“Honoring Tradition, Celebrating Diversity, and Building a Jewish Future”

IN THIS ISSUE

From the Rabbi p. 2
Member Spotlight p. 3
President’s Message p. 4
Youth & Family Education p. 5
New Books in the Library p. 10
Guest Articles p.7, 9, 15
B’nei Mitzvah p. 19
Events p. 12-13
New Members p. 16-17
Torah Study Schedule p. 18
Tzedakah p. 21
Calendars p. 22-23
Gift Shop p. 24

FEATURES

Jessie Gorovitz Aims High, p. 3
What’s a “Litvak”, Anyway?, p. 9
Torah Study and Judaism, p. 15

HIGHLIGHTS

DECEMBER

Jewish Pluralism Through IRAC, p. 7
Rabbis for Human Rights, December 9, p. 12
Register for Camp Kee Tov, December 11, p. 12
Shabbat Yafe dinner on December 13, p. 6

JANUARY

Tu B’shevat Seder, January 15, p. 5
Jewish Secularist Tradition, January 30, p. 13
Get Ready for the Gala on February 8! p. 20

ISSUE 140 • December 2013 & January 2014

CONGREGATION BETH EL IS A MEMBER OF THE UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM
FROM THE RABBI

CONNECTING WITH AND SUPPORTING ISRAEL

by Rabbi Yoel Kahn

THIS YEAR MARKS the 40th anniversary of the 1973 Yom Kippur War and the 40th anniversary of my own first trip to Israel (I spent the war and the rest of the ‘73-’74 school year on Kibbutz Kfar Blum in northern Israel). During the time I lived there, the imagined Israel of my childhood was replaced with an adolescent’s “know it all” understanding shaped by what I saw (and didn’t see). Throughout my adulthood, my relationship with Israel (the modern state and national homeland of the Jewish people) and with Eretz Yisrael (the historical geographical homeland of the Jewish people) has evolved, become more nuanced and, I believe, deepened. The two Beth El congregational trips to Israel had a deep impact on everyone who participated and all were changed by the experience—I encourage you to visit Israel, whether on your own, as part of our next East Bay community trip or, of course, on our next congregational trip (date and details coming soon!).

In an effort to bring the diverse reality of Israel closer to us, our Israel Committee has two more programs in December that highlight important dimensions of contemporary Israel. On October 16th at Beth El, we had the opportunity to hear how compassion can overcome anger and reconciliation replace enmity. Our congregational Israel Committee presented “The Two-Sided Story” with the Parents Circle Family Forum (PCFF). Robi Damelin, an Israeli Jew, and Bassam Aramin, a Palestinian, each lost a child to Israeli-Palestinian violence and have resolved to channel their grief toward reconciliation. More than a hundred Beth El and community members were inspired and moved by their presentation.

Israel’s Declaration of Independence promises that the country “will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex…” As in America, civic organizations there are the watchdogs and advocates for these core national values. In Israel, the leading advocate and representative of the prophetic tradition is the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC). (See p. 7.)

Founded in 1987 as the public and legal advocacy arm of the Reform movement in Israel, IRAC works to advance pluralism in Israeli society and to defend the freedoms of conscience, faith and religion. Rooted in progressive Jewish values, IRAC advocates on behalf of a broadly inclusive Israeli democracy based on the principles of social justice and equality.

Anat Hoffman, the Executive Director of IRAC and the Chairwoman of Women of the Wall, will speak on Sunday, December 8, at 2:30 pm at Temple Sinai in Oakland. Anat leads IRAC’s work to promote Jewish pluralism, tolerance and equality and to combat racism, corruption and religious coercion. Previously, Anat served as a Jerusalem City Councilwoman for 14 years, carving out a niche for herself as an unflinching warrior for justice and equality.

Beth El members will also have the opportunity to attend a private reception with Anat Hoffman in Berkeley on Sunday evening. All supporters of the Beth El IRAC Fund will receive an invitation.

On Monday evening, December 9, another important Israeli human rights activist will be at Beth El. Rabbi Arik Ascherman, President of Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR), will speak on “The Israel I Cherish: A discussion of the connection between Israel, human rights and Judaism,” at 7:30 pm in our sanctuary. I have been a rabbinic supporter of RHR since its founding and Rabbi Ascherman is one of my contemporary Jewish heroes.

Rabbis for Human Rights is an important rabbinic voice of conscience in Israel, defending human rights of marginalized communities within Israel and the Palestinian Territories. The organization was founded in 1988, and today has over 100 members—all Israelis and all ordained Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Renewal rabbis. (See p. 14.)

I know that there are other worthy organizations and speakers who represent the many ways we can connect with and express our connections to and support for Israel. We look forward to welcoming them at Beth El. I am deeply grateful to our Israel Committee members who are working diligently to ensure that our internal and public dialogues and programs are nuanced, diverse and civil, affirming our capacity as a congregational community to respect and honor one another and our deep connection to our people and our homeland.

Rabbi Yoel Kahn
AIMING HIGH, SHE’S WAY AHEAD OF MOST OF US

by Elisabeth Wechsler

IF YOU WERE LIKE ME, you thought the attractive and poised speaker at High Holy Day services was perhaps someone home from college. Jessica (“Jessie”) Gorovitz, surprisingly, is a junior at Berkeley High School. Despite her young age, Jessie is amazingly accomplished.

At Congregation Beth El, Jessie led part of the combined evening Rosh Hashanah service, the Kol Nidre early evening service and the Yom Kippur late morning service. She said she’d been wanting to do just that from the time she was studying to become a bat mitzvah. Reading Hebrew is “easy” for her – unlike English – because she has a learning disability. She and Rabbi Zellman had two rehearsals, one before each of the holidays. And she did a flawless job.

Jessie spent two weeks last summer at Yale University, taking part in a rigorous program of lectures and essay-writing for the Young Global Scholars program. Some 150 attendees, with 44 from outside the U.S., studied politics, law and economics together with Yale professors. She also participated in a working group with graduate and undergraduate students at Yale to polish their writing skills. The culmination of the program was a 2,000-word essay and research paper Jessie wrote entitled “The Effect of Harm in the Rwandan Civil War, World War I and the Syrian conflict.”

One intriguing activity was a simulation of a Constitutional convention to be held in 2050. Based on statistical projections from real-life experts, the students were assigned states and political parties to represent. Jessie was on the citizenship committee, where the students first had to define “citizenship.” The discussion focused on whether American citizens who committed acts of terrorism could still be citizens. It was decided that those perpetrators should be given a trial, not killed by drones, while retaining their citizenship.

Among her other activities and accomplishments, Jessie has worked at Camp Kee Tov for three summers, most recently as a junior counselor. She was a Beth El confirmand in 2012 and led the complete service for her bat mitzvah in 2010. In 2011, she served as president of Sababa, a Beth El after-school program for 6th to 8th graders.

Still, she manages to find time to be active in student organizations. One organization, Youth and Government, consists of a state-wide legislature and court system in which 2,400 high school students from around the state participate. In the program, Jessie has written legislation, including one bill on environmental policy.

