

"Honoring Tradition, Celebrating Diversity, and Building a Jewish Future"

# THE BUILDER



## HIGHLIGHTS

### DECEMBER

#### Supper and Cinema

Saturday, December 1 at 6:30 pm in the Beit Midrash, plus an early peek at the Gift Shop's Chanukah Bazaar decorations and gifts.

#### Chanukah Bazaar

Sunday, December 2 from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm in the Social Hall. Chanukah goodies, special family program, plus a latke lunch and gourmet coffee bar.

#### Chanukah Celebrations

December 8 to 15. Holiday recipes and website resources are available on pages 6, 16 and 17. Also included are descriptions of services and other events such as members' open houses.

#### Chavurah Kick-off Party

Sunday, December 9 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm in the Beit Midrash. Sign up for one of these small groups that foster community in a more intimate setting. See page 17.

#### Chanukah Latkefest

Friday, December 14 in the Social Hall. Cost is \$10 in advance, \$15 at the door. The evening begins with music by Isaac Zones at 5:30 pm. See page 16.

### JANUARY

**January 4 and 5** – Scholar-in-Residence Professor Melila Hellner-Eshed of Hebrew University of Jerusalem will conduct several Torah study sessions at Beth El during Shabbat. Pages 2 and 16 have the details.

**Monday, January 7** – Oral and Written History program for Beth Elders (55 and Better!) with four sessions and a professional consultant. Refer to page 14.

**Sunday, January 26** – Tu B'shevat, the new year of the trees, with a party for 4th and 5th graders and a multigenerational celebration from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm. A special Seder will be held that evening at 6:00 pm to honor Judaism's important connection to the environment. Make your Seder reservations (\$18) by January 18 at the front office. See page 16.

### FEB.

**Saturday, February 2** – Rendezvous at the Beth El "Corral" for our annual Gala. More details about this Western-themed event with an auction on page 15. The "Chai Noon" proceeds benefit YAFE programs.

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FROM THE RABBI

# FROM GENESIS TO EXODUS: READING OURSELVES INTO THE STORY

With Professor Melila Hellner-Eshed, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

## January 4 and 5 – Shabbat Shemot

I AM DELIGHTED TO ANNOUNCE that distinguished teacher and author Melila Hellner-Eshed will be our first Allan and Tybil Smith Kahn Scholar-in-Residence on Shabbat Shemot, January 4 and 5. A professor of Jewish Mysticism and Zohar in the Department of Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Hellner-Eshed is a leader in the renaissance of study of Jewish texts by Israeli adults, regardless of background or religious commitment.

At the beginning of the Book of Exodus, the Jewish people become enslaved in the land of *Mitzrayim* (Egypt). Over the course of two sessions, Prof. Hellner-Eshed will lead us on a journey from the Bible's terrain to the depths of the *Midrash* (later rabbinic commentaries) to the mysteries of the *Zohar* and the Jewish mystical tradition, exploring the question of how the children of Israel entered into the state of enslavement. This inquiry into how prior generations of Jews have read (and read into) this story will, in turn, be an opening to an exploration of our own understanding of the process of enslavement and, we hope, liberation.

Our Scholar-in-Residence Shabbat will begin on Friday evening, January 4, with Shabbat evening services at 6:15 pm followed by a catered Shabbat dinner. Prof. Hellner-Eshed's first program, focusing on biblical and midrashic sources, will begin at 8:00 pm. On Saturday morning, following an Early Morning Minyan with a Torah reading, Prof. Hellner-Eshed will be our Torah study teacher, beginning at 10:30 am. A bagel breakfast will be available all morning.

Our program will conclude on Saturday afternoon at a wine-and-cheese reception at the home of Jim Gilbert and Susan Orbuch, beginning at 5:30 pm. Prof. Hellner-Eshed will speak about her work in the Sulha, an Israeli-Palestinian mediation and reconciliation project. The program will conclude with *Havdallah*.

Please note: Advance reservations are needed for the Shabbat dinner only; the programs and reception are open to the community without cost. Please visit [www.bethelberkeley.org](http://www.bethelberkeley.org) for more information, to sign up for dinner or to make a contribution.

Melila Hellner-Eshed received her doctorate at Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where she now serves as Professor of Jewish Mysticism and Zohar. She is a senior research fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute and, in the United States, serves as a faculty member of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality. In Israel, she founded and currently directs and teaches a weekly program for rabbinic students from all denominations studying in Israel; she also teaches and works with Jewish communities in North America, Europe and the former Soviet Union. Her book, *A River Flows from Eden: The Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*, was published by Stanford University Press in 2009.

I hope you will join me for the inauguration of a wonderful new Beth El tradition at this joyful Shabbat of learning.

Rabbi Yoel Kahn

The Allan and Tybil Smith Kahn Scholar-in-Residence Fund was established after the death of Rabbi Yoel Kahn's mother, Tybil Smith Kahn in May 2012. The Allan and Tybil Smith Kahn Scholar-in-Residence Fund was established by their children to honor the memory of their parents, life-long supporters of learning and the Jewish community, to perpetuate the values most precious to them. We are honored to welcome Prof. Hellner-Eshed as the first Kahn Family Scholar-in-Residence at Beth El.

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### Nursery School Office

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# BERGTRAUNS BRING DESIGN TO REALITY AT BETH EL

by Elisabeth Wechsler

WHAT'S THE LINK BETWEEN CONGREGATION BETH EL DESIGN, local Boy Scouts and a 16th century synagogue in Italy? The answer is Alex and Michelle Bergtraun, who were married at the Casale Monferrato Synagogue in northern Italy and who have volunteered their expertise to Beth El's ongoing design projects. These have also included participation from the local Boy Scouts. (See sidebar article on this page.)

Alex joined an architecture studio, Berkeley Design Advocates, in Emeryville in 1988. He served as the local architect working with the large architectural firm M.R.Y. from Los Angeles throughout Beth El's construction, and "immediately formed the House Committee." The committee is in charge of ongoing maintenance and design work necessary to fulfill the architectural plan not completed when Beth El's building was constructed in 2005.

As funds come in, Beth El projects such as landscaping, shelving, lighting, signage and artwork are completed. "Anything left out of the original construction project for lack of funds" is a candidate for completion, he said. The vision of the House

Committee is to make Beth El a home for everyone "as long as people don't feel its okay to put tape on the walls..." Alex joked. Alex is also involved in a project with UC Berkeley and Berkeley Design Advocates to revitalize Telegraph Avenue. Michelle works full time with Alex running Studio Bergtraun, AIA, Architects. Berkeley Design Advocates is a group of volunteer planners, architects and designers who promote planning and design in Berkeley. Alex is just one of the many volunteer architects, and is on the Steering Committee of the group.



## BOY SCOUTS DONATE HARD WORK TO BETH EL

Alex and Michelle Bergtraun, long-time members of Congregation Beth El, recently have been recruiting Boy Scouts through their older son, Asher, 18, to build the garden and several other projects at the synagogue. Their younger son, Ruben, 12, is in the same Boy Scout Troop (6); he will become a Bar Mitzvah in March.

Currently, these Boy Scouts are donating their time and hard work to building the Beth El garden. Michael Long is the Boy Scout in charge of the fence part of the project. Yang Ren is the Scout overseeing the team building the raised planter boxes inside the garden. The boys are candidates for Eagle Scout and are members of Asher's Scout Council. (Most of the scouts' families are not members of Beth El.)

The garden will augment Youth and Family Education (YAFE) programs at Beth El, such as Tu B'shevat, and other nature-oriented Jewish holidays, explained Michelle. "This is one way to build community," she added.

Last winter, Asher's Eagle Scout project was building the Beth El gaga pit, which is now a great place for kids to play. Noah Marthinsen, son of members Emily and Bill Marthinsen, restored the south bank of the creek as his Eagle Scout project in 2005. Noah has since made *aliyah* to Israel (For his story, see page 8).

In January, Joseph Belman will be gearing up to build a new fence along Beth El's northern property line parallel to Berryman Path. The fence will be 270 linear feet and Beth El will pay for the materials with 20 to 30 Boy Scouts contributing their labor.

The next big project for Michelle is chairing the Supper & Schmooze event on Saturday, April 13. In the past this extravaganza was a fund-raiser, but this year it is re-envisioned as a community-building event. At press time, she was still looking for a volunteer to be her co-chair.

The format is the same as last year, in which a group of volunteer hosts provide the dinner and guest congregants are secretly assigned so that they don't know who else is going to the same house until they arrive. "We're hoping that a lot of younger members will get involved and discover commonality with others at their table," Michelle said, adding that babysitting will be provided for the evening, if needed.

The event will begin with Havdalah and munchies at Beth El, followed by the assignment for the rest of the evening. The secrecy is intentional: not only is it fun but the idea is to mix with new people you wouldn't necessarily meet otherwise.

**BERGTRAUNS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 11**



FROM THE PRESIDENT

# BUILDING A STRONG COMMUNITY COMBATS LONELINESS

*We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted.  
We need one another when we are in trouble and afraid.  
We need one another when we are in despair, and need encouragement to rise again.  
We need one another when we would accomplish some great purpose and cannot do it alone.*

THE TRUTH OF THESE WORDS FROM OUR LITURGY for a house of mourning was brought home to me repeatedly over the past couple weeks. I thought about how Beth El congregants showed up in large numbers to support two congregants who had lost loved ones. The mourning families have told me how important it was that people were there – not via email, not via Skype but in person. Those words played in my head when a member stopped me after services on Saturday to tell me how lonely she was now that her children had moved out, gotten married and started their own families. She needed to make new connections. Just as important, those words remind us that we also come together during times of celebration. Almost every weekend, I get to spend time with a couple hundred people as we welcome the latest adult member of the Jewish community at a Bar or Bat Mitzvah service. At Beth El, we come together to learn at Rabbi Kahn’s classes and at Torah Study, and we sing together in Rabbi Zellman’s chorus. Our children come here to learn, to play and to make friends. Everywhere you look at Beth El, you are reminded of how wonderful it is to be part of a strong community.

Contrast that with the recent news identifying the growing epidemic of loneliness in this country. A 2010 AARP survey found that 35% of adults older than 45 were chronically lonely, as opposed to 20% of a similar group just one decade earlier. Another study showed that roughly 20% of all Americans were

chronically unhappy because of loneliness. Meanwhile, in 1985 only 1 in 10 Americans said they had no personal confidants; by 2004 that number had increased to 1 in 4. All of this in the age of Facebook, Twitter, Skype, cell phones, instant messaging and all the other trappings of an always connected society. It appears that we are creating a greater number of increasingly shallow relationships.

The trend towards loneliness not only affects our mental well-being but impacts our physical health, as well. According to John Cacioppo, co-author of the book *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection*, “Lonely adults consume more alcohol and get less exercise than those who are not lonely. Their diet is higher in fat, their sleep less efficient, and they report more daytime fatigue. Loneliness also disrupts the regulation of cellular processes deep within the body, predisposing us to pre-mature aging.” Studies show that lonely people die earlier, lose capability more quickly and experience significantly lower quality of life.

One of the most critical missions at Beth El is to combat the rising tide of loneliness. Not just through our clerical counseling programs but through our opportunities to get together when we need each other. Beth El is a place to learn, to celebrate and to commiserate with friends. It is a place to make new friends and spend time with old friends. Our community is here during those times when we need each other most.

