked for Kenes, an Israeli organization that arranged international conferences for medical doctors and scientists to examine critical health issues. He also organized Palestinian-Israeli dialogue groups.

After former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin’s assassination by a right-wing Jewish extremist in 1995, Seth returned to the U.S. He knew that because of the assassination Israel’s peace movement would be sidelined for some time.

Seth also wanted to support his young nephew in the Bay Area who was diagnosed with a tumor and required major surgery. Seth stayed with his brother and helped care for the family.

Soon afterward, he was hired as executive director of Hillel for San Francisco’s college campuses, and he met his future wife, Jenn Brysk, at a conference. She worked for Hillel at the University of Rochester, NY and is now a perennial Beth El volunteer. They have three children: Noa (8), Adi (6) and Lev (4), who attend Kadima and BENS, as well as Camp Kee Tov in the summer. Seth volunteers as a consultant to the Beth El Emergency Preparedness Task Force.

Seth joined the ADL in 2012 and implements the organization’s national programs and policies in this region, including recruiting state and local law enforcement management to attend training courses in Washington, D.C. The ADL also assists law enforcement personnel in investigations that may involve hate crimes.

Seth was awarded the Officer’s Cross of the Order of Merit by Poland in 2013, one of the country’s highest honors. He has also served on a number of Jewish community boards and advisory committees.

Seth will present on the topic of “Global Anti-Semitism” at Beth El’s monthly Lunch & Learn on Thursday, December 11. Lunch starts at 12:00 pm and the program begins at 12:30 pm. Bring a bag lunch; all are invited to attend.
A SURPRISE. We drove down from Riga, a remarkable and lovely place, into Lithuania on bad roads through flat featureless countryside, paying rapt attention to the calm uninflected instructions of the GPS.

Flat, flat, flat, until we came around a corner, so to speak, into a fine landscape of rolling hills and woods, and finally came upon the road sign for Kraziai, which is what the remote farm village whence my forebears emigrated in 1885 is called now.

“Lena, do you remember Krozh?” that’s what my senile Great Aunt Fanny used to say 65 years ago when I was a child to my grandmother, her younger sister, over and over again. She had been ten years old when she was torn away from her home for the epic journey to the new land. Seeing that beautiful place I began to realize what it must have meant to have been uprooted like that. Well, as a matter of fact, much the same thing happened to me when I was six, so perhaps it’s particularly easy for me to empathize. In any case, I’m the last, living link to Fannie and to Krozh and to that vanished world of European Jewry. When I die, that dies with me.

The town, Christian half and Jewish half, was leveled in the summer of 1941 (when I was a year old) in battles between the Soviets and Nazis. There is a small monument to the murder of the remaining Jews that same ghastly summer in circumstances, you may be sure, of unimaginable cruelty and brutality.

On a wild hillside overlooking the town, we found the old Jewish cemetery. The stones, some of which are very old — centuries old — with their Hebrew inscriptions half effaced by the years, were set in a wild meadow of corn flower and loose strife under magnificent skies. On the breezy July afternoon we climbed that hill, church bells tolling in the town and thunder rumbling across piled up cumulus clouds.

Who’d want to leave such a place, unless of course tsarist paramilitary were raiding periodically and the church was preaching “kill the Jews.” But still, what child could leave such a place without trauma that reached to the last days of her life? Thanks be that they did leave way back then. Minnesota is pretty, too.
HOLIDAYS

Training for Shiva Leaders
by Alison Bernstein, Ritual Committee Chair

SHIVA, THE INTENSE DAYS of mourning following a funeral, is one of the wisest aspects of the Jewish tradition. During shiva, the family members stop their ordinary lives to honor the life of the loved one who has died and to make room to experience the full range of loss and grief that is present. Shiva takes place in the embrace of a caring community; our tradition teaches that “comforting the bereaved” is one of those mitzvot that has no limit to its fulfillment. Customarily, a short service is held at the mourners’ home each evening of the shiva week.

The Ritual Committee is training a group of member volunteers to lead shiva services. This two-part program, to be led by Rabbis Yoel Kahn and Rebekah Stern, will be taking place this winter (exact dates and times to be announced in the e-update). If you would consider joining other members as part of a shiva leading team, please contact me (alibernstein@gmail.com) to learn more about it.

Chanukah

CHANUKAH BEGINS THIS YEAR ON DECEMBER 16 and ends on December 24. We will celebrate Chanukah as a community at our annual Latkefest Shabbat on Friday evening, December 19 (see p. 7).