Jessie is deeply involved in music and theater. She’s been singing for many years, including singing Kol Nidre at Beth El’s Yom Kippur service two years ago. One of her dreams is to sing the “Queen of the Night” aria from The Magic Flute by Mozart; the top of the soprano range is the big challenge for her. Because she always wanted to try the instrument, Jessie has been taking cello lessons since the spring. “I’m not very good,” she insists. She loves show tunes, ballet and opera. Jessie is volunteering at Berkeley Playhouse in a drama class for 1st to 3rd graders.

Jessie is the daughter of Eric Gorovitz, an attorney who advises non-profit organizations, and Jennifer Gorovitz, CEO of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco. She credits both her parents with inspiring her to go into public service. She and her brother, Noah, live with their parents in Berkeley.

Next year, Jessie will apply to college; her first choices are Columbia and Barnard because they are located in New York City. She is also interested in UCLA and USC for their film programs. Her long-range goal is to be President of the United States. We wish her well in her future endeavors.
IN LATE SEPTEMBER, DURING SUKKOT, I wrote to all Beth El members to inform them about several upcoming changes to our clergy configuration, including the Board of Director’s decision to hire a second rabbi in anticipation of Rabbi Reuben Zellman’s leave of absence beginning July 1, 2014 and his desire to focus exclusively on his role as Music Director when he returns one year later. I encouraged members to contact me if they had any questions about these changes, and a few did.

I thought it would be helpful to share with the full congregation some of the questions I received and my responses, even though by the time this article is published Beth El may already have hired its new second rabbi. I learned many years ago when teaching school that when one student asks a question, the whole class benefits from hearing the answer and I suspect the same holds true in the Beth El community.

Can Beth El afford two rabbis?

Some members asked a very basic question: Why does Beth El need two rabbis? The simple answer is that tending to the rabbinic needs of our 500+ household congregation is just too large a task for any one individual. Beth El has not tried to get by with only one rabbi for many years. For the past four years we have been fortunate to be able to call upon both Rabbis Kahn and Zellman. Before Rabbi Zellman came on board, our then Rabbi Educator devoted roughly half of her time to rabbinic duties, sharing the bimah, officiating at life cycle events, engaging in our adult and youth programs and counseling members.

Few of us get to observe, or appreciate the extent of, the full range of our rabbis’ daily responsibilities. Some of us interact most often with our rabbis when they officiate from the bimah, leading Erev Shabbat, Shabbat morning and holiday services year-round. For other members, in particular the parents of our b’nei mitzvah students, our rabbis’ involvement in preparing their child to become a bar or bat mitzvah is the most prominent aspect of our clergy’s rabbinic responsibilities, inasmuch as our rabbis meet multiple times with each bar/bat mitzvah student and with each student’s family. With 37 b’nei mitzvah this year alone, these meetings, coupled with the classroom and individual instruction that our rabbis devote every week to Beth El’s b’nei mitzvah program, take up an extensive amount of time.

Still other members connect with our rabbis in the context of life cycle events, both happy (weddings, baby namings and other simchas), sad (illness, funerals) and in times of crisis. The latter are never pre-planned, of course, resulting in our rabbis often being pulled in several directions simultaneously and on short notice to respond to the pressing needs of our members.

Families with children in our Youth and Family Education (YAFE) programs want and expect to have a regular rabbinic presence in their children’s classrooms, from Nursery School through our 10th grade Confirmation program. Our members also want our rabbis to lead education classes oriented toward adults. Beth El’s rabbis work closely with the lay leadership; attend Board, Program Council and committee meetings; represent Beth El in the broader community by connecting with other synagogue rabbis and local, regional and national Jewish institutions; and help supervise our senior staff. In addition, our rabbis are regularly called upon to counsel members in time of need – the pastoral side of their job. I have not tried to capture all that our rabbis do for our members and our synagogue, but I hope that you will agree with me and the Board of Directors that one person alone cannot meet the demands of the job responsibilities I have outlined.

Other questions I received revolved around Beth El’s budget: Did the Board of Directors consider whether Beth El can afford two rabbis? Let me assure you that the Board carefully analyzed the question of affordability. Not only will a second rabbi enable Beth El to expand the availability of rabbinic services to our members, it will also result in some consolidation of tasks now spread among several staff. In addition, as I stated in my letter to the congregation, Rabbi Zellman has asked to work a reduced schedule once he returns as Music Director in July 2015. As a result, we estimate that a second rabbi, on a net basis, will end up increasing our overall operating budget expense by only two percent, with that increase largely deferred until fiscal year 2015-2016. The Board concluded that that modest increase in expense was manageable, even if the membership growth we experienced last year and are seeing again this year does not continue.

I am excited about the prospect of augmenting our clergy through the hiring of an Assistant or Associate Rabbi. Beth El is a large, active, highly diverse and participatory congregation, with high expectations for both ourselves and our clergy. The addition of another rabbi can only add to the ways in which our members can seek spiritual, educational and pastoral guidance from Beth El’s clergy.

L’shalom,
Paul Sugarman
GETTING DIRTY AT URBAN ADAMAH!
by Debra Sagan Massey, RJE, Director of Education

FOR THREE YEARS, our fourth graders have had the privilege of starting off their year at Urban Adamah. Every Tuesday, a group of Beth El students congregates at the local Jewish urban farm, and engages in hands-on lessons in sustainability and our obligation to take care of the earth. The kids learn about various natural elements, harvesting crops, taking care of animals and much more, all in a caring, natural environment. The group shares a common experience of working together and grows into a cohesive unit after eight weeks of hands-on learning at Urban Adamah.

Integrating the Urban Adamah experience into the 4th grade curriculum has been an extremely successful endeavor. The students love the opportunity to be on a farm and to see the world through a Jewish lens. These outdoor experiences provide a foundation to build a tight-knit community of students.

We are very grateful to the Judy and Hersh Langenthal family for enabling this program to start at Beth El. Through their generosity, we have been able to pilot and subsidize this incredibly successful program. We hope to continue to offer the Urban Adamah program to all of our 4th graders in years to come. We see this program as integral to the work we do, and are thrilled that it ties in the importance of having and maintaining a garden. We have also discovered that another natural outcome of having the 4th graders at Urban Adamah is that they are then motivated and excited to help take care of our beautiful garden here at Beth El.

We have included some photos from one of our “cob oven” days at Urban Adamah. Needless to say, we enjoyed getting dirty! Keep an eye on us when we are back at Beth El and the impact we will have on our community garden!

With Tu B’shevat (Birthday of the Trees) on Thursday, January 16, you can be certain that we will be ready! Don’t miss out on the Tu B’shevat family program run by 4th and 5th graders from 5:00 to 6:00 pm.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH AND FAMILY EDUCATION

December

12/1     LatkeFest
12/7     B’nei Mitzvah Family Program 10:15 am to 2:00 pm
12/7     Limos & Latkes Shabbat with BBYO
12/13    Shabbat Yafe Hosted by 5th grade families: Tot Shabbat at 5:00 pm, Dinner at 5:30 pm and Family Shabbat at 6:15 pm
12/19    All-School Service; parents encouraged to come at 5:40 pm
12/20-1/3/14 NO CLASSES: WINTER VACATION
BENS CHILDREN KEEP BUSY AT BETH EL

by Maguy Weizmann McGuire, Director of Early Childhood Education

FALL IS COMING TO AN END, so are the hot/warm days. The morning and evening chill is in the air and while we are all bundled up with multiple layers of clothing, the children’s desire to play outdoors in water and wet sand continues. The fall season and all that it offers has dominated the day-to-day activities in all of our classrooms. Children are exploring, examining, observing the many facets of fall. They went on neighborhood walks; visited Urban Adamah; cooked Stone Soup; baked pumpkin, red and orange breads; painted masterpieces with fall colors and made hanging mobiles from their fall collection. The art is displayed in the classrooms; please take a minute to view it if you visit.