We pass down the gift of community to our children, as well. Every Tuesday and Thursday, I see our Youth and Family Education students doing projects in class, learning about Judaism, singing in the sanctuary or playing gaga and basketball together. On Saturday, whole families come together for Chug Mishpacha. I have heard from many teens that Midrasha provides a community of friends to hang out with in the small city that is Berkeley High School. Friendships that start in kindergarten or at Camp Kee Tov can last a lifetime. Studies, including the recently completed European Social Survey, have repeatedly shown that people who regularly attend religious institutions and who participate in community activities are healthier and report higher levels of happiness. And we as a community make that happen here at Beth El. If you regularly attend events or programs at Beth El, I want to thank you for helping to build this great community. If you have not yet had the opportunity to “plug-in,” please come and introduce yourself! We would love to get to know you. You will find in the pages of *The Builder* and on our website a wide variety of programs, worship services, volunteer opportunities, *Chavurot* (friendship groups) and other ways to become an active participant in the Beth El community.

Dan Magid  
President, Board of Directors

## WARM CLOTHES NEEDED FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN’S CENTER

by Mary Jacobs

The Women’s Daytime Center on Acton Street in West Berkeley needs warm clothes for its guests this winter. Please collect any gently used coats, boots, gloves, hats, scarves, as well as heavy pants, shirts, socks and sneakers for women and children, and attach a note “for Mary J” on them. Place items in the Homeless Meal green and red bins in the upper education wing of Congregation Beth El, and I will take them to the Center. Because they receive a lot of very young children’s clothes, the Center is hoping to obtain donated items for ages 4 to 12 in time for Christmas. The Center serves lunch on weekdays for about 30 women and their children, helps them find housing and provides support groups. There is a staffed children’s playroom for toddlers and space for older children during school vacations. I started working at the Center in October – I make lunch three Fridays a month. If you have any questions, please contact me at [maryjacobs7@comcast.net](mailto:maryjacobs7@comcast.net).



## JEWISH EDUCATION: OUR VISION

by Debra Sagan Massey, RJE, Director of Education

WHAT IS YAFE? Yes, the letters spell out the word for beautiful in Hebrew “yafeh”, and they stand for “Youth and Family Education.” But what are we truly aiming to do at Beth El with our education programs? What can you expect when you enroll in our Nursery School, Kadima, Camp Kee Tov, our youth groups or Chug Mishpacha, our Shabbat family school? At Beth El, we aim to create positively identified Jews. We want our students to be excited about being Jewish and to have **fun** with other Jewish kids. It is incredibly important that parents feel connected too – either through learning about what their children are doing, participating in a workshop, or learning more about Judaism through our family school. At Beth El, we believe in life-long learning. We hope that parents will serve as models that we can all learn more about Judaism throughout our lives. Coming to our YAFE programs is a first step towards a lifetime of enriched Jewish living.

We are always reflecting on how we can improve the work we do in our YAFE programs. We invite you to get involved through our YAFE Committee and help us to shape the vision for our educational programs. We meet three times a year and are eager to have new voices and ideas. For more information, please contact me directly at: [debra@bethelberkeley.org](mailto:debra@bethelberkeley.org)

L'shalom,  
Debra

### Ode to the Wooden Soldier

By Esther Simon

I wish I was a wooden soldier,  
Least then I couldn't cry,  
I'd watch with carved out wooden eyes,  
as everybody dies.

I'd never have to use my legs,  
decide which path I tread,  
for children's hands would pick me up,  
and move me 'round instead.

My heart would never beat again,  
From my lips would slip no sigh,  
For as you know of wooden toys,  
there's naught but wood inside.

But best of all, a wooden soldier never feels pain,  
he gets knocked down,  
and picked back up,  
then the game begins again.

SCRIBES OF BETH EL

## YOUTH GROUPS

### SABABA UPCOMING EVENTS

6th-8th Grade Youth Group

#### December 8

Limos & Latkes with BBYO Connect, 6:00 pm to 9:30 pm

#### December 14-15

Overnight at Beth El

December 14 at 7:00 pm to December 15 at 11:30 am.

### RUACH UPCOMING EVENTS

4th-5th Grade Youth Group

#### December 9

Ruach Chanukah Party, 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm

#### January 26

Ruach Tu B'shevat Birthday Party for the Trees  
3:00 pm to 5:00 pm

### BETH EL TEEN BAND

8th-12th grade band led by Isaac Zones

*All musicians are welcome to join our stellar group!*

*Everyone is invited to experience Band Shabbat.*

### Rehearsal

January 10, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

January 24, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

### Band Shabbat

December 14 7:30 pm to 10:00 pm

January 11, 7:30 pm to 10:00 pm

*This innovative program has been made possible by a generous three-year pledge by Fred & Ila Rothenberg, parents of Beth El member David Rothenberg in memory of their son, Steven Rothenberg, David's brother.*

More details in upcoming e-Updates. Feel free to contact Rebecca DePalma, [rebecca@bethelberkeley.org](mailto:rebecca@bethelberkeley.org), 510-848-2122 ext. 214 if you have any questions or concerns.

### SCRIBES OF BETH EL

8th-12th Grade Writers' Group

8th-12th graders can come to work on their short fiction (maximum five pages) or poetry (maximum 500 words).

Meetings are weekly on Wednesdays 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm. Note: Closed for Winter Break on December 19, 26 and January 2.

Our fall literary magazine is coming out on **December 14.**

## RECIPES FOR CHANUKAH

by Ruth Spear

CHANUKAH COOKING IS ABOUT using all that fat in celebration of the oil that was supposed to last for one day but lasted for eight days when the Maccabees reconsecrated the Temple. In this country, the usual fried food for Chanukah is the potato latke served with sour cream and/or applesauce. In Israel, doughnuts are very popular. Here are recipes for both.

This year, *Cooks Illustrated* magazine looked at latkes and made some improvements: wring as much water out of the grated potatoes as possible and briefly microwave the potatoes to get even more water out of them. The magazine agrees that you can make them ahead and even freeze them and still have a good latke. This is modified from their recipe.

### Ingredients for Latkes

2 pounds russet potatoes, unpeeled, scrubbed and shredded  
 1/2 cup grated onion  
 Salt and pepper  
 2 large eggs, lightly beaten  
 2 teaspoons minced fresh parsley  
 2 tablespoons flour, matzo meal or potato starch  
 Vegetable oil

### Instructions for Latkes

Mix potatoes, onion, and 1 teaspoon salt in bowl. Place half of potato mixture in center of a clean dishtowel. Twist tightly to drain as much liquid as possible. Put the potato mixture in a microwave safe bowl.

Cover potato mixture and microwave until just warmed through but not hot, 1 to 2 minutes, stirring mixture with fork every 30 seconds. Spread potato mixture evenly over rimmed baking sheet and let cool for 10 minutes.

Return cooled potato mixture to bowl and add eggs, parsley, 1/4 teaspoon pepper, and flour or matzo meal.

Heat 1/4-inch depth of oil in 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering but not smoking (350 degrees). Place 1/4-cup mound of potato mixture in oil and press with nonstick spatula into 1/3 inch-thick disk. Repeat until 5 latkes are in pan. Cook, adjusting heat so fat bubbles around latke edges, until golden brown on bottom, about 3 minutes. Turn and continue cooking until golden brown on second side, about 3 minutes longer. Drain on paper towels. Put finished latkes in low oven while cooking the rest. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve immediately. Serve with applesauce and sour cream.

Here is a recipe for *soofganiot* (doughnuts) that I got from Beth El's religious school cookbook a long time ago. This is easy to make and they taste like New Orleans beignets.

### Ingredients for Soofganiyot (doughnuts)

3 c. flour  
 2 tsp. baking powder  
 2 T. sugar

2 eggs  
 2 c. plain yogurt  
 Oil for deep-frying

Jam (optional)  
 Powdered sugar (my daughter would say not optional)

### Instructions for Soofganiyot

Mix all the ingredients except the oil, jam and powdered sugar. Deep fry one tablespoon of batter per *soofganiyah*. Fill with jam and/or dust with powdered sugar and serve hot.

### THE CHALLAH-BAKING EVENT

by Barbara Segal (poet and head baker!)

It was right before the New Year and almost time for fall...  
 When at Beth El's kitchen, they arrived, short and tall.

The counters were covered with flour, all around;  
 And there was even some of that white stuff sprinkled on the ground.

What caused all these people to gather here to bake?  
 What were they all thinking that they could make?

It was time to create challah from a recipe tried and true...  
 While we schmoozed, kneaded and watched the dough as it grew!

Unique loaves were fashioned by hand...  
 Some round, others braided; all very grand!

It was a lively event sponsored by the Women of Beth El;  
 And each participant went home with a challah, some freshly-made dough and the right to kvell!!

### IMPORTANT WORDS FOR CHANUKAH

Chanukah - Literally: dedication.

Chanukat *HaBayit* - Literally: dedication of the house.

Ceremonial hanging of the mezuzah.

Menorah - Seven or eight-branched candelabra. Often used to refer to the eight-branched Chanukah lamp.

Chanukiah - Eight-branched Chanukah lamp or menorah.

Gelt - Yiddish word for "money"; given as a Chanukah present, used for playing dreidel.

Dreidel - Yiddish for "top"; used in Chanukah game. Known in Hebrew as *sevivon*.

*Nes Gadol Hayah Sham* - Literally: "A great miracle happened there." First letters of these four words are found on the dreidel.

Latke - Yiddish word for "pancake." Potato latkes are traditionally eaten on Chanukah.

### CHANUKAH RESOURCES

Here are some informative resources about celebrating Chanukah. Enjoy a Chanukah season filled with light!

Light the virtual Menorah and learn all about Chanukah at the Union for Reform Judaism's website, [www.urj.org](http://www.urj.org). The Chanukah blessings are available for each night of the holiday. You can sing along or practice reciting the blessings, too. The Chanukah page at [InterfaithFamily.com](http://InterfaithFamily.com) has materials, recipes, games and resources for all families, as well as specific ideas for how interfaith families may choose to navigate through the holiday season.

# HANG GLIDING BRINGS TALMUD STUDENT CLOSER TO GOD

by Elisabeth Wechsler

WHEN BARRY LEVINE MAKES A PRESENTATION to Congregation Beth El's Torah Study group, he lugs one or two Talmud tractates with him as references. Studying Talmud has helped Barry understand the subtleties of Jewish law, and when he glides above the treetops with a hang glider, he feels closer to God, as well.

As an instructor for the Berkeley Hang Gliding Club, Barry teaches new members each fall about aerodynamics and meteorology in eight lectures before hands-on practice can begin. He demonstrates how to assemble the equipment, the proper way to launch and the safe way to land in an open field. If people aren't careful, they can break an arm on landing, Barry cautions.

Barry studied Talmud with two rabbis associated with Beth El some years ago. He noted that much of the Talmud is now available online and in English, thanks to the life work of Aidin Steinsaltz. Barry also studied at the Berkeley chapter of Chabad but he found its approach very "foreign."

A regular at Torah Study for 18 years, Barry's religious practice also consists of attending Friday night services and the Early Morning Minyan before Torah Study.



"I usually learn something about the text presented at Torah Study, but I always learn something about the presenter," he said. Barry also attends the main Saturday service from time to time.

Barry was raised in Westchester County outside New York City in a "high reform synagogue," he said, adding that it had a choir loft and an organ, because the prevailing

feeling was that "Jews are just like everyone else," that is, like mainstream Protestants. Shabbat was even temporarily celebrated on Sunday (before his time) and yarmulkes were also discouraged.