Lighting the Chanukiyah (Chanukah menorah)

Candles are added to the chanukiyah from right to left, but are kindled from left to right. The newest candle is lit first. Light the shamash — the helper candle — first, using it to kindle the rest of the Chanukah lights; say or sing the blessings:

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid’shanu b’mitzvotav v’tsivanu l’hadlik ner shel Chanukah.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to kindle the Chanukah lights.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, she-asah nisim laavoteinu v’imoteinu bayamim hahaeim ba’z’man hazeh.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who performed wonderous deeds for our ancestors in days of old at this season.

On the first night only (of the first time one is lighting the Chanukah menorah this year):

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, shehecheyanu v’kiy’manu v’higianu la’z’man hazeh.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, for giving us life, for sustaining us, and for enabling us to reach this season.

There are now many Jewish sites and resources on the web. For Chanukah ideas, history, reflections, recipes, activities and songs, please visit one of our favorite websites:

- The Union for Reform Judaism, the national organization of Reform synagogues: urj.org/jewish-holidays.
- “Everything you wanted to know” (and a fair amount of silliness too — including a very goofy “how to light candles” video can be found at myjewishlearning.com.
- Especially created for interfaith families, interfaithfamily.com has many similar offerings as well as articles and wisdom for families seeking to navigate their way through the challenges and joys of having family members who observe different traditions and customs.
More New Books to Offer Our Readers

by Scott Spear, Library Chair

Donations to the Aaron Plishner and Rabbi George Vida Funds make it possible to buy new books. Here are some recent additions:

**Balaboosta: Bold Mediterranean Recipes to Feed the People You Love**, by Einat Admony, owner of popular New York restaurants, is a cookbook of the great variety of Middle Eastern foods, from sumptuous dinner-party recipes to meals for kids, healthy options and comfort food. The recipes reflect not only Admony’s Israeli, Yemenite and Persian background, but all she has learned working in beloved kitchens of New York City.

**Jewish Artists and the Bible in Twentieth-Century America**, by Samantha Baskind, an art historian, uncovers how modern Jewish American artists have adapted the Bible in innovative ways. It focuses on Jack Levine, George Segal, Andrey Flack, Larry Rivers and R. B. Kitaj, but includes many other Jewish artists in a well-illustrated book.

The notion that the anonymous creators of the Talmud were merely humble faithful transmitters of the traditions of revered predecessors is challenged and undermined in **Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud**, by Moulie Vidas. The anonymous sages, who wrote over half the Talmud, gave it its character of dialectic argumentation and arranged its content. They are shown to have had a creative role, distancing tradition for the sake of innovative interpretation. Daniel Boyarin calls the book “troubling and thrilling.” Moshe Halbertal calls it “original and valuable.”

**The Bar Mitzvah: A History**, by Rabbi Michael Hilton, includes bat mitzvah in the history. The author has sought out every reference to this coming-of-age milestone in the Bible, Talmud and many Jewish texts up to the present, in order to discover the origins, development and significance of the event, as well as its varied lores and customs in different times and in different Jewish communities.

**A Chosen Calling: Jews in Science in the Twentieth Century**, Noah Efron, a reputable historian of science, takes on the question, debated for decades, of why Jews have succeeded extraordinarily in modern science, finding historical explanation rather than supposed Jewish traits, brains and habits of mind. In a “symposium” on the question in a recent issue of “Moment,” Efron and Ofer Gal, another eminent science historian, rejected all theories about a Jewish “difference” in favor of history. David Hollinger, of UC Berkeley, calls this “fresh and ambitious.” The book began as the Efroymson Lectures at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati.

**Jabotinsky**, by Hillel Halkin, is another in Yale University’s series of Jewish biographies, telling the story of Vladimir Jabotinsky, founder of Zionism’s Revisionist Party, the ancestor of the Likud Party. Halkin, biographer of Yehuda Halevi, shows how Jabotinsky — both admired and loathed — has been the most misunderstood of Zionist politicians. This book is considerably shorter than the two-volume biography of Jabotinsky already in the library.

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**Book Review: Supersurvivors**

by Sean Holcombe, MFT

**WE ALL KNOW THAT** bad things happen to good people. In the book **Supersurvivors**, authors David B. Feldman, PhD and Lee Daniel Kravetz look at how people not only survive traumatic events, but use their experiences as a catalyst for personal change, and begin to thrive. Kravetz, himself a cancer survivor at age 30, points to his trauma as a turning point in his life when he examined his direction and purpose, culminating in the publication of this excellent book. Feldman and Kravetz examine case studies in post-traumatic stress, focusing on people who have suffered and turned their suffering into a transformative force for positive personal growth. From survivors of tragic accidents and illnesses to genocide victims, the authors explore current research on the effects of positive thinking, faith and hope in helping people overcome adversity and find new meaning in their lives. **Supersurvivors** contains valuable wisdom for all of us — whether or not we are trauma or tragedy survivors — about how not only to survive but thrive.
New Children's Library Section
by Marlene Getz, Children's Library volunteer

In addition to a fabulous collection of books about Jewish holidays, the Bible and Shabbat, we now have a new section entitled “Feelings and Family.” It is located in the Children’s Library below the toddler books.