While all this was happening in the classrooms, many other events took place around Beth El. Our first morning Friday Shabbat led by our very own parent, Rabbi Rebekah Stern (Leora’s mom, Gan Galim), was truly inspiring, moving and festive. Rebekah is magnificent! Many of our parents showed up to celebrate the morning event. Our next Friday Morning Shabbat is scheduled for Friday, March 28, 2014.

In October, Beth El Nursery School (BENS) introduced its first Parents’ Night Out, and 16 of our families took part. Children were brought to school on a Saturday at 5:00 pm for dinner. Families who participated in the event were grateful to spend an evening by themselves or with other families while their children were cared for in a safe and stimulating environment. We look forward to many more Parents’ Night Out events. The money collected will go directly to the BENS funds for classroom and outdoor enrichment.

Our first Early Childhood Education (ECE) committee meeting led by the dynamic co-chairs, Jenn Brysk and Sharon Glasser, took place on October 23. Parents representing different age groups were present. The purpose of the evening was to define the committees’ mission, its goals, parent involvement and how to bridge the gap between BENS and the rest of Beth El. The group brainstormed on how to enrich the classrooms’ indoor and outdoor environment while keeping ongoing parent involvement.

One of the programs designed to bridge this gap is called Shabbat Yafe. It’s a Friday Shabbat service open to all families. BENS, Kadima and families from around the community join Isaac Zones in celebrating Shabbat with songs, dance and prayers. All Shabbat Yafe services will include a potluck or catered dinners and are a monthly event scheduled to begin at 5:00 pm. We look forward to celebrating Shabbat evenings with you!

Our first Shabbat Yafe was celebrated on Friday, November 1. The next Shabbat Yafe services are:

- Friday, December 13
- Friday, January 10
- Friday, March 14
- Friday, April 4
- Saturday, February 8
- Friday, May 2

In November, we launched a new parent workshop, specifically designed to educate and assist our families with day-to-day parenting issues. The first of the series was conducted by Jill Shugart (former BENS director), a psychotherapist, Marriage and Family Counselor, parenting consultant, coach, speaker and seminar workshop leader. Jill presented “When Kids Won’t Do What You Ask: Meeting the Challenges and Managing the Stress.” To learn more about Jill Shugart visit her website at www.jillshugart.net.

BENS celebrated the Chanukah/Thanksgiving holidays on Friday, November 22nd. Continuing with our goal to involve the entire BENS community in celebrating holiday events, Jodi Gladstone, our Jewish Resource Specialist representative, in collaboration with BENS staff planned, organized and implemented the holiday event. Parents and children chose Chanukah/Thanksgiving-related activities to create holiday symbols, which were later used at home.

During the summer BENS teachers were given a summer reading: From Play to Practice: Connecting Teachers’ Play to Children’s Practice. Each month the staff will meet to discuss the chapters, their theoretical and practical components, and bring their learning back to the classroom to work with the children. Our first meeting took place on Friday, November 2, and during that time we covered: Chapter One: Introduction. Play/Practice: Clay and its use in various forms.

If you happen to be around the nursery school building, please come and visit. We have a lot to show you! L’hitraot (We’ll see you!) and L’histameh (We’ll hear from you!) from all BENS staff and families.
WHAT IRAC IS DOING FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ISRAEL

by Norman Postone and Laurie Swiadon
Co-Chairs, Congregation Beth El Israel Committee

CONGREGATION BETH EL HAS BEGUN an exciting new relationship with the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC), the public and legal advocacy arm of the Reform movement in Israel. The goal of this relationship is for us as a congregation to increase our engagement with Israel by learning more about the issues and participating in creating a more just, democratic society in Israel.

Over the past six months IRAC has been involved in many civil rights and social justice issues, including:

Ensuring Recognition and Equality for Progressive Religious Streams

• Ensuring equal access to the Western Wall for all Jews: IRAC remains in the front line of maintaining a coalition of groups pressing for change at the Western Wall.

• Securing equal status for progressive religious streams and continuing to petition for government support for non-Orthodox rabbis: IRAC influenced the decision made by Religious Services Minister Naftali Bennett to allow communities to choose who will serve them, opening the doors for many more non-Orthodox rabbis to receive salaries from the state.

• With support from IRAC, Congregation Ma’ayanot, a Conservative congregation in Jerusalem, received the right to use a new community center building for services.

• IRAC’s Project Ruth has served 300 families that required legal services to secure Israeli citizenship because they had received non-Orthodox conversions in their country of origin.

Opposing Gender Segregation and the Exclusion of Women

• After a long struggle by IRAC, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that forced gender segregation on public buses is illegal. IRAC continues to monitor the situation and provide legal services to people who have suffered discrimination.

• IRAC won a class-action suit against Kol HaBama, a religious public radio station which refused to feature women anchors or allow women to be interviewed on call-in shows.

Fighting Racism

• The Supreme Court accepted IRAC’s petition demanding that the government apply disciplinary rules to rabbis and other employees of religious councils who engage in racist incitement.

• IRAC works in a coalition with other Jewish and Arab human rights organizations in the struggle to fight racism.

How can you help? Join Congregation Beth El’s campaign to support IRAC.

• Donate $36 per year to Beth El’s IRAC fund. Make checks payable to Congregation Beth El, with “IRAC” in the memo line.

• Join the Beth EL Israel Committee.

• Visit IRAC’s website: www.irac.org. Select option to receive The Pluralist, a weekly newsletter that includes action items.

DO YOU HAVE WEBSITE, DATABASE OR PUBLICATION TALENT?

Attention web designers, database gurus, graphic designers and marketing-communications professionals: the Beth El Marketing/Communications (“Marcom”) Committee needs you! We’ve got some juicy projects coming up and can use your talents. We’ll be adding functions to the Beth El website and the membership database. We’ll be working on the e-update and The Builder. So, contact Jeff Seideman at jmseideman@gmail.com if you’re interested in joining us. We meet in the evening once a month.
BETH EL STAFF UPDATES

by Norm Frankel

WE ARE EXCITED TO UPDATE YOU on important milestones for two of our dedicated and valued staff.

After seven years of devoted service to Beth El, Rabbi Kahn will take a much deserved three-month sabbatical this spring, from March 1 through May 31. In his absence, Rabbi Zellman will work full time in order to handle all rabbinic responsibilities. He will be assisted on the bimah by our own gifted member volunteers and by other guest clergy and cantorial soloists. Rabbi Zellman will officiate at all bar and bat mitzvah services and at other life-cycle services as needed. He will also teach our 7th grade class.

Debra Massey will teach Rabbi Kahn’s Confirmation class and the Rabbi’s Tisch for our 11th and 12th grade students. Rabbi Steve Chester (Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Sinai in Oakland) will work with our b’nei mitzvah students on the preparation of their d’rashot. Rabbi Zellman will meet with our b’nei mitzvah families as they prepare for their service. He will also serve as the staff liaison to the Ritual Committee. Our music programs will continue as usual under Rabbi Zellman’s leadership.