As a chemistry major, Barry did his undergraduate work at Harvard University and studied for his doctorate at Stanford University. He worked for a decade as a medical chemist in New Jersey at Sandoz, which became part of Novartis International. Then, he returned to California as associate research professor at Loma Linda School of Medicine in San Bernardino County. After leaving academia, Barry worked again as a medical chemist, first at Onyx Pharmaceuticals in South San Francisco for two years, and then for 10 years at Chiron Corporation, which was recently acquired by Novartis, in Emeryville. In 2007, he



was laid off and hasn't worked professionally since.

He has a sizable (30 ft. diameter) garden in the back of his rental house in Lafayette and spends "easily 25 hours a week" working in it during the peak growing season. His main adversaries there are deer, gophers and squirrels.

Barry also writes Letters to the Editor of the *New York Times* about "our crumbling democracy" and has had a number of them published. Here is a recent letter of his about the drone killing of Anwar al-Awlaki, a radical Muslim cleric and American citizen, in Yemen last September that was published by the *New York Times*. It expresses Barry's controversial views:

"To the Editor:

Anwar al-Awlaki was an American citizen, with constitutional guarantees of due process of law. Indeed, if our courts were empowered to strip any of us of citizenship, all our 'rights' would be merely boons granted at the courts' pleasure. Unless he walked into a U.S. courthouse or embassy to renounce his citizenship, U.S. law permits only one scenario in which he would not be entitled to a full trial (whether in person or in absentia). Our statute provides that we can infer that one has renounced U.S. citizenship by: 'serving in the armed forces of a foreign state if such armed forces are engaged in hostilities against the United States.' Name that state and show that al-Awlaki served in armed forces, and you have a case for denying him a trial. Until then, he's a murder victim.

Barry Haskell Levine"

# NOAH MARTHINSEN: MY ALIYAH TO ISRAEL IN 2011

WHEN I WAS INITIALLY ASKED TO WRITE a short description of my aliyah for the Beth El community, I was at a bit of a loss. To describe the last 14 months of living in Israel in 400 words is, to say the least, a challenge. I have so many stories, observations and commentary, on such a diverse range of topics, that even picking the direction of this article is tough.

- Do I focus on the initial culture shock I experienced in the first months while living on a kibbutz and studying Hebrew six days a week?
- Do I complain about the bureaucratic nightmare of registering as a new immigrant at various government ministries or navigating the healthcare system or opening a bank account?
- Do I talk about the complete Jewishness of this place: how everything stops for Shabbat? How Sukkahs sprout up everywhere during the High Holy Days? How I walk home from the beach a few feet behind ultra-Orthodox men in impressive fur hats?
- Do I even try to explain the weird mixture of frustration, patriotic pride and excruciating boredom that has characterized my military service?

I decided that while I could write on any number of these topics, none of what I mentioned above has really defined my experience. *Aliyah* is a deeply personal decision that ultimately reflects the goals and values of the individual who decides to uproot and come here. In my case, the Zionist ideal that led me to “ascend” to Israel was the concept of making the desert bloom. Having just finished an agriculture



degree from UC Davis, I came here with purpose. I was going to live in the Negev and put my education to use in the country where cherry tomatoes and drip irrigation were born. As I tried to figure out what I was going to do, now that I was actually in Israel, I searched for a way that I could immediately follow my dreams even though many Israelis told me that the kind of Zionism that drove me simply did not exist anymore.

I ended up spending the few spare months I had before joining the Army living on a farm in the sand dunes near Egypt. Even though the bulk of the big Zionist pioneering projects occurred a good 70 years ago, I found a village where *Chaluzot* (Pioneering) and *Tzionut* (Zionism) were still the guiding principles. In Be'er Milka, residents built ecological houses out of mud, built greenhouses on the sand dunes, and pulled water out of an aquifer buried deep under their feet. The farm I lived and worked on was organic and grew an eclectic mix of table grapes, fruit trees and medicinal herbs that were sold at farmers' markets around the Negev. Our neighbors grew tomatoes and pomegranates that they exported to Europe. And all of it was literally being grown in the desert sand of Eretz Yisrael, powered by the drive and labor of modern

Israeli Zionists: Jewish pioneers, making the desert bloom with modern agricultural techniques and a lot of *Avodah Ivrit* (Jewish labor).

*Noah currently lives in Tel Aviv and serves in the Israeli Defense Force, Logistics Branch. He finished his*

*military service in November and will enroll for graduate studies in Desert Agriculture and Biotechnology at Ben Gurion University in the spring.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Your thoughts and opinions are important to us. If you have a subject of interest to the Congregation, write a letter or essay of a **maximum of 400 words** and submit it to: Editor, *The Builder*, emwechsler@earthlink.net by **December 20, 2012** for the February-March issue.

Letters and essays may be edited for length and at the discretion of the Editorial Advisory Board.

**No anonymous submissions will be accepted.**

## EDITORIAL STAFF OF THE BUILDER

Elisabeth Wechsler, **Editor**  
Jennifer Robinson, **Layout Design and Production**  
Margee Burch, **Coordinator**

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# JACOB ERICKSON: MY ALIYAH TO ISRAEL IN 2007

Our condolences to Jacob and the entire Erickson family on the passing of his father, Cliff Erickson, ז"ל, on November 19. This letter was written by Jacob in October. Y'hi zichrono liv-rachah. May his memory be for blessing.

MY NAME IS JACOB ERICKSON. I made aliyah to Israel on January 11, 2007. I think it was the best decision I have ever made. Initially, my parents (Clifton Erickson and Ellie Goldstein-Erickson) tried to talk me out of it, even offered bribes, but after being here I know they know I made the best decision for myself. I knew what they were thinking: my dad got most of his information about Israel from Fox News, and the last time my mother was in Israel, Jerusalem was divided.

My decision to move here was based on my *Taglit* (Birthright) trip and a six-month *ulpan* I did in central Israel. I had an amazing experience. I made more friends and had more amazing experiences in that time than in my life before. However, I know moving to Israel isn't for all Jewish youth.

Do *Taglit*, and take a longer trip before you make a decision. It is difficult here, but the support you get both officially and from the people you meet is astounding. After my *ulpan*, I moved to Tel Aviv and, within a few weeks, I was lucky enough to meet the woman who would become my wife and give me a whole new family.



**Rahel Ismailov (mother of the bride), Tanya Ismailov (sister of the bride), Kate Erickson (bride/wife), Jacob Erickson (groom), Eleanor Goldstein-Erickson (Jacob's mom), Clifton Erickson (Jacob Erickson's father), Yosef Ismailov (father of the bride) holding Stav Ismailov (niece), Jonathan Erickson (Jacob's brother), Shoshi Ismailov (bride's sister-in-law), Gabriel Ismailov (bride's brother)**

Also, after moving to Tel Aviv I served in the Israel Defense Force. While not a combat soldier, I still think it was an incredibly valuable and incredibly frustrating period that all who move or live here should do to acclimate themselves to life in this country.

Following the army service, I proposed to my wife and started to study again. My wedding, I can say without bias, was by far the most amazing and spectacular wedding ever. Videos can be seen on my Facebook page for proof. I owe that to my amazing family in the U.S. and now in Israel.

I'm in my last year of studying at the Inter-Disciplinary Center, a private college in Herzeliya, where I also joined the AEPi fraternity in its inaugural pledge class after establishing itself in Israel. The friends I have made are amazing and have further cemented my connection to Israel.

Work is abundant for immigrants; I myself have found success in my current job, and I am being promoted to office manager with a staff of about

20 employees in my department.

The mentality of living here and being Israeli will push someone to become a better person, both due to difficulties and friendships. I would highly suggest that all young Jews outside of Israel make some kind of connection with this country, even if you don't end up making Israel your home.

## LECTURE SERIES ON CONTEMPORARY ISRAELI SOCIETY

by Norm Frankel

The Israel Committee will present a three-part lecture series, "**Perspectives on Social Issues in Israel Today**," this winter. We have invited three local guest speakers to address a range of contemporary issues confronting Israeli society. This is an opportunity to learn more about issues of importance to Israel and the Jewish people beyond the usual discussion of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

**Each talk will begin at 7:30 pm  
in the Beit Midrash.**

The first lecture will be **Thursday, January 31**. Attorney Fred Hertz will present "**A Complicated Shade of Pink: Same-Sex Couples and the Law in Israel Today**." Fred will talk about gay rights, marriage and family issues in Israel.

Orli Bein of the New Israel Fund will speak on **Thursday, February 7**. Her topic will be "**From the Knesset to the Supreme Court: Israel's Democracy at a Crossroads**."

The final talk in the series will be **Thursday, February 21**. Rabbi Pam Frydman, Co-Founder and International Co-Chair of Rabbis for Women of the Wall, will speak about "**The Status of Non-Orthodox Judaism in Israel Today**."

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

### JENNIFER & SETH BRYSK

**The Brysk**s, who recently moved to Berkeley from Los Angeles, have three children: **Noa** (almost 7), **Adi** (4) and **Lev** (2). Adi and Lev are in the Beth El Nursery School (BENS), and Noa is at Washington Elementary School. Before they lived in L.A., Seth and Jenn lived in San Francisco for seven years. Jenn is the owner of Qute, a creative design firm for baby clothes, while Seth is regional director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), in San Francisco. Jenn is interested in helping with Camp Kee Tov, BENS and all types of social action. She is already on the committee to assist with the Gala, Beth El's annual fund-raiser in February. In the past, she has done development work for the Jewish Federation of San Francisco and the Jewish Home for the Aged. Seth previously was Director of the San Francisco chapter of Hillel and also hopes to be involved at Beth El. The Brysk family loves the outdoors, especially hiking all over the Bay Area with their dog.

### RUTH DUNHAM

**Ruth Dunham** moved to San Francisco from St. Louis, MO in 1964 and has lived in Berkeley for 47 years. Her interest in ancient Near Eastern history, and early Jewish history in particular, led her to begin attending Torah Study sessions in 2009. Ruth remembers coming to Beth El in the '70s with Sam and Betty Sherman, their son; Ruth's husband, Donald; and their son David. "The congregational singing, the communal nature of the services (members sharing the Bimah with the Rabbi, children at play outside in the yard on Arch Street), the opening and closing of the ark, Kol Nidre service, the cantor chanting, the Magid family front and center, and Stephanie Friedman singing..." Ruth's current interests are reading history, literature and non-fiction, seeing grandchildren, going to the theater and sewing. She enjoys walking, Yoga and volunteering at the Friends of the Berkeley Public Library. She also is in a "bridge for Seniors" class and a Berkeley Adult School film class. Among her other volunteer work is delivering meals to those confined to their homes. Ruth's professional career included working as a computer programmer analyst and as a librarian.

### DONNA FRIEDMAN MEIR & GADI MEIR

**Donna Friedman Meir** and **Gadi Meir** moved from Montclair, NJ in mid-August, to Piedmont although Gadi had previously lived in San Francisco for 15 years. Last year, the Meirs attended a Chug Mishpacha session and a children's service at Beth El and were "impressed by the intelligence, warmth and authenticity of the leaders as well as the members... We were also very fortunate, thanks to Elizabeth Branoff, an old friend, to attend the Shabbaton this year, which absolutely sold us..."