At present, the books help children deal with grief, adoption, divorce, as well as special needs. Several books also describe the special role of grandparents/older adults in a child’s life as well as the importance of Jewish traditions, passed l’dor v’dor (generation to generation).

Featured in this selection include: Joel Iskowitz’s A Candle for Grandpa, a guide to a Jewish funeral for parents and children; The Dead Bird by Margaret Wise Brown, a poignant story of children finding and burying a dead bird; Saying Goodbye to Lulu by Corinne Demas, how a child copes with the illness and subsequent death of her beloved dog.

Bryman Olenburg Sugerman’s Rebecca’s Journey Home tells how a family welcomes their adopted Vietnamese child into their Jewish home. Be sure to check out Bubbe’s Belated Bat Mitzvah, by Isabel Penson, a very sweet and touching story of a child helping her great grandmother become bat mitzvah at 95!

Nathan Blows Out the Hanukkah Candles, by Tami Lehman-Wilzig, is told through the eyes of the older brother of an autistic sibling. Allison Ofanansky’s The Patchwork Torah is an unique intergenerational story that is beautifully illustrated.

By request, we have added another section, “Hebrew,” found on the shelf directly below the Feelings and Family section. Currently, there is The Giving Tree entirely in Hebrew, plus A Thousand Words in Hebrew, Alef is for Abba and several books with blessings in Hebrew.

As we are approaching the Festival of Lights, come visit the amazing plethora of Chanukah books!
What a Wonderful Fall We Had!

by Emily Schnitzer, Youth Group Advisor

This fall proved to be one for the books! My first session as Youth Group advisor for Ruach and Sababa did not let me down. Through amazing collaboration and the leadership of our Sababa Board, we offered youth services for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur that were meaningful and relevant. Through Dr. Seuss readings and traditional Jewish songs, we were able to reflect on the past year and think about our choices for the year to come.

Sukkot came quickly afterward and we celebrated in style. Ruach hung out in Beth El's sukkah, relaxing in the heat and painting our own planter boxes. We planted some beautiful basil and alyssum plants for our homes. Sababa celebrated at Nathan Magid's house, eating dinner in their sukkah before playing games and laughing all evening.

For more information about Ruach (Beth El's youth group for 4th and 5th graders) or Sababa (Beth El's youth group for 6th-8th graders), please visit www.bethelberkeley.org/learning/youth-groups.

Ruach Upcoming Events

Ruach's Chanukah celebration and crafts on Sunday, December 7, 4:00-6:00 pm at Beth El. Snacks provided. Please RSVP to me by December 5.

Tu B’shevat Celebration under the trees on Wednesday, February 4, 3:30-5:30 pm at Beth El. Please RSVP to me by February 1. RSVP for Ruach events: 510-848-3988, ext 223, or emilyschnitzer@bethelberkeley.org. Remember to get on the bus after school if you are coming to the event.

Sababa Upcoming Events

Limos and Latkes! event is hosted by BBYO and will be in late December. Check the e-update for more information as it becomes available.

West Coast Party Jr. 2015 Retreat from Friday to Monday, January 16–19, at Camp Newman in Santa Rosa. This is an amazing weekend organized by NFTY and is a great way to learn more about all their high school programs. More information about cost and registration will come soon.

Gala Volunteering and Movie Night on Saturday, February 7, 6:00–10:00 pm at Beth El. We will volunteer at the Gala, speak about what Beth El means to us and have a fun movie night with popcorn.

As always, if you have any questions about Ruach or Sababa, don’t hesitate to contact me by phone at 510-848-3988 ext 223, or by email at emilyschnitzer@bethelberkeley.org.

Meet our new BESTY Advisor!

My name is Ali Greenland, and I'm excited to be the new BESTY (Beth El Synagogue Team Youth) advisor! I grew up in Columbus, OH and was involved with my synagogue from birth until I left for college. My involvement with North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) was strong throughout high school, and I served as my youth group's president during my last year. I attended Indiana University in Bloomington, where I studied studio art and dance.

I graduated in May 2013, and later that year I moved to Berkeley to participate in an Urban Adamah Farm fellowship. The food, culture and love for the environment here are so exciting, and I have enjoyed every moment. Currently, I spend my days working for Camp Newman as their year-round kibbutz director as well as advising BESTY, where I oversee youth group activities and assist in event planning. I care deeply for Jewish youth engagement and think it is important for young Jews to have the opportunity to connect to Judaism in different ways.