By the time you read this article, Rebecca DePalma will have begun her maternity leave. Allie Liepman (whom many of you know from Camp Kee Tov) will fill in for Rebecca as the administrative assistant for our Youth and Family Education (YAFE) program. Allie will work with Debra Massey to continue to provide all the necessary administrative support that our YAFE programs need.

Emily Schnitzer, our Camp Kee Tov (CKT) Administrator, will cover our Youth Group Programs (with a little help from Zach Landres-Schnur, CKT Director). Rebecca has been the force behind the growth of our three thriving youth groups: Ruach, our 4th and 5th grade program; Sababa, our 6th to 8th grade group; and our newest program for grades 9 through 12, BESTY (Beth El Synagogue Teen Youth affiliated with NFTY, the North American Federation of Temple Youth). Emily brings years of Camp Kee Tov experience, working with kids of all ages, and will carry out the programs and events that have already been planned for the coming months.

I also want to note that we recently added Sacha Kopin to our office staff. She will be coordinating our b’nei mitzvah program. Sacha has been a b’nei mitzvah tutor and popular Midrasha teacher for many years.

It’s a great pleasure for me to work with our exceptional staff and observe all of us grow and develop both professionally and personally.

BETH EL TEEN RESEARCHES ISRAELI IN-FLIGHT REFUELING SYSTEM

At age 17, Aaron Magid, a senior at the Jewish Community High School in San Francisco and a member of Congregation Beth El, has worked professionally designing and creating web applications. He has built computers, circuits and homemade electromagnets and, in his spare time, hikes, bikes, skis and acts in school plays. Now he can add conducting advanced aerospace research in Israel to this list of achievements.

Aaron, the son of Robinn and Dan Magid, was among 44 teens worldwide invited to participate in SciTech, a three-week international science and technology research camp at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa. Now in its 20th year, SciTech provides teens the opportunity to carry out research in a broad range of fields with accomplished Israeli researchers while experiencing life in Israel.

The goal of Aaron’s research project was to design a system for autonomous refueling between Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) while in flight. The flying fuel tank, which he and his partners called “Mother Goose,” would dramatically increase the time a UAV could fly, as well as the area it could cover, making it more efficient. He and his partners won first prize for presentation of their research at the close of the SciTech program.

SciTech participants came from nine U.S. states as well as from Israel, Europe and Canada, and all spoke the language of science. “For once, I could spout random scientific things and, rather than looking at me like I was speaking Chinese, other people would actually turn around and spout back other scientific stuff! It was amazing!” Aaron said.

SciTech was founded by the late Harry J. Stern of Sands Point, N.Y., a supporter of Technion and the American Technion Society (ATS). Admission to the program is selective, and scholarships from the ATS are available. Student research culminates in an oral presentation and written report for publication.
WHAT’S A “LITVAK”, ANYWAY?

by Evie Groch

TARGET IS NOT MY USUAL PLACE TO FIND INTERESTING FOLKS to write about, but this person found me and wouldn’t accept my initial disinterest.

In August, I had just returned from a seven-week journey to Israel, Spain, Morocco, Portugal and France. I was in a feud with my computer which refused to find sufficient room in my Dropbox to upload my thousands of photos. I grabbed my memory sticks and headed to Target to select and transfer my photos to CDs. As I was standing in front of a terminal engrossed in my task, I heard a voice behind me say, “Do you mind if I watch what you’re doing?”

I turned around to see an older man, disheveled, unshaven, with a set of ill-fitting lower dentures. He carried a small bag of purchases and waited for me to grant him permission to watch. I asked myself where this could lead. I had thousands of photos to go through and little patience for interruptions.

“I really don’t think you’d be interested,” I responded.

“I just want to see how you do this.”

“I’m just transferring photos to a CD.”

“I know – I want to know how to do that.”

“Okay, I guess so.”

Then came the questions I was hoping to avoid answering.

“What are your photos of?”

“Travel.”

I predicted the next question.

“Travel to where?”

I shortened the list to Israel in my response.

“Israel?” he exclaimed. “I’ve always wanted to go to Israel. Did you know I’m a Litvak?”

I stopped what I was doing and turned around to look at him.

“You’re a what?”

“A Litvak from Lithuania.”

“Do you know what a Litvak is?”

“I’m a Lithuanian Litvak. That’s what my Jewish friends tell me.”

“Why do they call you a ‘Litvak’?”

“I think that’s a compliment.”

“Are you Jewish?”

“No, I’m a goyim.”

“You mean goy.”

“No, goyim.”

“Goyim is plural. You can only be one.”

“Okay, but I have many Jewish friends.”

“I think you have to be Jewish to be a Litvak.”

“I don’t think so.”

Have it your way, I thought to myself, returning to my work.

“How did you like Israel?”

“Very nice.”

“How were the people?”

“Very friendly.”

“Did you hear the shmear while you were there?”

“The what?”

“The shmear – you know – the important thing that all Jews say.”

“You mean the Sh’ma?”

“No, I’m pretty sure it’s the shmear.”

“Shmear is what you spread on a bagel – lox and cream cheese mixture.”

“I don’t mean that shmear. I mean the shmear in prayers.”

“That’s the Sh’m’a – you know – Hear O Israel.”

“So it’s not the shmear? I know there’s another meaning for shmear. It’s the laser-focusing tool used to cut the stones for the First Temple.”

“I don’t think they had that kind of technology back then.”

“You’d be surprised what you don’t know.”

“Let it go, I told myself.

“You know, at one time I was studying to be a shiksa.”

“You can never be a shiksa.”

“Why not? I could study.”

“Because a shiksa is a non-Jewish girl.”

“Oh.”

“You could have been a shaygits.”

“What’s that?”

“A non-Jewish boy, but you don’t have to study to become one.”

“So, shaygitz – not shiksa. I thought shiksa was like a lawyer or something.”

“No, really, no.”

“I’ve always been treated well by Jews. My mother used to work for them. She did the women’s nails, and they sent her nice gifts for Christmas. She taught me about them. What is your nationality?”

“Why, I’m American.”

“Oh, come on, don’t fool me.”

“I’m not fooling you.”

“Where do your people come from?”

“That’s not what you asked – you asked my nationality. My parents came from Poland.”

“Why – we could be related.”

“I don’t think so. Europe is a big continent.”

“I enjoy meeting people everywhere. It’s so interesting. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me.”

“No problem. You’re a very interesting person yourself.”

“Can I tell you a story?”

“In a moment. I need some help for the next step on this machine.”

I looked up and signaled for help. When I turned back around, he was gone.

*A “litvak” is a Jew with roots in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania: present-day Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Latvia and the northeastern Suwałki region of Poland. The term is sometimes used, especially in Israel, to cover all Orthodox Jews who follow a “Lithuanian” (Ashkenazi and non-Chasidic) style of life and learning, whatever their ethnic background.*
Donations to the Aaron Plishner and Rabbi George Vida Funds make it possible to buy new children’s and adults’ books. Here are some new adult books:

**A Guide For the Perplexed**, by Dara Horn, is a novel that combines the story of Josie Ashkenazi, a software prodigy abducted in modern Egypt, with the stories of two other Jewish travelers to Egypt, Solomon Schechter, seeking out the Cairo Genizah a century earlier, and Moses Maimonides in the 12th century. The story intertwines Genesis, medieval philosophy and the digital frontier with suspense and learning. Jewish Learning Works selected the book for this year’s One Bay One Book selection.