Watching everyone rocking out together...was exactly the kind of energy and spirit we were looking for," Donna said. With their children, **Ayla** (8) and **Joss** (5), they seek big adventures. "We love hiking, being in nature and visiting art galleries and museums. Gadi is a vice-president of Wells Fargo Bank, and Donna has her own company, Lemonade Creative Consulting, that helps build cross-media experiences for kids and families. She has worked for National Geographic, Warner Brothers and Nickelodeon, among others. Gadi has been involved in many Jewish causes including American Jewish World Service and JCRC of San Francisco. He is interested in helping with educational forums and social action projects at Beth El. Donna "loves to sing and would love to be involved in services in some way," she said, adding, "I'm also happy to help with creative education programs for kids."

### YUVAL & REUT GEZ

**Yuval and Reut Gez** moved to the Bay Area five months ago from Moshav Dor, Israel, a small place in the north next to the Mediterranean. It is very important for them as a family to maintain a Jewish life and for their daughter **Ori** (2) to have a Jewish education. "We would like to celebrate the Jewish holidays as we did in Israel,"

Yuval said. They chose Congregation Beth El because they received "a very warm recommendation from good friends who used to live in Berkeley, Michal and Daniel Bar," he said. The Gezes are very interested in outdoor activities, mainly taking short hikes in the surrounding area. "We are crazy about animals; we've already visited the Oakland zoo three times," Yuval said. Reut is a teacher for children with special



needs and has more than five years' experience. She specializes in teaching Hebrew and math. Yuval is an MBA student at UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business. Prior to his MBA studies, he worked as a software engineer for Intel Corp. At Beth El they would like to be involved in helping to celebrate the holidays and in contributing their time to the work needed.

### JANE SCHERR

**Jane Scherr** has lived in Berkeley since she became a UC Berkeley student in the fall of 1957. She was born in the Village of DeRyter, NY. Jane has been married to Don Jelinek for 27 years and has two daughters, Dove Shalom and Apollinaire Scherr. Dove's children, Jane's grandchildren, are Hannele (14) and Pascal (11), whom she enjoys being with very much. Jane is a very active member of Torah Study and likes to garden. She says she enjoys reading *The Builder* "from cover to cover before misplacing it!" Jane worked as a free-lance photographer for 25 years.

**MIRIAM SCHULTZ & ELLIOT CRAVITZ**

**Miriam Schultz** and **Elliot Cravitz** moved to Berkeley from Manhattan in February 2012. Elliot is from London originally and Miriam grew up in Tucson, AZ. They were drawn to Congregation Beth El because of its preschool. Beth El had one space available mid-year in its Bet class for their older son, **Solomon**. "He was welcomed with open arms and we were similarly welcomed by the community of parents at the preschool," Miriam said. Now Solomon has graduated to kindergarten and their younger son, **Isaac**, has started Gan Katan. As parents of two young children, they are avid "play-daters." The Schultz-Cravitzes' grown-up interests include film, biking, cooking (Elliot's the chef in the family) and camping. Elliot is a branding and design director at a management consulting firm. He has a background in graphic design and marketing. Miriam is a psychiatrist specializing in women's mental health and has started a private practice in Rockridge. "We hope we can be helpful in welcoming new families as we were welcomed," Miriam said, adding that she would like to be involved with the mental health task force. "We loved the Shabbaton and hope we can also help this year," she said.

**DEBORAH SHREM & MATTHEW RAIMI**

**Deborah (Debbie) Shrem** and **Matthew (Matt) Raimi** have lived in Berkeley since 1999. They were drawn to Congregation Beth El because they "appreciate the richness of kid-focused activities here and wanted a forum for Jewish learning for their children, **Alyssa** (5) and **Noah** (9). Among the activities the family enjoys are traveling, horseback riding, playing/watching hockey and soccer, as well as cycling and swimming. Going to Six Flags and the Jelly Belly Factory are also popular with Noah and Alyssa. Matt has a small urban planning consulting firm in Berkeley and Debbie works at the state health department on a schools, asthma and green cleaning project. "We hope to help with the Homeless Meal and being Mitzvah volunteers," Debbie said.

**DONNA BREGER STANTON**

As a third-generation San Franciscan, **Donna Breger Stanton** has moved to Los Angeles, Aspen, Denver, San Francisco (again), Baton Rouge, Los Angeles (again), Sacramento, and then finally settled in Kensington for 16 years. She feels a "need to be part of a Jewish community, especially as I get older," and has attended several events at Congregation Beth El. She especially likes Rabbi Kahn's services. Donna's professional work is focused on teaching occupational therapy as associate professor at Samuel Merritt University in Oakland. She also is involved in placing students in internships. Meanwhile, Donna is a doctoral student at Jefferson University, Philadelphia, enrolled in an on-line program. She will graduate in May with a clinical doctorate (OTD) in occupational therapy. Donna is married to Bill Stanton.

We would also like to welcome as new members: **Craig and Cheryl Beckerman**, who live in Kensington with their daughter, **Alissa** (10); **Ellen Kinoy** and **Michael Dotter**, with children **Jakob Kinoy** (13) and **Zelie Kinoy** (10), who live in Berkeley; **Adrienne Leder**, of Berkeley; and **David and Judy Pivar**, who live in Kensington.

**BERGTRAUNS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3**

"We discovered a Boy Scout troop for [our son] Asher years ago at one of these dinners," Alex said, adding that "it really changed his life." And the Bergtrauns still have close friends from those dinners. The hosts determine how many people they can entertain and

it may be a buffet or a sit-down dinner, elaborate or simple, and with or without a theme. "It's really flexible," Michelle said. She hopes that Beth El members will volunteer to open their houses to Supper & Schmooze, and that even more members will decide to participate. Michelle came to Berkeley at age 17 as an American Field Service (AFS) exchange student from Milan. Her American host family was in the same Chavurah as Alex's parents, and a romance began because of a delicious apricot cake that his mother made. Alex's mother heard Michelle exclaim how good the cake was and said, "If you like the cake, you should meet my son." And the rest is history.

Years of courtship ensued, while Michelle returned to Milan for university and Alex went to work in an architect's studio there for four years with the intention of learning Italian and being with Michelle. They were married in the second oldest synagogue in Europe (after one in Holland), Casale Monferrato, in 1988 and moved to the Bay Area, joining Beth El in 1990.

In 1994 Michelle's parents bought the house next door and her mom, Piera, lives there to this day. Her father, Paul Segre, now deceased, had fled from Mussolini's fascism and lived in New York City for 25 years. He eventually returned to Milan before moving to the Bay Area in 1994.

Michelle is a local volunteer coordinator for AFS students, and this year the Bergtrauns have a Norwegian exchange student living with them, Vegard Dalen, whom they are introducing to Jewish life.

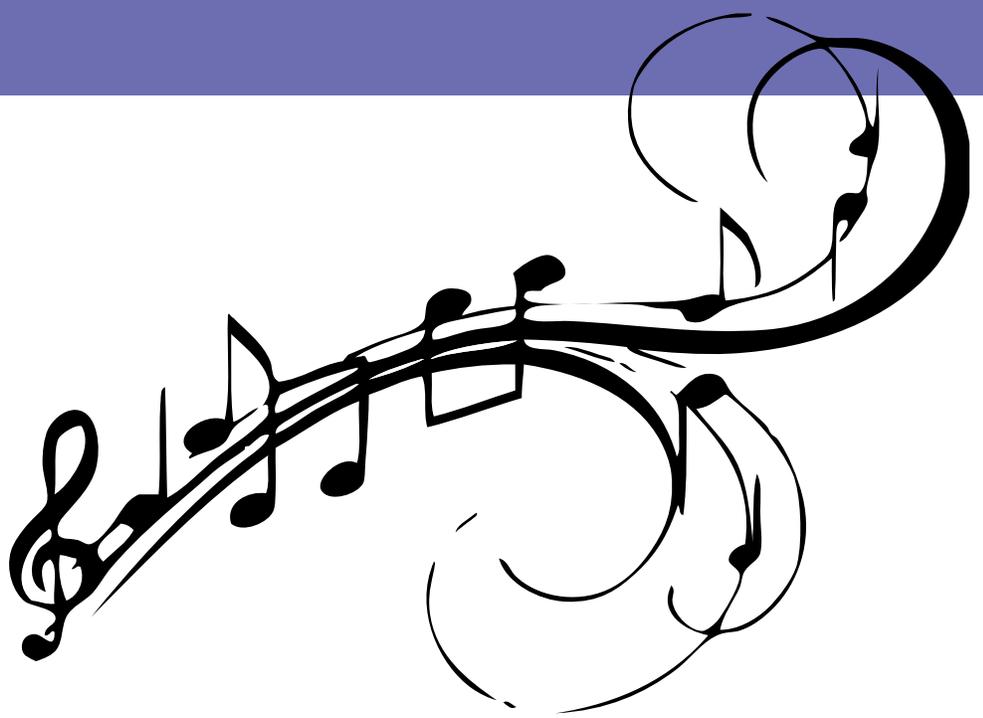
The Bergtrauns strongly believe in parents being involved in the community in order to successfully raise Jewish children. "Our kids see us actively involved in Beth El events and it makes them realize how important community is. You're really giving your children nothing Jewishly if you quit after the Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony," they both emphasized.

## MUSIC ROOM

by Rabbi Reuben Zellman

HERE IN THE MUSIC ROOM you can keep up with the flourishing musical life of our congregation. We understand music as an opportunity for connection to community; a wonderful vehicle for teaching and learning Hebrew, Jewish history, ideas, culture and art; and one of many paths to God and spiritual experience.

I hope you'll join us for some of the musical offerings below. If you have questions or want to join in, contact me any time: RabbiRZ@bethelberkeley.org or 848-3988, ext 228.



### MORE BAND SHABBATS COMING UP!

*Yasher koach* (way to go!) to our new teen and adult bands, who played a spectacular first Band Shabbat on November 9! Mark your calendars for these upcoming Shabbat evenings to sing along and hear our bands play.

#### **BAND SHABBATS are Friday nights at 7:30 pm:**

December 14, January 11, February 8, March 8 and May 10.

### JOIN THE BAND!

Bring your talents and creativity to Beth El. The bands encompass many genres, from jazz and swing to classical, folk and traditional Jewish genres such as klezmer. The bands welcome all instruments — folk, orchestral and traditional band instruments, both acoustic and electric. Whether you're an amateur or a pro, bring your instrument and join in.

The **adult band** rehearses at 7:00 pm before each Band Shabbat. For more information, contact Rabbi Zellman.

The **teen band** is open to musicians in 8th grade and above. Rehearsals are on the fourth Thursday of every month with a few exceptions, from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. A full Band Schedule is available on the website. Visit <http://www.bethelberkeley.org/learning/teen-band>. For more information, contact Rebecca DePalma at [rebecca@bethelberkeley.org](mailto:rebecca@bethelberkeley.org).

### SING WITH THE CHORUS: ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS WELCOME!

Chorus rehearsals begin for Shabbat Shirah on Wednesday, January 9 at 7:00 pm. Beth El's Chorus brings glorious harmonies to Shabbat services and High Holy Days, as well as at community performances. The chorus is always open to new singers, and musical background is not necessary. All Beth El members who love to sing are encouraged to come check it out!

### JEWISH CHORAL MUSIC OF THE RENAISSANCE AND BAROQUE: CONCERT SERIES BEGINS NEXT FALL

Keep your ears open! Beginning in the fall, Beth El is fortunate to host an extremely unusual and exceptionally beautiful concert series, focused entirely on Jewish choral music of the Renaissance and Baroque periods: The Beth El Chorus and other area musicians will collaborate with the professional San Francisco Renaissance Voices and the Baroque Chamber Orchestra.