Our youth group is part of the national organization dedicated to serving Reform Jewish youth and providing them with meaningful and engaging experiences. In February, NFTY will be hosting its convention in Atlanta! This event is an amazing opportunity for Jewish teens. Young Reform Jews will gather from all over North America for five days to have meaningful Jewish experiences, connect with old friends and meet new ones, enjoy performances by various Jewish artists, and much more! We invite any teen involved with Congregation Beth El to join us in Atlanta and at our local BESTY events during the year. For more information go to www.nftyconvention.org or feel free to contact me at alison.greenland@gmail.com.

I'm looking forward to a fun and inspiring year at Beth El!
The Miracle and Magic of Midrasha

by Rabbi Jennifer Flam
Executive Director of Berkeley Midrasha

IT IS AMAZING what a group of teens in a room can create through their personal exploration of who they want to become. The process of self-awareness and community bonding through Jewish experiences and learning are the true magic that happens every Sunday morning at Midrasha. Our Midrasha classes are engaged with innovative Jewish learning and experiencing.

The “Build-It: Judaism” class is creating a replica of Noah’s Ark using the proportions set forward in the Torah. Our Biblio-yoga class, with Beth Midanik-Blum, spends time engaged in Torah learning through movement and guided imagery. This class merges Jewish meaning and personal revitalization for the week ahead. Our Talmud class is grappling with some of the blessings found in the Talmud, and creating some of the teens’ own along the way. Sacha Kopin is leading a group through an exploration of what it means to be happy!

At Midrasha in Berkeley, we nourish our teens, much like soil nourishes a growing plant. Our soil is composed of an impressive professional faculty that teaches and mentors our teens to build on their own identities and relationships with others through lessons that will last long after they leave our classrooms. We empower them through community engagement and activism, in addition to building skills that encourage the development of each individual student.

Through your support of Midrasha today, you become part of the magic that creates the Jewish community of tomorrow. Your support ensures that Midrasha in Berkeley is accessible to all East Bay Jewish teens. Your support ensures that we will continue to innovate and build the highest quality program that speaks to the needs of today’s teens.

Thank you for being part of the magic and miracle of Midrasha.

L’shalom.
BENS: Connecting With Nature
by Maguy Weizmann-McGuire, Director of Early Childhood Education

WE STARTED THE FALL by celebrating together under the Sukkah and dancing with the Torah. With the High Holy Days behind us, we began to focus on plans for our new outdoor space. Our goal is to have the outdoor yard reflect the philosophy and structure of our classrooms. A special thank-you to Jason Kaldis for the design of our new outdoor structure. We are grateful to Dvir Brakah who volunteered to build the project with his team. We invite everyone to visit BENS in December to see the new additions to our outdoor space.

As we continue the year exploring our educational theme, “Shomrei Adamah,” which can be translated as “Keepers of the Earth,” we will connect with nature. The Gan Galim and Gan Hadar classes have field trips to Urban Adamah, where they will have a hands-on experience with animals, farming and nature. Jodi Gladstone, our Jewish resource specialist, continues to lead us in thoughtful and creative hands-on learning activities.

BENS is now taking applications for new students for the 2015-2016 year. There is an Open House on Wednesday, January 21 (check the e-updates for the time) to learn about our school and its philosophy. Please help to spread the word to your family and friends about our program. Beth El Nursery School weaves together current child development practices by encouraging children to explore and develop emotional, social, physical and cognitive qualities at their own pace.

For more information about BENS or to schedule a tour, please contact me at maguy@bethelberkeley.org.
# BENS & YAFE Calendar

## December

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 1</td>
<td>BENS Parents Cafe</td>
<td>9:00 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 3</td>
<td>Holiday Craft Night with Jodi</td>
<td>6:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 5</td>
<td>Shabbat Yafe Tot Service</td>
<td>5:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 5</td>
<td>Shabbat Yafe Catered Dinner</td>
<td>5:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 6</td>
<td>Shabbat Yafe Service</td>
<td>6:15 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 7</td>
<td>Beth El Chanukah Bazaar Preview</td>
<td>6:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 7</td>
<td>Beth El Chanukah Bazaar</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 9</td>
<td>Parenting Workshop w/ Rabbi Stern: “Themes, Rituals and Parenting for Chanukah”</td>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 9</td>
<td>B’nei Mitzvah Parent Meeting</td>
<td>6:15 pm–7:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 10</td>
<td>BENS Closed for Parent Teacher Conference (childcare available)</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 12</td>
<td>Gan Galim Shabbat Dinner: A Family Event</td>
<td>5:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 18</td>
<td>Chanukiot Lighting</td>
<td>5:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 19</td>
<td>BENS All School Shabbat Service</td>
<td>12:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 19</td>
<td>Beth El Latkefest &amp; Kee Tov Shabbat Reunion</td>
<td>5:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 20–January 2</td>
<td>Kadima closed for Winter Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 22–January 2</td>
<td>BENS closed for Winter Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 29</td>
<td>BENS Winter Camp</td>
<td>8:00 am–5:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 30</td>
<td>BENS Winter Camp</td>
<td>8:00 am–5:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31</td>
<td>BENS Winter Camp</td>
<td>8:00 am–3:30 pm</td>
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## January