**The American Jewish Story Through Cinema**, by Eric Goldman of Yeshiva University and Jewish Theological Seminary, charts the history of how Jewish moviemakers shied away from presenting Jewish images on the screen, thus leaving this blank until the founding of Israel. Yet it took the only non-Jewish movie mogul, Darryl Zanuck, finally to produce the breakthrough movie, “Gentleman’s Agreement.”

**A Living Lens**, ed. by Alana Newhouse, presents photographs from the archives of the great newspaper, *The Jewish Forward*, from 1897 to 1974. Nicole Krauss says, “Here is what it looked like, and how it felt, to be a Jew in the 20th Century.” The richness of this collection cannot be exaggerated.

**Jewish Concepts of Scripture, A Comparative Introduction**, ed. by Benjamin Sommer, contains 17 essays by eminent scholars. The essays focus on aspects of Scripture in Jewish tradition as seen in synagogue service, Rabbinic Judaism, Midrash and Jewish mysticism. The essays explore these topics as interpreted by the Schools of Rabbis Akiva and Ishmael; among Jews during the time of medieval Islam; by the Schools of Rashi, Maimonides and Nachmanides; and in modern Israeli literature, secular culture and historical scholarship. The book includes the thoughts of Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Yehezkel Kaufmann, Moshe Greenberg and Mordechai Breuer. A “god-send” says Steven Weitzman of Stanford.

Telling stories has been an integral part of the Chasidic movement, perhaps more than with any other social or religious movement in Jewish history, where story telling has always been prominent. In **The Hasidic Tale**, Gedalyah Nigal surveys all of the published anthologies of such stories, analyzing their history, subject matter, reasons for existing and what it tells us about Chasidism.

Nicole Krauss is also the author of **The History of Love**, a novel said to be a cross between I.B. Singer, Woody Allen, Franz Kafka and Leopold Bloom, constructed from the 20th century Jewish experience of dislocation. J.M. Coetzee calls it “charming, tender and wholly original.” Ken Kalfur says it “will break your heart and at once mend it.”

IF YOU HAVE HAD BOOKS CHECKED OUT FROM THE LIBRARY FOR A LONG TIME, PLEASE RETURN THE BOOKS SO OTHERS CAN USE THEM.

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 500 words and submit it to: Editor, *The Builder*, emwechsler@earthlink.net by December 27, 2013 for the February - March issue.

Letters, essays and guest articles may be edited for length and at the discretion of the Marcom Committee. No anonymous submissions will be accepted.

EDITORIAL STAFF OF THE BUILDER

Editor and Senior Writer: Elisabeth Wechsler
Guest Contributors: Margie Gelb, Ann Gonski, Evie Groch, Lloyd Morgan, Anna Saldinger, Anna Saldinger, Scott Spear
Copy Editors: Gail Bernstein, Mara Bernstein, Jerry Iserson
Proofreader: Miriam Schiffman
Layout and Design: Jennifer Robinson
Communications Coordinator: Molly Daniels

The Marcom Committee will offer guidance and suggestions for future issues of *The Builder*. Interested members are invited to join the committee. Contact jeff.seideman@earthlink.net
**YOUTH GROUP EVENTS**

**Ruach (4th - 5th Grade)**
January 12 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm Tu B’shevat Birthday Party for the Trees

**Sababa (6th - 8th Grade)**
December 14 6:00 pm – 10:00 pm Limos & Latkes
February 8 – Gala Night Volunteering & Movie Night

**BESTY (9th - 12th Grade)**
December 14 Event TBA
January 17-20 West Coast Party at Camp Newman

**Beth El Band (8th grade & up)**
Performances:
- Sunday, December1 5:00 -8:00 pm
- Saturday, December 7 at 10:15 am
Rehearsals, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm:
- December 3
- Tuesday, January 7
- Tuesday, January 21

**Scribes of Beth El: Creative Writers’ Group (8th – 12th grade)**
Meet on Wednesdays at Beth El, 4:15 – 5:15 pm:
- December 4, 11, 18
- January 8, 15, 22, 29

**MADRICHIM POSITIONS OPEN**
Congregation Beth El’s 8th – 12th graders work in our Youth & Family Education (YAFE) programs as madrichim, which means “guides” in Hebrew. Our madrichim work as teaching assistants, Hebrew tutors, specialty leaders and office assistants helping our programs run smoothly while they gain valuable work experience. We are looking for more staff members. To apply for a position, please go to www.bethelberkeley.org/learning/teens/madrichim. Contact Debra Sagan Massey at debra@bethelberkeley.org if you have any questions.

---

**ON THE ONE-MINUTE ESSAY**

by Anna Saldinger

On Liquid Eyeliner One-Liners
Too much failure, too early in the morning. Only perfectionists need apply. Some girls use tape, but I wing it.

On Each Other
When I watch people pass by, I wonder if they know they are beautiful today. I wonder how someone felt when she put her socks on. I wonder if he combed his hair, or was innately satisfied with how the sandman had styled it. I wonder if they can tell whether I feel beautiful. I wonder if they ask.

On War
Johnson was a brilliant man, ruined by the pressures of a war he was not equipped to fight. He could have saved America from ruin but was sidetracked by trying to save the world. And now nobody cares that he might have won the war on poverty, because he lost the war in Vietnam.

On the Coffee-to-Cream Ratio
Pouring half-and-half is like developing a photograph, when developing a photograph was still an act of faith. You know when it’s perfect, and you can see instantly when you’ve gone too far.

To read more, please go to www.bethelberkeley.org/learning/teens/scribes

Anna Saldinger is a member of Scribes of Beth El.
EVENTS

THE ISRAEL I CHERISH
Monday, December 9, 7:30 pm
Congregation Beth El, Berkeley
Admission free

A discussion of the connection between Israel, Human Rights and Judaism with Rabbi Arik Ascherman, President, Rabbis for Human Rights.

Rabbi Arik Ascherman, President and Senior Rabbi of Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR), will speak at Congregation Beth El on Monday, December 9 at 7:30 pm about “The Israel I Cherish” and discuss the links between historical Jewish teaching, human rights and modern Israel. An outspoken activist and organizer for justice, Rabbi Ascherman has several times stood trial for acts of civil disobedience. He has received numerous awards and recognition for his human rights work, as has Rabbis for Human Rights.

RHR is an important rabbinic voice of conscience in Israel, defending human rights of marginalized communities within Israel and the Palestinian Territories. The organization was founded in 1988 and today has over 100 members – Israelis and ordained Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Renewal rabbis, as well as some rabbinical students.

The work of RHR expresses the view that, as Jews, we are obligated to protest against every injustice enacted against any other person, a view based on the belief that man and woman were created in God’s image. RHR believes that it is its obligation to inform the Israeli public about human rights violations, and that it is the organization’s role to pressure the state institutions to fix these injustices.

RHR derives its authority from two main sources – from the humanistic Jewish tradition and from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In parallel to its efforts to prevent violations of human rights, RHR brings a humanistic understanding of Jewish sources to the Israeli public discourse. During a time in which a nationalist and isolationist understanding of Jewish tradition is heard frequently and loudly, RHR gives expression to the traditional Jewish responsibility for the safety and welfare of the stranger, the different and the weak, the convert, the widow and the orphan. (See more in Rabbi Kahn’s letter on pg. 2.)