#### **We encourage you to sing with the Chorus for this unique opportunity!**

The first set of rehearsals for this concert series will be weekly on Wednesday evenings, from April 3 to June 5.

### CHANT TORAH OR HAFTARAH

**Interested in leading services or chanting Torah or Haftarah?** Beth El needs you! These fun, important and much-appreciated musical mitzvot are available year 'round. Slots are available almost every week. If you know how to chant Torah or lead prayers—or would like to learn — please contact me, Rabbi Zellman, and I will be very happy to sign you up!

### The Multilingual Megillah Reading Returns For a Second Season!

Save the date: Saturday evening, **February 23**  
Volunteer readers needed in all languages! Seeking readers and chanters for our celebration of Purim! We're bringing back last year's smash hit lineup: a complete Hebrew reading of Megillat Esther, followed by the second annual multilingual reading. Last year, we read the story of Esther in 25 languages and we're hoping for even more this year! Both readings will be accompanied by Purim songs, costumes, schnapps, snacks, antics and hilarity for the whole community. Childcare will be provided throughout the evening. If you are interested in participating, either as a chanter, reader or volunteer with other aspects of the evening, please contact Ruth Ehrenkrantz, [ruthehren@comcast.net](mailto:ruthehren@comcast.net).

# B'NEI MITZVAH

The congregation is cordially invited to attend the service and kiddush following to honor these B'Nei Mitzvah candidates:



Abby Glasser will be called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah on Saturday, December 1 at 10:15 am. She is the daughter of Sharon Goldfarb and Brad Glasser.



Will Glasser will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah on Thursday, January 17 at 10:00 am. He is the son of Eileen Crumm and David Glasser.



Mari Ferlin will be called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah on Saturday, January 12 at 10:15 am. She is the daughter of Phyllis Steiber and Jim Ferlin.



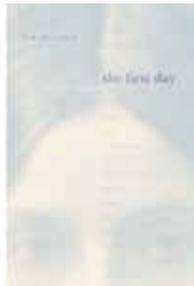
Julia Glasser will be called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah on Saturday, January 19 at 10:15 am. She is the daughter of Eileen Crumm and David Glasser.

## NEW BOOKS IN THE LIBRARY

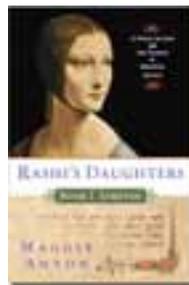
by Scott Spear, Library Chair

**Donations to the Plishner and Vida Funds make it possible to buy new children's and adult's books. Here are some new adult books:**

*The First Day*, by Dvora Baron, is a collection of 18 short stories by the first modern Hebrew woman writer. Born in Lithuania in 1887, she moved to Palestine in 1910. Her stories present a feminist perspective on shtetl life not found in Aleichem, Singer, and others. The translation from Hebrew is by Naomi Seidman, and Chana Kronfeld, both known here at Beth El; Professor Seidman acknowledges help from David Biale and Rabbi Yoel Kahn, *inter alia*.



Maggie Anton's *Rashi's Daughters* trilogy of novels is now followed by the first in a new series, *Rav Hisda's Daughter, Book I: Apprentice*. Based on Talmud texts and set in late 3rd century C.E. Babylon, this novel of "love, the Talmud, and sorcery" is, says *Lilith* magazine, "a compelling combination of drama, suspense and romance." **Maggie Anton will be giving a reading at Beth El on Sunday, February 10 at 2:00 pm** as part of the Adult Education People of the Book series.



Mordechai Bar-On, author of *Moshe Dayan: Israel's Controversial Hero*, was Dayan's Israel Defense Force bureau chief. This biography features an analysis of Israel's political environment from pre-Mandate Palestine through the early 1980's, in addition to an intimate view of Dayan's private life and public career.

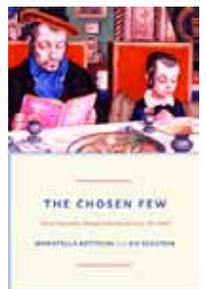


In *The First Modern Jew: Spinoza and the History of an Image*, Daniel Schwartz tells how generations of Jewish intellectuals have projected their own dilemmas of identity upon the Amsterdam thinker. This is reception history, not about Spinoza but about what he has meant to thinkers wondering whether a secular Jewish identity is possible. David Biale calls it "a spectacular book."



In a striking contrast, Elliot Wolfson, a major analyst and historian of Jewish mysticism, traces the inner course of Chabad theosophy through seven generations, in *Open Secret: Post Messianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menachem Mendel Schneerson*. This book has been described as a "profound construction," "often breath taking" and "extraordinary."

*The Chosen Few: How Education Shaped Jewish History, 70-1492*, by Marsitella Botticini and Zev Eckstein, economics professors in Milan and Tel Aviv, explains how we changed from illiterate farmers to literate urbanites as the result of a new norm that required every Jewish male to read and study Torah. This is a socioeconomic history of Jewry based on that argument. David Biale calls it a "bracing work" that "takes on one of the truly big questions in Jewish history."



# ORAL AND WRITTEN HISTORY PROGRAM FOR BETH ELDERS (55 AND BETTER!)

by Marilyn Margulius, Chair

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE A WONDERFUL WRITTEN MEMOIR and ethical will that you can leave for your relatives, children and grandchildren? Or, better still, one that you can share with them, and start an ongoing process of discovery? Are you really going to achieve this goal by yourself?

This winter we will begin an oral and written history program developed with professional consultant Linda Blachman, who is well-known in this field. It will be a continuous sequence of eight or 10 progressive sessions, but the program will be divided into two segments:

### **The first session**

Mondays, January 7 to January 28, 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

### **The second session**

Mondays, March 4 to April 1, 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

Maximum: 20 people, on a first-come, first-served basis. Cost is \$50.00. Please contact Marilyn Margulius at 510-525-5010 or email her ([mmargulius@comcast.net](mailto:mmargulius@comcast.net)) for more information and to sign up. The program has already begun to fill.

We have a plan for those interested to follow up with teachers in Kadima to share Beth Elders' stories with children, including plenty of interaction between adults and children. We will consider a second program if there is sufficient interest.

### **Advance Directives**

Here is another opportunity to look at various advance directives, a set of written instructions that specify what actions should be taken for your health if you are no longer able to make your own decisions due to illness or incapacity. In this get-together we will try to answer your questions and help you decide which of the alternatives to select. You will be able to amend the standard document with personal comments. A representative of Compassion and Choices and a rabbi will be present. Compassion and Choices is a nonprofit organization that seeks to improve care and expand choice at the end of life. Keep an eye on the e-Updates for details.

### **Brain Research**

A program about your memory and what's new in brain research, with speaker, will be held at a future date, as yet undetermined.

We welcome all of your suggestions about future programming and feedback and welcome new committee members who have some time to help with our programs.

## HOW WE'LL HELP YOU TELL YOUR STORY

Although no one is expected to finish telling their story in eight sessions, those who participate in this lay-led program will have a structure and an opportunity to achieve a written memoir and an ethical will that they can leave for their relatives. The details of our stories matter. They give color to our personal histories and help us not only understand ourselves but understand one another and our journeys spanning from childhood to maturity.

Member Susan Austin and consultant Linda Blachman, both experienced professionals in the field, have helped us develop this program. Linda Blachman will be our ongoing advisor.

The program is divided into two four-week sessions separated by a month, in case people can't attend all sessions consecutively.

The format for each of our weekly sessions will be interactive. You will receive a list of questions in advance of each session (after the first one). In the first half hour of each session, you will discuss the questions with one other person in the group. In the following 45 minutes, you will write down your thoughts. You will not be expected to answer all of the questions; you may only want to focus on a few. Recollection is enhanced through associating the memory with other senses, so we'll pause to share a nosh, a piece of music, a favorite item, or a remembered scent during our break. We will finish each session by asking if anyone would like to share something they remembered with the group.

Participants may miss a few sessions but can still obtain the questions. Memories will surface and your brain neurons will allow you to become conscious of them. Memories will keep coming up all week long! This is a great brain exercise.

If there is enough interest, we will try to accommodate an evening group.

# SHALOM FROM BETH EL NURSERY SCHOOL (BENS)

by Maguy Wiezmann-McGuire

IT IS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT TWO MONTHS HAVE PASSED since the start of the school year. So much has happened! While the month of September was dedicated to the High Holy Days, with many happy gatherings filled with prayers and songs, the month of October has been dedicated to adjusting, getting to know one another, and learning about our curriculum and its approach.

This year's goal is to establish strong and meaningful connections between parents, children and teachers. We have launched a parent participation program throughout the school. The program is off to a great start! Many of our parents are already planning and organizing upcoming BENS and Beth El events, and helping teachers in the classroom. We are thankful and proud to have you as members of our community! Many parents ask the question, "Why is my child not learning the ABC's and 123's in the classroom?" To answer this question – and many more – we conducted two meetings. The first addressed the topic of children's social and emotional behaviors, both theories and practical approaches. We examined the different stages of child development from ages two to five and outlined criteria for how to support, set realistic goals and begin to adopt a new language that will enable children to become competent independent thinkers and problem-solvers.

The second meeting focused on introducing the various child development theories using Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences, Lillian Katz's the project approach and Malaguzzi's *The Hundred Languages*. We used many examples from our daily observations and shared the children's creative art projects to substantiate these theories.

As a major component, we have adopted the documentation inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach: *The Hundred Languages*. As you walk through BENS' hallway and classrooms, you will notice the posters filled with children's art and photographs. Documentation supports our day-to-day developmentally appropriate practices and acts as a tool for teachers and parents to reflect on, and connect to, children's knowledge and their understanding of concepts. As a followup, the BENS faculty is planning a Back-to-School Night (**December 12**) where parents will have the opportunity to experience a day in the classroom and engage in various activities similar to those of their children.

We are also in the process of gathering materials to enhance BENS' outdoor facility and build our new sandbox. It will be larger than the existing one to accommodate many of our tunnel diggers and construction experts. We hope to have this project completed before Thanksgiving (after *The Builder* has gone to press).

If any of you are around BENS or are curious to see what the children are engaged in, please come and visit us. We are always busy doing something! It is truly a happy place.

## BENS Upcoming Events:

### Wednesday, December 12

Parent Teacher Conference

### Friday, December 14

Chanukiyah Lighting and Shabbat Celebration at noon (an all-school event)

Latkefest, Band and BENS Tot Shabbat at 5:30pm

### Friday, December 21

Clean-Up at BENS, 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm

### Monday, December 24 - January 4

Winter Break

### Wednesday, January 2 to 4

BENS Winter Camp

### Saturday, January 12

Tot Shabbat with Isaac Zones at 11:00 am (Beit Midrash)

### Sunday, January 13, 20 and 27

Workshop Series with Julie King: "How to Talk so Your Kids Will Listen" 10:00 am to noon.

**BENS faculty wishes you and your family a Happy Chanukah.**

## CHAI NOON GALA ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2

by Debra Sagan Massey and Dana Zell

Howdy Partner! Saddle up over here and join us for a fabulous time at Beth El's annual Gala on Saturday, February 2. This year we are kickin' up our heels and puttin' on our ten-gallon hats for a rompin' and stompin' good time beginning at 6:00 pm. The Beth El Gala, Chai Noon, is an opportunity for all adults in the Beth El community to gather together in the re-envisioned Social Hall for an evening of fun and fund raising. Western dress is encouraged and childcare will be provided.