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 3</td>
<td>Chug Mishpacha Resumes</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 5</td>
<td>BENS Resumes</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 5</td>
<td>Parents’ Café</td>
<td>9:00 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 6</td>
<td>KADIMA resumes</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 9</td>
<td>Shabbat Yafe Tot Shabbat</td>
<td>5:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 9</td>
<td>Shabbat Yafe Catered Dinner</td>
<td>5:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 9</td>
<td>Shabbat Yafe Service</td>
<td>6:15 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 10</td>
<td>Saturday Night Live: Parents Night Out</td>
<td>5:00 pm–9:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 13</td>
<td>Urban Adamah — Gan Galim Field Trip</td>
<td>9:00 am–1:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 16</td>
<td>BENS Closed for Teachers’ In-Service Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 17</td>
<td>No CHUG MISHPACHA</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 19</td>
<td>BENS Closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 20</td>
<td>Education Committee Meeting</td>
<td>7:30 pm–9:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 22</td>
<td>Kadima All-School Service</td>
<td>5:40 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 24</td>
<td>6th Grade B’nei Mitzvah Family Program</td>
<td>10:15 am–2:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 27</td>
<td>Urban Adamah — Gan Hadar Field Trip</td>
<td>9:00 am–1:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>5th Grade B’nei Mitzvah Date Selection Family Meeting</td>
<td>7:30 pm–9:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 30</td>
<td>BENS All School Shabbat Service</td>
<td>12:30 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 30</td>
<td>Gan Hadar Shabbat Dinner: A Family Event</td>
<td>5:30 pm</td>
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Claudia Roden’s Orange-Almond Cake

by Marjorie Gelb

I HAVE KNOWN ABOUT THIS RECIPE for years but as someone who only bakes with butter, it took a long time for me to embrace it. The motivation came during the Jewish New Year when a relative who keeps Kosher joined us for dinner. The rest of the family wanted meat, and my usual sorbet or berries seemed too light. What’s a dessert lover to do? In an effort to serve a true dairy free meal, I gave this recipe a whirl. It is perfect. Easy, delicious, and the cake can be made in advance. If you have children, they can decorate it with powdered sugar and sprinkles.

**Cooking Directions**

1. Place the whole unpeeled oranges in a large pot, cover with cold water and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer gently for two (2) hours, adding more water as needed. Let cool in the water or remove and set aside. The oranges can be refrigerated at this point or, after they are cool, you can continue with the recipe.

2. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 9-inch spring form pan with cooking oil, line the bottom with parchment paper cut to fit, and spray paper with oil.

3. Cut the unpeeled oranges in half, remove the seeds and puree in a food processor.

4. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs together with the sugar. Add the orange puree and whisk again. Add the almond flour, baking powder, and salt, and stir until just combined.

5. Pour into the prepared pan and bake until the edges are starting to brown and pull away from the sides of the pan, about one (1) hour. Transfer the pan to a wire rack. Let it rest for 15 minutes and run a knife around edge of pan to loosen the cake. Remove the cake from the pan and cool on a wire rack.

6. When it’s cooled completely you can either cover it and refrigerate for a day or so, or immediately sprinkle with powdered sugar forced through a sieve. Serve soon after the powdered sugar is put on or it will melt into the cake. Colored sprinkles are optional.

**Time:** 15 minutes active time; two (2) hours for poaching the oranges, one (1) hour for baking and time for cooling.

**Serves 8.**

**Ingredients**

- 2-3 sweet oranges (about a pound)
- 6 large eggs
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 ½ cups almond meal/flour, or ground blanched almonds
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- Powdered sugar
- Colored sprinkles, optional
From the Rabbi
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

voices around a single theme. These voices cross the spectrum of Judaism — secular and religious, communal and non-partisan, engaged and striving — and expose readers to challenging, sometimes conflicting, ideas. The articles and essays are short, pungent and thoughtful, making for a rewarding spiritual and intellectual workout. Highly recommended (www.shma.com).