Co-sponsored by the Israel Committee of Congregation Beth El, Congregation Netivot Shalom, Kehillah Community Synagogue, Temple Isaiah and Temple Sinai.

REGISTER FOR CAMP SESSIONS NOW!

Summer 2014 registration opens Wednesday, December 11 at 11:00 am at www.campkeetov.org.
Session 1: June 23 – July 18
Session 2: July 28 – August 22
Beth El members and returning Camp Kee Tov families are given priority until January 7. The priority registration is on a first-come, first-served basis.

REUNION SHABBAT FOR CKT CAMPERS

Come to the Camp Kee Tov Reunion Shabbat on Friday, December 20 at 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 20 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!

PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

Join Congregation Beth El’s People of the Book group for lively discussions of fascinating books! Meetings take place on the third Thursday of the month beginning at 7:00 pm. You don’t have to read the book to attend, but it may add to your enjoyment!

December 19: Call It Sleep, by Henry Roth, the magnificent story of David Schearl, the “dangerously imaginative” child coming of age in the slums of New York. Presented by Wilma Rader.

January 16: The Rise of David Levinsky, by Abraham Cahan. Written by the legendary founder and editor of The Daily Forward and first published in 1917, Abraham Cahan’s realistic novel tells the story of a young Talmudic scholar who emigrates from a small town in Russia to the melting pot of turn-of-the-century New York City. As the Jewish “greenhorn” rises from the depths of poverty to become a millionaire garment merchant, he discovers the unbearably high price of assimilation. Presented by Bob Brandfon.

The Beth El library has obtained copies of these books.

People of the Book has openings for book presentations during the “Spring semester” (January through May). Books may be fiction or non-fiction, but bear in mind that they should appeal to a general audience. If you would like to present a book, please e-mail Barry Silverblatt at barry_s@pacbell.net.
**CAL KIDS DAY: WOMEN’S BASKETBALL FOR THE FAMILY**

Cal Women’s basketball team will play University of Oregon at UC Berkeley on **Sunday, January 5 at noon**. Bring your children and/or grandchildren and come early for the special pre-game activities. Team members will be available after the game to sign autographs. Enjoy great basketball with other Men’s Club members, Beth El members and their families.

Cal Women went to the Women’s Basketball Final Four competition last year. They play an exciting up-tempo game led by their coach, Pac-12 coach of the Year, Lindsay Gottlieb, and their point guard, Berkeley High School graduate, Brittany Boyd. If you went last year, you’ll remember their exciting 70-65 win over UCLA. Almost 100 Beth El kids and their families attended this event. If you’ve never been to a women’s basketball game, you’re in for a treat.

Tickets are $5 for adults and $1 for kids. Get your tickets now before they are sold out. To purchase tickets or to get further information, email Allan Sobel at absebs@gmail.com or call him at 510-878-2726.

Plans are in the works for Coach Gottlieb to come to Beth El and meet with children and their families. In addition to being a great coach, she is an inspiring speaker. For more information on this event, read the Beth El weekly e-updates and future YAFE announcements.

**TU B’SHEVAT SEDER**

Join us to celebrate Tu B’shevat with a special seder on **Wednesday, January 15, 2014 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm**.

On Tu B’shevat, we celebrate a New Year for the trees. Rabbis Yoel Kahn and Reuben Zellman will offer a celebration of fruit, transformation, growth and spirit in ourselves and in our world at a Tu B’shevat seder. Dinner included! $10 per person; kids grades 6 and older are welcome. No one will be turned away for lack of funds. RSVP to frontoffice@bethelberkeley.org or call the office at 510-848-3988.

**MENTAL HEALTH TASK FORCE**

Beth El’s Mental Health Task Force supports the wellness and mental health of our members and their families and educates the congregation about mental health issues and resources. The Task Force, chaired by Karen Harber and Susan Sugarman, meets periodically to learn, plan programs and explore how to best support the programs and members of Beth El. For more information about our work or if you would like to attend our next meeting on **Sunday, January 26 at 10:00 am**, please contact co-chairs: Susan Sugarman at susansugarmanlcsw@gmail.com or Karen Harber at kharber1@aol.com.

**ADULT EDUCATION**

“Jewish Identity” is our Adult Education Committee’s theme for the year. We are pleased to present two important scholars addressing different aspects of contemporary Jewish identity.

**THE JEWISH SECULARIST TRADITION**

Professor David Biale  
**Thursday, January 30, 2014 at 7:30 pm**

Professor David Biale, Emanuel Ringelblum Distinguished Professor of Jewish History at UC Davis, will speak about how Judaism has been transmitted, refashioned and renewed in a world where religious identity is no longer a matter of fate, but of personal choice. Prof. Biale’s most recent book, *Not in the Heavens: The Tradition of Jewish Secular Thought* was published by Princeton University Press in 2010.

**LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY**

Professor Sarah Benor, Scholar-in-Residence  
**Shabbat, February 21 & 22, 2014**

Professor Sarah Benor will be at Beth El as the Allan and Tybil Smith Kahn Scholar-in-Residence on the weekend of February 21 and 22. She is Associate Professor of Contemporary Jewish Studies at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (the seminary of the Reform movement). Her research and teaching focuses on the social science of American Jews with particular attention to language. The founder and editor of the *Journal of Jewish Languages*, Prof. Benor will speak about how language shapes and marks our identity and helps define the boundaries of community.
CHICKEN WITH CARMELIZED ONION AND CARDAMON RICE IS EASY TO MAKE

by Margie Gelb

A COOKBOOK HAS STOLEN MY HEART. Jerusalem, A Cookbook by Yotam Ottolenghi and Sami Tamimi is a home cook’s dream. Its sophisticated recipes are prepared with accents from both Palestinian and Israeli culture, in reflection of Ottolenghi and Tamimi’s individual upbringings. The business partners are quite famous in England, where their food shop, Ottolenghi, first opened in 2002. Their cookbook was released stateside last fall, and I snapped it up immediately.

Usually if I make one recipe out of a cookbook it’s a lot. I’ve made seven from this cookbook, and Chicken with Caramelized Onion and Cardamon Rice is one I now make regularly. I’ve adapted it with a few shortcuts to streamline the preparation, but the flavors remain true to the original recipe.

Ingredients:
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 3 tablespoons water
- 3 tablespoons barberries* (or use currants)
- 2-3 pounds chicken thigh on the bone, with skin
- 2 ½ teaspoons salt, divided
- ½ teaspoon pepper, divided
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- 4 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 10 cardamon pods
- ¼ rounded teaspoon cloves
- 1 cinnamon stick, broken in half
- 2 medium onions, peeled, halved and thinly sliced
- 1 ⅔ cups basmati rice
- 1 ¼ cups water, boiling
- ⅔ cup chopped herbs, for example, parsley, dill and cilantro leaves

Directions:
1. In a small saucepan, heat sugar and water until the sugar dissolves. Remove from heat, add the barberries and set aside. (You don’t have to do anything if you use the currants.)
2. Sprinkle the chicken with 1 teaspoon salt, several turns of pepper and the cinnamon. Heat a 12-13 inch sauté pan over medium heat. Add 2 tablespoons oil. Add the chicken and sauté until brown on both sides, about five minutes a side. Set aside on a plate.
3. In the same pan, add the rest of the oil, the cardamom pods, cloves and cinnamon stick. After 30 seconds add the onions and sauté over medium heat for 15 minutes until golden brown. Turn off heat. Add rice, 1½ teaspoons salt, more pepper and the barberries, or the currants and stir everything together.
4. Return the chicken to the pan, pushing it into the rice. Pour the boiling water over the chicken and rice, cover and cook over very low heat for 30 minutes. Remove from heat. Cover pan with clean tea towel and seal again with the lid for 10 minutes. Stir in the herbs with a fork.