The evening's auction will be the focus, along with dinner, drinks and dancing. The Gala Committee is seeking exciting auction items. Please contact co-chairs Jen Brand (jensbrand@gmail.com) or Dana Zell (danazell@me.com) if you have something special to donate. Visit the Gala website to buy tickets and watch for details in the e-Updates.

Proceeds from the Gala provide financial scholarships for our many Youth and Family Education (YAFE) Programs, such as Camp Kee Tov, BENS, Chug Mishpacha, Kadima, the annual Shabbaton, youth group programs and more.

If you aren't able to join us on February 2, there are other ways to contribute to this event, such as purchasing raffle tickets, contributing items to our auction, and helping to cook the delicious food. This is a community event and we need everyone's support. Thank you in advance for making this year's Gala a Texas-sized success!! YeeHaw!

**We look forward to seeing you there!**

# UPCOMING HOLIDAY, YAFE AND OTHER EVENTS/SERVICES

by Ruth Ehrenkrantz and Deborah Sagan-Massey

## Celebrate First Night of Chanukah – Open House

Two families are opening their homes to celebrate Chanukah with Beth El members. Come visit, eat, light menorahs, celebrate and sing songs. Bring a potluck dish, a menorah and candles. The first night of Chanukah, **Saturday, December 8** from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Havdallah and candlelighting at 6:30, followed by dinner, at the home of Ronna and Donald Honigman, 2546 Alva Avenue, El Cerrito.

**Friday December 14** – Celebrate Chanukah with us at our annual Latkefest and Rocking Band Shabbat. Bring your Menorah and candles. We will take in the light from the Chanukah candles together. Cost is \$10 in advance or \$15 at the door.

5:30 pm Musical Chanukah Celebration led by Isaac Zones  
6:15 pm Catered Dinner with Latkes made by the Men's Club  
7:30 pm Rocking Band Shabbat with our Teen and Adult Bands

## Last Night of Chanukah – Open House

**Saturday, December 15** from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Come for Havdalah and candlelighting, followed by a potluck dinner, at the home of Susan and Bill Zarchy, 826 Talbot Avenue, Albany. Visit, eat, light menorahs, celebrate and sing songs. Bring a potluck dish, your menorah and candles.

**Friday, December 21**, 6:15 pm choose from:

**Yismechu Chanting Service** – We sing sacred words and wordless melodies (*niggunim*) and share community through music. Drummers and instrumentalists are always welcome. Regardless of whether or not you think you can sing, you are enthusiastically welcomed at this wonderful gathering. The service will last about an hour and will include the Sh'ma, Mourner's Kaddish and quiet time for the Amidah or reflection. Begin your Shabbat with music for your soul; OR

**Camp Kee Tov Reunion Shabbat** – Followed by a *ruach*-filled oneg. See page 17 for details.

**Saturday, December 22 – Shabbat B'Yachad.** At Beth El, we have a variety of Shabbat morning programs: Early Morning Minyan, Torah study, morning services, Chug Mishpacha. On this Shabbat morning we will come together to share our Shabbat traditions. Shabbat morning services, in the style of the Early Morning Minyan, will begin at 9:00 am and will include the reading of the Torah. Torah study will begin at 10:00 am and conclude with the Mourners' Kaddish. An extended coffee hour/oneg Shabbat will follow.

**January 4 and 5 – Scholar-in-Residence Shabbat with Professor Melila Hellner-Eshed**, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Prof. Hellner-Eshed will explore the question of how the children of Israel entered into the state of enslavement through a range of texts.

## Friday January 4

6:15 pm Shabbat Services followed by a catered dinner  
8:00 pm **Lecture by Scholar-in-Residence Prof. Hellner-Eshed**

## Saturday January 5

8:30 am **Bagel breakfast with Scholar-in-Residence**  
9:00 am Morning Minyan Service  
10:30 am Torah Study with Scholar-in-Residence Prof. Hellner-Eshed  
5:30 pm Wine and Cheese Havdalah reception at the home of Jim Gilbert and Susan Orbach. Prof. Hellner-Eshed will speak about her work in the Sulha, an Israeli-Palestinian mediation and reconciliation project.

## Thursday, January 10, 5:15 pm to 6:00 pm Shir Appeal

**A Capella Performance** in Beth El's Sanctuary. Come hear the beautiful sound of Tufts University's Jewish *a capella* group, followed by a question and answer session. This program is open to the entire Beth El community!

## Friday, January 11 – Band Shabbat

5:30 pm Shabbat Song-fest led by Isaac Zones  
6:15 pm Catered Dinner  
7:30 pm Rocking Band Shabbat with our Teen and Adult Bands

## Saturday, January 12, 11:00 am Shabbat Morning

**service.** Isaac Zones will lead our families with young children in a Shabbat morning celebration filled with music and joy!

## Friday, January 18 – Yismechu Chanting Service

6:15 pm We sing sacred words and wordless melodies (*niggunim*) and share community through music. Drummers and instrumentalists are always welcome. The service will last about an hour and will include the Sh'ma, Mourner's Kaddish and quiet time for the Amidah or reflection. Begin your Shabbat with music for your soul!

## Friday, January 25 – Shabbat Shirah

8:00 pm This Shabbat is Judaism's annual "Shabbat of Song," when we read in the Torah about our ancestors' crossing the sea and then rejoicing with song and dance. Beth El's Chorus and members of our adult and teen bands will lead a joyful Shabbat full of dancing and singing, as well as the reading from the Torah of the Song of the Sea.

## Saturday, January 26

6:00 pm Called **Tu B'shevat**, the 15th of Shevat marks the time of year in Israel when sap begins to flow, giving new life to the trees. Rabbis Yoel Kahn and Reuben Zellman will lead participants in a Seder for adults, that celebrates the connection between the spirit, body and the Earth. The Seder will include blessings, songs and a vegetarian dinner. Reservations are required, \$18 per person. Contact the office by January 18.

There will also be a celebration of Tu B'shevat from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Join us for planting our new Beth El Congregational garden and learning about Judaism's important connection to the environment. There will be food and activities for all generations! For more information, contact Debra Massey at [debra@bethelberkeley.org](mailto:debra@bethelberkeley.org).

In the 16th century, the kabbalist Rabbi Yitzchak Luria of Safed and his disciples created a "new" ritual called the Tu B'shevat Seder, based on the Passover Seder. The Tu B'shevat Seder created an order of eating fruits with specific properties, and many that are indigenous to Israel. Each fruit eaten during the ceremony corresponds to a kabbalistic spiritual level: *Asiah*, the world of action; *Yetzirah*, the world of formation; *Briah*, the world of creation; and *Atzilut*, the world of emanation and Godliness.

## MORE EVENTS

### Join Us For a Noshin' and Joshin' Chanukah Party – And Find a Chavurah for You and Your Family

**Sunday, December 9**, 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Beth El's Social Hall (snacks will be provided).

You're invited to a fun first-afternoon-of-Chanukah *Chavurah* party organized to help you meet other congregants and form a *Chavurah*. *Chavurot* (plural of *Chavurah*) are groups of synagogue members who find it easier to get to know each other in small settings. *Chavurot* get together on a regular basis (every month or so) to share Shabbat dinners and holidays (perfect for kids!), enhance Jewish learning and practice, attend cultural events or simply socialize. Surprise! Food is often involved! Beth El *Chavurot* members have watched each other's children grow up and established lifelong friendships. One group of adults came together to folk dance and are still meeting more than 30 years later! Some *Chavurot* are multigenerational, while others may appeal only to adults or to families with children. You'll have a chance to talk to others about their interests and find those whose overlap with yours. We'll be there to help organize the choices and allow you to quickly identify what you're looking for and who else is looking for the same thing. Children are welcome and childcare will be available. We look forward to celebrating Chanukah and new friendships! With any luck, you'll be celebrating Chanukah next year with your own special *Chavurah*.

Questions? Please contact Nancy Turak, VP of Membership at [nturak@comcast.net](mailto:nturak@comcast.net), or at 510-409-4904..

*This event is co-sponsored by the Board of Directors; Membership, Youth and Family Education, Nursery School, Women of Beth El and Beth Elders (55 and Better!) Committees.*

### The Women of Beth El Are Creating and Learning!

Every month in the Beit Midrash at Beth El – Women's Craft Party – Second Sunday of the month (December 9, January 13) from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. Bring your own knitting, crochet, bead work or other project (anything goes). Crafters of several ability levels will be there to offer tips to beginners. Questions? Contact Barbara Schmidt at [schmidt510@comcast.net](mailto:schmidt510@comcast.net).

### Adult Education Committee LUNCH & LEARN Series

... in pursuit of Life-Long Learning  
Second Thursday of the month – Noon to 1:30 pm

**December 13, 2012**, Noon

*The Finkler Question* presented by Rabbi Yoel Kahn

**February 14, 2013**, Noon

"Personal Observations and Historical Perspectives of the Romanian Jewish Community" presented by Harry Margulius

Bring a bag lunch. Dessert and beverages will be provided. Lunch & Learn events are open to the entire community.

### Save the Date!

#### Camp Kee Tov Reunion Shabbat

**Friday, December 21** • 6:15 pm

Miss your favorite counselors? Want to rock out with Eric Schoen? Haven't felt that *ruach* since the summer? Join us on Friday, December 21 for the Camp Kee Tov Reunion Shabbat! Eric Schoen will lead a Camp Kee Tov-style Shabbat service beginning at 6:15 pm at Congregation Beth El followed by a *ruach*-filled oneg!

We can't wait to see you all there!

# Camp Kee Tov Summer 2013

Registration opens  
**Wednesday, December 12**  
at 10:00 am at  
[www.campkeetov.org](http://www.campkeetov.org)!

**Session 1: June 24 - July 19, 2013**  
**Session 2: July 29 - August 23, 2013**

Beth El members and returning Camp Kee Tov families will be given priority registration by being guaranteed a spot at camp until January 9, 2013.