For news from Israel, in English, there are two primary choices: the online (or print) editions of the Jerusalem Post and Haaretz newspapers. While both papers’ ownership has changed over the years, they each still reflect their histories of being the semi-official voice of the Israeli right and left, respectively. Both have limited free access on their home screens; an investment in a digital subscription means that when something happens in Israel and you need to know “right now” (as I do!) what is going on, it’s there; I also find the vigorous debate an ongoing challenge to my understanding of what’s happening in Israel (www.haaretz.com; www.jpost.com).

Even a short a round-up like this one would be incomplete without mentioning two long-running American Jewish institutions. I have to admit that I haven’t really paid a lot of attention to either one for a long time, but I have fond memories of reading them in my parents’ living room and I was delighted that they are still being published (in digital and print editions): what has long since become the voice of the Jewish neocon movement, Commentary magazine (its left-leaning antithesis, Tikvun, was started later in Berkeley in response) and what was often the liveliest Jewish read, Moment. All are still around, in print and online. (www.commentarymagazine.com; www.momentmag.com; www.tikkun.org).

You can find many of these and other Jewish periodicals in our Beth El library. I am sure that there are other excellent Jewish periodicals out there — please let me know what you subscribe to, and why. Enjoy!
THIS YEAR, FOR THE FIRST TIME, we have an amazing challenge grant of $50,000 from a small group of generous members to inspire new and increased donations to the Annual Appeal. Every new contribution we receive will be doubled, and every increased donation will be matched.

The Annual Appeal Fund supports our diverse community in several ways. It enables us to offer membership to anyone who wants to join us, with a contribution that is feasible. In addition, through this fund we offer scholarships for BENS, Kadima, Camp Kee Tov, our congregational retreat (Shabbaton) and other synagogue programs. This year we will award $125,000 in scholarship money, benefiting over 170 children and making our other synagogue programs. This year we will award $125,000 in scholarship money, benefiting over 170 children and making our other synagogue programs.

Every donation, no matter what amount, is meaningful and valued. If you are giving for the first time and donate $18, Beth El will receive $36. If last year you gave a donation of $100, and this year give $200, Beth El will receive $300.

As a result of the Annual Appeal, we are able to study, celebrate and pray with an incredibly diverse community. We believe that helping our community welcome everyone makes it a better place for all of us. Please help meet this challenge grant and support our congregation with a gift to the Annual Appeal. Thank you!

Our operating budget is largely funded by membership contributions and program fees, but we absolutely depend on the Annual Appeal to balance our budget.

Thank you!
Remember Beth El in Your Will or Estate

by Ruth Ehrenkrantz, Director of Development

OUR SYNAGOGUE REFLECTS the vibrancy of our congregation. On Saturdays several hundred people walk through our doors for services, Torah study and our family education program, Chug Mishpacha. Weekday mornings you can watch three- and four-year-olds run up to our doors, eager to begin their day in BENS. On a weekday afternoon, many children enter our doors for Kadima, our youth education program. Adults enjoy a diverse set of education offerings each week. Camp Kee Tov provides an impressive Jewish camp experience for more than 1,000 children, teens and young adult counselors every summer.

The Shabbaton retreat celebrates our multigenerational community as we make new friends and reconnect with old ones. We care for each other in good times and bad.

For the past six years our synagogue has had a balanced budget. Our current financial situation is stable. This year, congregational leadership is planning for our community’s financial future by launching the L’Dor Vador (From Generation to Generation) Circle, creating an endowment to help support our community in perpetuity. Members who make a gift or bequest in their will or estate plan join this circle of donors.

The underlying principle of this effort is the collective provision of financial resources for future generations of our members. In the Shabbat liturgy there is an exclamation of joy: “Ma Yafe Yerushateinu” — How beautiful [is] our legacy! It is our hope that the beauty of our legacy will be enhanced in the future as we increase the engaged and tightly-knit feeling of future Beth El generations. If we all give what we can, our collective legacy will be beautiful.

If you have already made a planned gift, but have not yet informed us, please do so. Soon afterward, you will receive a letter welcoming you into the L’Dor Vador Legacy Circle. We will begin thanking these donors publicly at a recognition ceremony and thank-you event in 5775 and on an annual basis thereafter. If you have questions about legacy giving, please contact me (ruth@bethelberkeley.org) or Paul Sugarman (president@bethelberkeley.org). We look forward to having a conversation with you.