Serves 4

*Barberries can be bought in Berkeley at the Middle East Market, 2054 San Pablo Avenue, just south of University. Worth the small effort.

“BRINGING IT HOME” CHALLAH COVERS
by Jodi Gladstone

Director of Early Childhood Education Maguy Weizmann McGuire, many multigenerational attendees and I had a fun opportunity to create a communal tallit at the Beth El Shabbaton led by Arella Barlev. This sparked an idea that Arella could to BENS and work with Gan Hadar students (ages 4-5) on a classroom project using the same silk-painting techniques.

The need arose when we couldn’t find a big enough challah cover for our All-School Shabbat challot. With a quick phone call to Arella, the problem was solved! On Friday, November 1, Arella set up the Beth El art room with silk-paint and not one – but TWO challah covers. One was three feet by three feet for the All-School Shabbat and a smaller one was created for our Shabbat bear!

The students painted, watched the colors mix and mingled as Arella, a Beth El member, talked about Shabbat, the Hebrew letters and the blessings. In the end, this collaboration fulfilled the mission of this year’s Shabbaton theme of “bringing it home!”
FINDING JUDAISM THROUGH TORAH STUDY

by Lloyd Morgan

I FIRST CAME TO CONGREGATION BETH EL’S TORAH STUDY in October 1994. It changed both the direction of my life and my spirituality. At Torah study, the presenter first describes what the parashah (Torah portion of the week) is all about or what it means to him or her and then the audience begins the discussion. Comments come from every conceivable direction. Sometimes a comment contradicts a previous comment, but no one ever says, “You’re wrong.” When I first began attending, I was immediately caught up in the process.

This process couldn’t have been more different from the way I grew up. I come from an extended family where it is not accepted for one person to have a different viewpoint from another. When one’s viewpoint is slightly different, it can bring on what feels like a verbal attack. The result is that when my family gets together, we avoid any topic that can lead to controversy. What remains are conversations so inane that I called them “yabber-yabber-yabber.”

What a breath of fresh air I found at Torah Study, where all views are welcome.

To understand what led me to Judaism, it’s useful to know a bit more about my background. When I was a child, my family went to a Methodist church every Sunday. I could not stand the music (simplistic rhymes sung in a droning style) and I was bored by Sunday school. At age 13, I told my parents I did not want to go any more, and they made no objection.

As early as junior high school, I was reading books about the Nazi resistance. I imagined how I, too, would resist if caught in such a nightmare.

As I got older, I only dated Jewish girls. It was not specifically because they were Jewish – I literally didn’t recognize Jewish names. I suspect, instead, that I was attracted to them because our conversations didn’t turn into the familiar yabber-yabber-yabber.

I graduated UC Berkeley as an electronic engineer. Having a science education, I described my spirituality as “quantum mechanical probabilistic-ness.”

Yet the irony of my circuitous route to becoming Jewish was evident in the fact that I had been married to a Jewish woman for 24 years. We visited her family once or twice a year during these years. They were secular Jews, so I had no idea what Judaism was all about. Yet, I loved their world.

In April 1995, I spent 11 days in the hospital – eight days in critical condition – as the result of a massive brain tumor. This experience, combined with Torah Study, which I had started attending the year before, gave me a deep sense of the Divine.

All along, I thought you had to be born Jewish to be Jewish. Eventually, I learned otherwise. I converted to Judaism on Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day), 1996. If I am in town, I attend Torah Study every week.

Lloyd has been a member of Congregation Beth El for 17 years.

THE SHABBATON WAS A HUGE SUCCESS!

Many thanks to our incredible Shabbaton Committee, led by Anna Fogelman and Jessica Wolin! This year’s Shabbaton included something for everyone...and helped us all learn, create, connect and play. Our vision for the Shabbaton was to “Bring it Home.” We wanted the enriching experience and powerful moments we had there to not be just isolated experiences but translated into meaningful and fun activities back at Beth El.

We hope you will “keep the Shabbaton spirit alive” by finding ways to bring it home—whether by joining a Keva class taught by Dorothy Richman, tying the tzitzit on the beautiful communal tallit made with Arella Barlev, or singing your heart out with Isaac Zones at our upcoming Shabbat Yafe on December 13. We look forward to seeing you soon!

We are grateful to the entire Shabbaton Committee for their hard work and would like to publicly acknowledge them for their contributions:

Max and Bonnie Coopertsein
Mara Bernstein
Donna Friedman Meier
Julie Pledger
Jodi Gladstone

Todah Rabah!
WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

**Susan Austin and Michael Charlson** joined Beth El with their sons Sam (4) and Ben (20 months) and moved to Oakland about 18 months ago from San Francisco. With a few gaps for professional and personal adventures, both Susan and Michael have called the Bay Area home since they arrived at Stanford as undergraduates. Susan is a deputy attorney general in the land law section of the California Attorney General’s Office, specializing in environmental and land use issues. Michael is also a partner in the San Francisco office of the Vinson & Elkins law firm where he practices securities and corporate governance litigation. They and their sons enjoy music, learning about science and the great outdoors.

**Joanna Bankier** first came to Berkeley in August 1969, with two young sons and her husband, a Fulbright scholar. He returned to France after two years and she stayed on, continuing graduate studies in Comparative Literature at UC Berkeley. Joanna raised her sons at the French American Bilingual School and Black Pine Circle, and published three anthologies of women’s poetry in translation before returning to academic work. Joanna taught later translation studies, Jews of modernity, cultural studies and critical theory at a new university in Stockholm, Södertörns högskola. Joanna now has returned to Berkeley and is translating, researching, writing – and watching over two grandchildren.

**Miriam Dym** is originally from the East Coast – raised mostly in Massachusetts. She moved to Berkeley in early 2004. One of her sons, **Gus Noe** (12) decided last fall (“with ferocity and tenacity”) that he wanted to be part of a Jewish community and wanted to become a bar mitzvah. His determination brought the family to Beth El. Gus had gone to Camp Kee Tov (1 session each in the summers of 2010, 2012) and adores the community and the ruach. **Ulysses Noe** (9), Gus’s younger brother and the real Berkeley native of the family, likes video games and biking. Miriam is an artist and entrepreneur with a start-up hand-printed textile and product business. Her dream is to grow into a real, local manufacturing establishment founded on principles of sustainability. (Her website, www.dymproducts.com, has links to a few of her main projects.) Miriam would like to volunteer at Beth El as a graphic designer or a copy editor. She is deeply interested in developing “best practices for sustainability/green living.”