## **ALLAN AND TYBIL SMITH KAHN SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE FUND**

Catherine Pfister Cherin & Jonathan Cherin in memory of Tybil Smith Kahn  
Stacey Shulman

## **ANNUAL APPEAL**

Josie & Alex A.G. Shapiro in honor of Tot High Holy Day services  
Rebecca Abravanel & Kimberly Beeson  
Michael & Susan Austin  
Leyna Bernstein & Brian Parker in memory of Jean Bernstein  
Ruth & Michael Botchan in honor of Ellen Singer-Vine  
Pamela & James Brandman in honor of Marv Pearlstein  
Bruce & Susan Carter  
Alfred & Anita Cotton  
Clarke Daniels  
Andrew & Lauren Ganes  
Stephen Garber & Rena Pasick  
David Glasser & Eileen Crumm  
Melissa Kasnitz & Jonathan Meyers  
Leroy Kessler  
Carol Klein  
Noel & Meredith Kopald  
Ellen Levin  
Leigh Marymor  
Michael & Jo-Ann Paul  
Catherine Pfister Cherin & Jonathan Cherin  
David & Phyllis Rothman  
Thalia Silverman  
Jeff Sloan  
Ruth & Scott Spear  
Edward Vine & Ellen Singer-Vine  
Elisabeth Wechsler & Jeffrey Seideman  
Marissa Wolf

## **ARJMAND ADULT EDUCATION**

Vivian Clayton in honor of the birth of Caleb Richard Eigner

## **BLACHMAN EMERGENCY FUND**

Odetta Blachman in memory of Morris Blachman

## **BUILDING FUND**

Anna Mantell & Robert Goldstein in memory of Jordan Duty

## **CAMP KEE TOV SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

Janet Lipkin in memory of Barry Shapiro

## **DAVID COTTON MEMORIAL SWIG FUND**

Frances Alexander in memory of Dora & William Connolly

## **GENERAL FUND**

Joanne Backman & Harry Pollack in memory of Edmund Backman  
Florence Borkon in memory of Dorothy Rosenberg

Adam Eigner & Evelyn Herrera  
James & Marcia Emery in memory of Mildred Emery  
Arthur & Carol Goldman  
Hazon  
Edward Holly  
Steven Joseph & Corey Hansen-Joseph in memory of Jordan Duty  
Batya Kalis in honor of Rabbi Yoel Kahn & Rabbi Reuben Zellman  
Rosa Mayeri in memory of Noor Yashar & Yahya Mayeri  
Enid Pollack in honor of Rabbi Reuben Zellman  
Rhonda Sarnoff & Clifford Ball  
Sharon & Matthew Sloan in honor of Aidan & Elliot Sloan Mark  
Paul & Susan Sugarman in memory of Jordan Duty  
Sharon Caplow Todd  
Lloyd & Lassie Ulman in memory of Rosa Finch  
Jahandar & Niloufar Yadegar in memory of Rachel Pirnazar  
Alexander & Izabella Zheleznyak

## **HOMELESS MEAL PROGRAM**

Frances Alexander in memory of Mildred Schoenfeld  
Joan Marie Alexander in memory of Janet Sachs  
Stephen Blum & Lorraine Midanik in honor of the marriage of Rabbi Reuben Zellman & Erika Katske  
Mona Cain in honor of the marriage of Rabbi Reuben Zellman & Erika Katske  
Desmid Lyon in honor of the marriage of Rabbi Reuben Zellman & Erika Katske  
Pam Mendelsohn in honor of Erica & Barry Goode  
Elaine & Allan Sobel in honor of the marriage of Rabbi Reuben Zellman & Erika Katske  
Elaine & Allan Sobel in memory of Annette Biatch  
Madelyn & Anthony Stone in memory of Sidney Stein  
Gerald Weintraub

## **LEGACY CAMPAIGN**

Iren Suhami

## **MARIAN MAGID MEMORIAL FUND**

Elizabeth Fishel & Robert Houghteling in memory of Edith Fishel

## **MITZVAH COMMITTEE**

Barbara Fierer & Bob Brandfon in memory of Jordan Duty  
Barbara Fierer & Bob Brandfon in honor of Marcia & Jim Emery

## **MUSIC FUND**

Stephen Blum & Lorraine Midanik in honor of the marriage of Rabbi Reuben Zellman & Erika Katske  
Leah Emdy in honor of the marriage of Rabbi Reuben Zellman & Erika Katske  
Marcia & James Emery in memory of Wendell Emery  
Susan Goldstein & Andy Kivel in honor of Daniel Kivel-Goldstein's Bar Mitzvah  
John Hartog & Margaret Hand  
Sharon Lewin in honor of the marriage of Rabbi Reuben Zellman & Erika Katske  
Catherine Pfister Cherin & Jonathan Cherin in honor of the marriage of Rabbi Reuben Zellman & Erika Katske  
Miriam Rabinovitz in honor of the marriage of Rabbi Reuben Zellman & Erika Katske

# SOCCER AND FAMILY FILL JESUS LOPEZ'S LIFE

By Elisabeth Wechsler

HE DOESN'T HAVE MUCH FREE TIME, but Jesus Lopez loves to play soccer with his friends at least twice a month. He also enjoys a game of racket ball now and then.

Jesus, a custodian of 25 years at Congregation Beth El, met his wife, Maria Andrade, in a very romantic way. He glanced at her across the room and arranged later to meet her formally.

Jesus first saw Maria at El Tapatio, a restaurant in Concord where he had once worked. One of Maria's cousins, Felipe Ramirez (who knew her father, Francisco), also knew Jesus and took him to Maria's house the next weekend to introduce him. Jesus and Maria dated for three years and married in 1991.

That's just part of the story, though. Maria's father, Francisco Andrade, had started working as a custodian at Beth El, in 1985. Three years later, Francisco recruited Jesus to work with him. Now Francisco is spending three months in Mexico planning his 50th wedding anniversary to be held in Durango. Jesus and the whole family will join in the celebration on December 27.

Francisco will be back at Beth El in January. Meanwhile, Jesus is working extra hours, along with Beth El's two other custodians, to help fill in for Francisco.



Jesus and Maria have two children, Francisco (19) and Jessica (11). His son, Francisco, is finishing his studies at Berkeley City College and has filed applications to transfer to a four-year university. Jesus is working extra hours also to help pay for his son's education. But the family goes out to eat sometimes, and they take walks together. Occasionally, they go to a movie on

Saturday or Sunday afternoons when Jesus is free.

Jesus is originally from Guadalajara, Mexico, and travels there twice a year to visit his father, who is in good health. Sometimes, his father visits the Bay Area.

Maria's family is from Durango. She and her mother take care of the garden at their Berkeley house, and Jesus does the yard work at a second house that is rented out to a day-care provider.

With retirement still a long way off, Jesus (47) dreams of "resting

and taking it easy, and enjoying the rest of my life." He likes the people at Beth El and said he'd never met any Jews before working here. "When you're young, you don't know other people's religions," Jesus said, adding that he loves the new building even though there is much more work to maintaining it.

## TZEDAKAH

Phyllis Zisman in honor of the marriage of Rabbi Reuben Zellman & Erika Katske

### NURSERY SCHOOL FUND

Grossberg Foundation

### ONEG/KIDDUSH FUND

Joan Sarnat in memory of Bernard Sarnat

### RABBI KAHN'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Roberta Achtenberg

Janet Byron in memory of Blanche Reiman

Lynn Eden & Ruth Schoenbach

David & Manisha Eigner

Marcia & James Emery in memory of Naomi Rose

Deborah & Michael Feiler in honor of Jim & Marcia Emery  
Matthew & Lisa Friedman in memory of Sheila & Larry  
Amsterdam

Andrew & Lauren Ganes

Susan Goldstein & Andy Kivel

Martin & Selma Graham in memory Laddie Graham

John Hartog & Margaret Hand

Thomas & Amy Lurquin

Amy Resner & William Lee in memory of Gerald Resner

Marcel & Margrit Schurman in memory of Israel Turkavka

Robert & Elizabeth Sharf in memory of Rosslyn Sharf

### YOUTH AND FAMILY EDUCATION FUND

Grossberg Foundation

## DECEMBER

December 1, 2012  
Vayishlach, Genesis 32-36  
Led by Jenn Rader

December 8, 2012  
Vayeshev, Genesis 37-40  
Led by Rabbi Yoel Kahn

December 15, 2012  
Miketz, Genesis 41-44  
Led by Stu Berman

December 22, 2012  
Vayigash, Genesis 44-47  
Led by Bob Goldstein

December 29, 2012  
Vayechi, Genesis 47-50  
Led by Moshe Maler

## JANUARY

January 5, 2013  
Shemot, Exodus 1-6  
Led by Scholar-in-Residence  
Prof. Melila Hellner-Eshed

January 12, 2013  
Vaera, Exodus 6-9  
Led by Rabbi Ferenc Raj

January 19, 2013  
Bo, Exodus 10-13  
Led by Stu Berman

January 26, 2013  
Beshalach, Exodus 13-17  
Rabbi Yoel Kahn

## Become a Beth El Ambassador

Do you remember when you first joined Congregation Beth El? Wasn't it helpful to have someone there who could answer your questions or guide you through the myriad choices of services, activities and events? Our newest members appreciate having a guide to introduce them, and we need more members of our congregation to volunteer for this important role of ambassador. The way it works is that you are assigned a new family, couple or single member to contact. It is helpful if you invite them to coffee, a Shabbat dinner or a Beth El event so you can get to know them. Then, keep in touch with your new friends to ensure that their questions are answered and that they can become involved in our community. Contact Barbara Segal at 2segals@comcast.net or 510-527-7906, if you can help.

## DONATE TO BETH EL!

Please make checks payable to **Congregation Beth El** and mail to **1301 Oxford Street, Berkeley, CA 94709**

### CONGREGATION BETH EL Fund Contributions

This contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is  in Memory of\*  in Honor of\*

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- General Fund - Use Where Most Needed**
- Aaron Plishner Children's Library**
- Allan and Tybil Smith Kahn Memorial Fund**
- Arjmand Adult Education Fund**
- Blachman Emergency Fund**
- Building Fund**
- Camp Kee Tov Scholarship Fund**
- Chevra Kadisha Fund**
- David Cotton Memorial Swig Fund**
- Ellen Meyer Childcare Fund**
- Endowment Fund**
- Freed Flower Fund**
- Homeless Meal Program**
- Israel Scholarship Fund**
- Bar Lev Landscape Fund**
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- Men's Club**
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- Music Fund**
- Nursery School Fund**
- Oneg/Kiddush Fund**
- Prayerbook Fund**
- Rabbis Kahn's Discretionary Fund**
- Rabbi Emeritus Raj's Discretionary Fund**
- Rabbi Vida Library Fund**
- Social Action Fund**
- Youth and Family Education Fund**
- Youth Groups Fund**

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.

**Thank you for your support.**



# GRATITUDE FOR MIDRASHA

by Diane Bernbaum

ALTHOUGH MOST MONTHS IT IS UP TO ME what I share with you in my Midrasha column, some months a synagogue will send a prompt and this month I was very grateful that Temple Beth Abraham asked me to write about "gratitude." Because there is rarely a day that goes by when I don't feel grateful to be working in my job or to have a teen, a teacher or a parent express to me the gratitude they feel towards Midrasha. It's unusual: most of us that work in the nonprofit world don't get enough pats on the back, but I do.