Congregation Beth El’s Planned Giving

We gratefully acknowledge these members of Congregation Beth El’s newly formed L’Dor Vador (From Generation to Generation) Legacy Circle, who have made a planned gift in their wills or estates for the congregation’s future:

Max* and Odette Blachman
Martin and Jill Dodd
David* and Dorothy* Golner
Barry and Erica Goode
John Hartog
Rabbi Yoel Kahn and Dan Bellm
Patrick Kennedy and Julie Matof Kennedy

Max* and Dorothy* Golner
Barry and Erica Goode
John Hartog
Rabbi Yoel Kahn and Dan Bellm
Patrick Kennedy and Julie Matof Kennedy

*Of blessed memory

If you have provided for the Congregation with a bequest in your will or estate plan but have not yet informed us, please let us know by contacting Norm Frankel, Beth El’s Executive Director. We welcome the opportunity to thank and acknowledge you.

Donate to Beth El!

It is a Jewish tradition to give tzedakah to commemorate life cycle events and other occasions. Are you celebrating a birthday, engagement, anniversary, baby naming, bat/bar mitzvah or recovery from an illness? These are just a few ideas of appropriate times to commemorate with a donation to Beth El. These tax-deductible donations are greatly appreciated and are a vital financial supplement to support the wonderful variety of programs and activities that we offer at Congregation Beth El.

Please make checks payable to Congregation Beth El and mail to 1301 Oxford Street, Berkeley, CA 94709 or visit bethelberkeley.org/give/donate.

This contribution of $ _________ is
☐ in memory of ☐ in honor of

☐ General Fund — Use Where Most Needed
☐ Aaron Plishner Children’s Library
☐ Allan and Tybil Smith Kahn Memorial Fund
☐ Arjmand Adult Education Fund
☐ Building Fund
☐ Camp Kee Tov Scholarship Fund
☐ Chevra Kadisha Fund
☐ David Cotton Memorial Swig Fund
☐ Homeless Meal Program
☐ Israel Scholarship Fund
☐ Bar Lev Landscape Fund
☐ Marjorie Magid Memorial Fund
☐ Men’s Club
☐ Mitzvah Committee
☐ Music Fund
☐ Nursery School Fund
☐ Oneg/Kiddush Fund
☐ Prayerbook Fund
☐ Project Nechama Fund
☐ Rabbinic’s Discretionary Fund
☐ Rabbi Emeritus Raj’s Discretionary Fund
☐ Rabbi Vida Library Fund
☐ Social Action Fund
☐ Youth and Family Education Fund
☐ Youth Group Fund

Contribution: __________________________

Acknowledge: __________________________

From: ________________________________

To: _________________________________

Address 1: ___________________________

Address 2: ___________________________

Thank you for your support!
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<th>SUNDAY</th>
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</table>
| 1       | 9:00 am BENS Parent Cafe  
2:00 pm Library Committee | 2       | 7:00 pm Ritual Committee Meeting | 3       | 5:00 pm Parent-Child Hebrew  
6:00 pm Adult B’nei Mitzvah Rehearsal  
6:30 pm BENS Chanukah Craft Night  
7:30 pm Lehrhaus’ Intro to the Jewish Experience  
7:30 pm Midrasha Board Meeting | 4       | 7:00 pm Israel Committee  
2:30 pm Life Stories | 5       | 5:00 pm Talmud Class  
5:00 pm Tot Shabbat Yafe  
5:30 pm Shabbat Yafe Community Dinner  
6:15 pm Shabbat Yafe Evening Service  
7:00 pm Oneg & Activity | 6       | 8:30 am Early Minyan  
9:15 am Torah Study  
9:30 am Chug Mishpacha  
10:15 am Shabbat Service: Adult B’nei Mitzvah  
6:00 pm Beth El Chanukah Bazaar Preview  
“Sababa Limos and Latkes”  
6:00 pm  
6:30 pm Movie Night: “Dancing in Jaffa” | 7       | 9:15 am Roots and Branches  
10:00 am Beth El Chanukah Bazaar  
10:00 am Yitzhak Rabin Exhibit  
3:00 pm Lehrhaus: Beginner Hebrew  
4:00 pm Ruach! Chanukah event  
4:00 pm Yitzhak Rabin Reception  
4:35 pm Lehrhaus: Intermediate Hebrew  
6:05 pm Lehrhaus: Advanced Hebrew | 8       | 2:00 pm Library Committee | 9       | 6:15 pm B’nei Mitzvah Parent Meeting  
7:30 pm BENS Parent Workshop: Chanukah How-To  
7:30 pm Executive Committee Meeting | 10      | BENS Closed: Parent/Teacher Conferences  
5:00 pm Parent-Child Hebrew  
7:30 pm Lehrhaus’ Intro to the Jewish Experience | 11      | 12:00 pm Lunch & Learn: Global Anti-Semitism with Seth Brysk  
6:15 pm Sababa Board Meeting | 12      | 5:00 pm Talmud Class  
5:30 pm BENS Gan Galim Family Shabbat Dinner  
6:15 pm Shabbat Evening Service | 13      | 8:30 am Early Minyan  
9:15 am Torah Study  
9:30 am Chug Mishpacha  
10:15 am Shabbat Service: Adult B’nei Mitzvah | 14      | 9:15 am Roots and Branches | 15      | 2:00 pm Library Committee | 16      | Erev Chanukah  
6:30 pm Beth El Band Rehearsal  
7:00 pm Board of Directors | 17      | Chanukah I  
5:00 pm Parent-Child Hebrew  
7:30 pm Lehrhaus’ Intro to the Jewish Experience | 18      | Chanukah II  
2:30 pm Life Stories  
5:40 pm Kadima, Chanukah Lighting  
7:00 pm People of the Book  
8:00 pm Rosh Chodesh Group | 19      | Chanukah III  
12:30 pm BENS All-School Shabbat  
5:00 pm Talmud Class  
5:30 pm Latkefest  
6:15 pm CKT Reunion Shabbat  
6:15 pm Yismechu Shabbat Evening Service  
6:45 pm Shabbat Oneg  
7:00 pm CKT Staff Dinner | 20      | Chanukah IV  
No Chug Mishpacha  
8:30 am Early Minyan  
9:15 am Torah Study  
10:15 am Shabbat Service | 21      | Chanukah V  
No Midrasha  
2:00 pm Homeless Meal: Medical Clinic  
5:00 pm Homeless Meal | 22      | Chanukah VI  
WINTER BREAK  
2:00 pm Library Committee | 23      | Chanukah VII  
WINTER BREAK  
No Kadima | 24      | Chanukah VIII  
WINTER BREAK  
No Kadima  
3:30 pm BENS & Office Closes  
5:00 pm No Parent-Child Hebrew | 25      | WINTER BREAK  
BENS & Office Closed  
4:00 pm No Kadima | 26      | WINTER BREAK  
BENS & Office Closed  
5:00 pm Talmud Class  
6:15 pm Shabbat Evening Service | 27      | No Chug Mishpacha  
8:30 am Early Minyan  
8:45 am Shabbat B’Yachad  
9:15 am Torah Study  
11:00 am Oneg in honor of Eigner Anniversary & Baby Naming |
### JANUARY 2015 · TEVET–SH’VAT 5775

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<th>SUNDAY</th>
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<td>7:00 pm Board of Directors</td>
<td>6:00 pm 5th Grade B’nai Mitzvah Date Selection Family Meeting</td>
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### Register for Camp Kee Tov 2015

Summer 2015 registration opens for Beth El members on Monday, December 1 at www.campkeetov.org.

Session 1: June 22–July 17
Session 2: July 27–August 21

Beth El members have exclusive opportunities to register from December 1–16. General registration opens December 17. All registration is on a first-come, first-served basis.
Like most retail businesses, the Beth El Gift Shop relies on the fourth quarter of the year to fulfill its annual projections. In our case, we’ve added the mitzvah of supporting the synagogue to our shop’s mission, so we are grateful for your shopping loyalty. Please think of the Gift Shop first when you need a teacher gift, hostess present or other token of appreciation during the winter months. From a pair of Israeli-made candle tapers or trivets to fair trade scarves and handbags, we have something for every gifting need. Come see us first!

The timing of the Chanukah Bazaar this year on **Sunday, December 7 (11:00 am to 4:30 pm)**, improves our chances for a top earning season over last year when we had Chanukah and Thanksgiving together. This year the first night of Chanukah will fall on December 16, allowing the bazaar to comfortably offer the broadest variety of merchandise we have ever displayed and featuring extended shopping hours for your convenience well after the Thanksgiving madness.

Besides menorahs, candles, dreidels and gelt, we have tapped a number of new vendors for original, artistic ritual objects as well as secular gifts appropriate for all age groups. Some of our fair trade items have a Judaica motif and are reasonably priced to boot! Our selection of games and puzzles are good brain teasers. Greeting cards and gift paper remain very good sellers. We have added some new models to our popular mezzuzot and our elegant jewelry includes some brand-new Roman glass pieces from Israel.

We can’t mention all the surprises we have in store, but we know that you will have a pleasant shopping experience! Bring your family and friends and stay for the latke lunch, gourmet coffee and cookies. Members attending movie night on Saturday evening (December 6) will have a preview opportunity during a short break. So mark your calendars and see you at the Chanukah Bazaar!

—Odette and Robinn · giftshop@bethelberkeley.org; 510-848-3988