The best feedback often comes at Midrasha graduation. Students are asked to write out what they feel about Midrasha. Do any of you remember that Leo Lionni children's book, *Frederick's Fables*, where all the other mice are busy storing food for the winter but Frederick stores up the sun's rays to bring joy to his fellow mice in the cold times? Well, that's how I feel about graduation. You can go to the Midrasha website, [www.midrasha.org](http://www.midrasha.org), and download a file of the booklet with the graduates' speeches and pictures. This is a short read and it will give you faith in the next generation, plus gratitude that we have such a place for our Jewish teens. But because I know most of you won't go to the website, here are a few snippets:

"I love this community – the inspiring teachers, the intense conversations about ethics and culture and the wonderful friends I have made." -Rebecca Herman

"What I'm taking away from Midrasha is a means of figuring out what my relationship to Judaism will be after I leave home... Midrasha has shown me that I can be Jewish in my own way." -Elisheva Anisman

"There is so much more to Judaism than puzzling out words in Hebrew and memorizing the names of the months. At Midrasha, I was finally able to take classes that I like, classes that I was interested in and classes that pushed me, both intellectually and emotionally... I will never forget the experiences that volunteering at the homeless shelter have given me, and the responsibility that stimulated my growth as a leader is irreplaceable." -Dina Blanter

"What I found at Midrasha was a mixture of tradition and originality, an intellectual and social alternative to my secular high school experience... My Midrasha teacher created an environment in which we all felt comfortable shedding our insecurities to have real discussions. His openness and generosity as a teacher allowed for one of the more unique educational experiences of my life thus far." -Ben Dandridge-Lemco

"Retreats are an amazing experience because they allow younger and older students to connect without the social pressures that come with school and other extracurricular [activities]... Midrasha is such an important part of my life and my Jewish identity as it has affected and molded it in many positive ways. Midrasha has always been a safe space for me to go to during times of need." -Victoria Miller

"Not only did Midrasha give me an opportunity to make new friends, it also gave me powerful techniques to cope with my stress and anxiety during hectic times." -Sam Stone

So, the students are grateful and I am grateful to them. I am grateful that we live in an area where it is easy to attract a knowledgeable and charismatic staff who love working with teens. I am grateful that Desmid Lyon has worked side by side with me for so many years, handling all the parts of this job – the finances, insurance and legal details that are so much not what I am good at. I am grateful that Jenni Mangel has stepped up this year to enable Midrasha in Berkeley to create retreats for the entire Midrasha community and to do so in such a caring, professional and meaningful way. I am grateful for the three other Midrasha directors in Oakland, Contra Costa County and Pleasanton – Kendra, Devra and Day – who make working collaboratively such an easy task. I am grateful for Chair Yossi Fendel and the rest of the Midrasha Board who work tirelessly and passionately to make Midrasha thrive. I am grateful to the Beth El staff who make my weekly office life so pleasant and are welcoming hosts to Midrasha at their synagogue.

I could go on and on. Mostly, I am grateful to YOU, members of the East Bay Jewish community, who have supported this institution for the last 43 years.

## WOULD YOU LIKE A PRINTED COPY OF THE BUILDER?

If you would prefer to read *The Builder* in a printed format, please contact Margee at the Beth El front office. She will put your name on the list to mail you a hard copy.

Email [margee@bethelberkeley.org](mailto:margee@bethelberkeley.org)  
or phone 848-3988, ext. 211.

## December 2012 / Kislev - Tevet 5773

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						<b>1</b> 8:30 am Early Minyan 9:15 am Torah Study  10:15 am Bat Mitzvah of Abby Glasser  5:30 pm B'Nei Mitzvah Family Midrasha Havdallah Program  6:30 pm Supper and Cinema: Chanukah Bazaar Preview
<b>2</b> 11:00 am Chanukah Bazaar & Family Program	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> 6:15 pm Scribes of Beth El (off-site)  7:30 pm Membership Committee (off-site)	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> 5:30 pm Editorial Advisory Board  6:15 pm Sababa  7:00 pm Israel Committee  7:30 pm Ritual Committee	<b>7</b> 6:15 pm Shabbat Evening Service	<b>8</b> <b>1st Night of Chanukah</b>  8:30 am Early Minyan 9:15 am Torah Study 10:15 am Shabbat Service  6:00 pm Open House Chanukah (off-site)  7:00 pm Limos & Lafkes Sababa & BBYO Connect
<b>9</b> <b>2nd Night of Chanukah</b>  1:00 pm Women of Beth El Crafting  3:00 pm Ruach Chanukah Party  3:00 pm Chavurah Kick-Off Chanukah Party  7:15 pm Keva Mother's Group	<b>10</b> <b>3rd Night of Chanukah</b>	<b>11</b> <b>4th Night of Chanukah</b>  6:15 pm Scribes of Beth El (off-site)  7:30 pm Executive Committee	<b>12</b> <b>5th Night of Chanukah</b>  No BENS - Parent-Teacher Conferences	<b>13</b> <b>6th Night of Chanukah</b>  12:00 pm Lunch & Learn: Rabbi Zellman	<b>14</b> <b>7th Night of Chanukah</b>  Sababa Overnight  5:30 pm Chanukah Latkefest  7:30 pm Shabbat Evening Service: Band Shabbat	<b>15</b> <b>8th Night of Chanukah</b>  Sababa Overnight (cont'd)  8:30 am Early Minyan 9:15 am Torah Study 10:15 am Shabbat Service
<b>16</b> 10:00 am Roots and Branches Class  2:00 pm Homeless Meal - Medical Clinic  5:00 pm Homeless Meal Dinner	<b>17</b> Kadima Winter Break Starts	<b>18</b> Kadima Winter Break  7:00 pm Board of Directors	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Kadima Winter Break  7:00 pm People of the Book: <i>What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank</i>	<b>21</b> 6:15 pm Camp Kee Tov Reunion Shabbat  6:15 pm Yismechu: Shabbat Evening Chanting Service	<b>22</b> No Chug Mishpacha  9:00 am Shabbat B'Yachad Service
<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> BENS Winter Break	<b>25</b> OFFICE CLOSED  BENS Winter Break  Kadima Winter Break	<b>26</b> BENS Winter Break	<b>27</b> BENS Winter Break  Kadima Winter Break  7:00 pm Beth Elders Committee on Aging	<b>28</b> BENS Winter Break  6:15 pm Shabbat Evening Service	<b>29</b> No Chug Mishpacha  8:30 am Early Minyan 9:15 am Torah Study 10:15 am Shabbat Service
<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> BENS Winter Break					

January 2013 / Tevet - Shevat 5773

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<p><b>1</b> OFFICE CLOSED FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY</p> <p>BENS Winter Break</p> <p>Kadima Winter Break: No Kadima</p>	<p><b>2</b> BENS Winter Break</p> <p>BENS Winter Camp begins</p>	<p><b>3</b> BENS Winter Break</p> <p>Kadima Winter Break: No Kadima</p> <p>7:00 pm Israel Committee</p>	<p><b>4</b> BENS Winter Break BENS Winter Camp ends</p> <p>Scholar-in-Residence Program: 6:15 pm Shabbat Evening Service 7:00 pm Dinner 8:00 pm Scholar-in-Residence Lecture</p>	<p><b>5</b> 8:30 am Bagel Breakfast with Scholar-in-Residence</p> <p>9:00 am Shabbat Morning Service</p> <p>10:30 am Scholar in Residence/Torah Study</p> <p>5:30 pm Scholar in Residence Reception (off-site)</p>
<p><b>6</b> 1:00 pm Cooking Class: Rye Bread</p>	<p><b>7</b> 3:00 pm Beth Elders: Oral &amp; Written History Program</p>	<p><b>8</b> 7:30 pm Executive Committee</p>	<p><b>9</b> 7:00 pm Chorus Rehearsal</p>	<p><b>10</b> 12:00 pm Lunch &amp; Learn</p> <p>5:15 pm Shir Appeal - Tufts a capella Group</p> <p>6:00 pm Teen Band Rehearsal</p> <p>6:15 pm Sababa</p>	<p><b>11</b> 5:30 pm Shabbat Song-fest</p> <p>6:15 pm Shabbat Dinner</p> <p>7:30 pm Shabbat Evening Services: Band Shabbat</p>	<p><b>12</b> 8:30 am Early Minyan</p> <p>9:15 am Torah Study</p> <p>10:15 am Bat Mitzvah of Mari Ferlin</p> <p>11:00 am Tot Shabbat</p>
<p><b>13</b> 10:00 am Roots and Branches</p> <p>1:00 pm Women of Beth El Crafting</p> <p>7:15 pm Keva Mother's Group</p>	<p><b>14</b> 3:00 pm Beth Elders: Oral &amp; Written History Program</p>	<p><b>15</b> 3:00 pm Beth Elders: Oral &amp; Written History Program</p> <p>6:15 pm Scribes of Beth El (off-site)</p> <p>7:00 pm Program Council</p>	<p><b>16</b> 7:00 pm Chorus Rehearsal</p>	<p><b>17</b> 10:00 am Bar Mitzvah of Will Glasser</p> <p>6:00 pm 6th Grade Family Program</p> <p>6:00 pm Madrichim Training</p> <p>7:00 pm Adult Ed - Jewish Book Group</p> <p>7:30 pm Ritual Committee</p>	<p><b>18</b> 6:15 pm Yismechu: Shabbat Evening Chanting Service</p> <p>Deadline for Tu B'shevat seder reservations</p>	<p><b>19</b> No Chug Mishpacha</p> <p>8:30 am Early Minyan</p> <p>9:15 am Torah Study</p> <p>10:15 am Bat Mitzvah of Julia Glasser</p>
<p><b>20</b> 10:00 am Roots and Branches</p> <p>2:00 pm Homeless Meal - Medical Clinic</p> <p>5:00 pm Homeless Meal</p>	<p><b>21</b> OFFICE CLOSED FOR MLK, JR. DAY</p> <p>BENS Closed</p> <p>3:00 pm Beth Elders: Oral &amp; Written History Program</p>	<p><b>22</b> 7:00 pm Board of Directors</p>	<p><b>23</b> 7:00 pm Chorus Rehearsal</p>	<p><b>24</b> 4:00 pm Kadima: Tu B'shevat Family Celebration</p> <p>6:00 pm Teen Band Rehearsal</p> <p>7:00 pm Beth Elders - Committee on Aging</p>	<p><b>25</b> Erev Tu B'shevat</p> <p>6:15 pm Shabbat Evening Service: Shabbat Shirah (Chorus)</p>	<p><b>26</b> <b>Tu B'shevat</b></p> <p>8:30 am Early Minyan</p> <p>9:15 am Torah Study</p> <p>10:15 am Shabbat Service</p> <p>3:00 pm Ruach Tu B'shevat Birthday Party</p> <p>3:00 pm Tu B'shevat Multigenerational Celebration</p> <p>6:00 pm Tu B'shevat Seder for Adults</p>
<p><b>27</b> 10:00 am Roots and Branches</p>	<p><b>28</b> 3:00 pm Beth Elders: Oral and Written History Program</p>	<p><b>29</b> 6:15 pm Scribes of Beth El (off-site)</p>	<p><b>30</b></p>	<p><b>31</b> BENS CLOSED</p> <p>7:30 pm Contemporary Social Issues in Israel: Fred Hertz</p>		



## CONGREGATION BETH EL

1301 Oxford Street  
Berkeley, CA 94709-1424

by Odette Blachman and Robinn Magid

## FROM THE GIFT SHOP



THE ANNUAL CHANUKAH BAZAAR IS BACK, and this year we have assembled a terrific array of merchandise with everything you need for a festive Chanukah season. **Join us on Sunday, December 2 from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm** to discover:

- *Decorations* at affordable prices in every shape and size!
- *Candles* in fun colors from the famous Safed Candle Factory, bees wax - and the cheap ones too!
- *Dreidels* wood, plastic, metallic, and even the new translucent ones. (Robinn thinks they spin the best!)
- *Chocolate Gelt* milk, pareve and bittersweet
- *Chanukah Menorahs* modern and traditional styles
- *Puzzles and games* including the "hottest" new games and crafts for the season

Come see our elegant jewelry and wonderful gifts you will be proud to give to friends and family. **This year, activities for families with children will be offered from 11:00 am to noon.** A latke lunch will begin at noon and feature gourmet coffee.



**Check out the preview sale at the Supper and Cinema night on Saturday, December 1.**

Bring your shopping list, your friends and your neighbors and help make this year's Bazaar a roaring success. We are also open during the business week. All profits benefit our congregation. See you there!

Odette and Robinn  
oblachman@sbcglobal.net

Gift shop hours correspond with Beth El's office hours. When no volunteer is available, our office staff graciously fills in. For additional information or to make an appointment at a special time, please call Odette at 510-526-4917.