**Ben Highton** and **Nancy Berglas** live in Berkeley with their two daughters, **Elisa** (7) and **Samantha** (3 1/2). Ben is originally from Chicago and came to Berkeley for graduate school. Once here, he decided never to leave. Ben is now a political science professor at UC Davis. Nancy grew up in New York, moved to Berkeley in 2000 and is an adolescent health researcher at the Public Health Institute in Oakland. Ben and Nancy have been enjoying High Holy Day services at Beth El for many years, joined the Camp Kee Tov family two years ago and are happy to be official members of the congregation.

**Eric Leven** grew up in Philadelphia and settled in Berkeley almost 20 years ago to work as a visual effects supervisor. His new bride, **Beth Hoch**, grew up in Berkeley, and currently works in academic affairs at the UC Berkeley College of Engineering. Initially only attending its High Holy Day services, Eric sought out Beth El because the warm and family-oriented atmosphere reminded him of his congregations back East. Beth grew up with many of her best friends as Beth El members. They joined as full members this year and are looking forward to being a part of the congregation as newlyweds. (They were married by Rabbi Kahn on October 13.) Eric is teaching Beth all the standard East Coast Jewish mannerisms, including Woody Allen’s neuroses. Beth is teaching Eric about remaining calm in crises. They live in Berkeley with their dog, cat and three chickens and enjoy movies, travel, hikes, baking and sailing on the Bay. “We look forward to becoming much more involved in Beth El and volunteering once all the wedding mishugas is over!” Beth said.

**Colin Mahan** and the children (**Zelda**, 6, and **Dash**, 17 months) have lived in the Bay Area their whole lives. **Amanda Mahan**, who was born and raised on the East Coast, has been living here since 1997 – almost a native, she says. The family, who now live in Albany, visited several local synagogues but loved the warmth of Beth El and its “beautiful facilities.” After Zelda had a fabulous summer at Kee Tov, the Mahans decided to join Beth El. “We love to take advantage of the natural beauty of the Bay Area – hikes at Point Reyes and Alameda beach. We really enjoy family time and socializing with good friends. We throw a mean BBQ and love to bake,” Amanda said. Colin is a copywriter for MyFitnessPal and Amanda works as a Creative Director for digital at The Clorox Company. They are interested in participating in all of the holiday and child-related activities.

**Joanne Miller** and **David Zonana** are excited to become members of Beth El after taking part in wonderful holiday and kids’ events over the past couple of years. They wanted their kids to start religious school and be more involved in a Jewish community, and felt that Beth El was the best fit. **Sophie** (7) and **Leah** (5) attend Marin School in Albany. David grew up in Greenwich Village and lived in New York City until moving to the Bay Area in 1997. He is an attorney with the California Attorney
General’s Office, working on climate change and other environmental issues. Joanne is originally from Los Angeles but came to UC Berkeley and basically never left. She works for the California Digital Library in UC’s Office of the President in Oakland. The family enjoys bike riding, reading, cooking and baking, arts and crafts, and playing outside. They are looking forward to being more involved in holiday events and children’s programs at Beth El, and finding out about the charitable work that Beth El does in the larger Bay Area as well as in Jewish communities.

Reneé Passy-Zale moved from San Rafael to Berkeley to be closer to her children, following the loss of her husband, Irving Zale. She’s originally from Paris and has lived in the Bay Area since she came to the United States as a young bride. Congregation Beth El is very close to her new home. Reneé used to work with Beth El on joint projects when she was on the staff of the Berkeley/Richmond JCC. She enjoys many activities including writing, singing, foreign films and travel abroad and, of course, visiting with her four children and seven grandchildren. Reneé taught French, Spanish and English as a Second Language (ESL) for many years and has a Master’s degree in creative writing from San Francisco State University. She has been teaching the history of the Holocaust at public schools across the Bay Area. The “past two years have been challenging,” Reneé said, but she hopes to resume her volunteer activities “in the near future.”

Leah & Juston Smithers met at UC Berkeley and have lived in the Bay Area since 1996. Leah is from Los Angeles; Juston also grew up in Southern California, by way of Michigan and, originally, West Virginia. The Smithers were drawn to Beth El by the youth program, which incorporates the kinds of songs and outdoor experiences that Leah grew familiar with as a long-time Camp Swig camper. Their children, Ella (5) and Julian (2), took an immediate liking to Beth El’s youth program – both kids enjoyed the Beth El playgroups. For the past few years, Leah has mostly been a full-time mom, taking on occasional projects as a reporter and editor. (She is a graduate of Cal’s journalism school.) Juston is co-founder and chief technical officer of 44 Energy Technologies, a consulting and technology development company focused on the responsible use of energy resources. Leah and Juston would like to be involved with Beth El’s family programs.

Josh and Marne Sussman met in San Francisco after college (playing rugby!). After getting married, they moved to New Jersey while Josh was attending law school at NYU. They “hightailed it back to the Bay Area as soon as they could” and settled in El Cerrito about three years ago. Josh is originally from Novato, CA, and Fairlawn, NJ, and Marne is from Arcata, CA. Marne is an environmental attorney at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman in San Francisco, and Josh is a PhD. candidate in school psychology at UC Berkeley, an intern at a psychology clinic in Oakland and a fellow in Berkeley’s Research in Cognition and Mathematics Education program. The Sussmans were drawn to Beth El for “the wonderful pre-school environment for our son Parker (3), who despite his wild ways, seems to be greatly loved at BENS.” The family was also interested in the opportunity to be a part of a Jewish community. “We both love sports (especially rugby) and being outside,” Marne said. “Parker is shaping up to be a rugby star. We hope to be involved with BENS and other family volunteer activities.”

Federico Villalobos moved to San Francisco from Los Angeles nearly seven years ago to study art at San Francisco State University. He started to do studio art and walked away with a degree in art history – something he’s extremely passionate about. The past two years he has been living in North Berkeley, a few blocks from Beth El. While he’s been a visitor to many congregations in the Bay Area and they’ve all been quite beautiful, Federico never felt the warmth he did upon visiting Beth El – everyone was so welcoming, he said. A member even invited him home for Shabbat dinner after the service. Federico’s been attending Beth El ever since. His current interests are in radio, social media in branding and marketing, art history and curatorial work – focusing on cultural memory in art history and current contemporary art practices. He also likes biking around the Bay Area. Federico is currently working at two retail jobs and interning at a radio program in Oakland, while trying to study for the Graduate Record Exam. He and a friend are also putting together a queer pop culture podcast – “something we hope will come to fruition by this year’s end!” Federico is currently looking for projects to be involved in at Beth El. Otherwise, he says he loves attending Friday evening Shabbat services whenever he can.

We also welcome Norma Fiedotin and sons, Joseph Rothenberg (9) and Jake Rothenberg (6), who live in Berkeley; Spencer and Sarah Herold live in Berkeley with their son, Atticus (17 months); Moorea Mallatt and her daughter, Iris (3), also hail from Berkeley; Anne Pearson and Erik Levin have a son, Rafi (9) and a daughter Sadie (7), and live in Berkeley; Noel Plummer, with her daughter, Sidney (10), live in Albany; and Todd and Dianne Tucker live in Walnut Creek with their daughter, Alexandra (17) and son, Ian (15).
MY UPCOMING YEAR IN SANTIAGO, CHILE

by Rabbi Reuben Zellman

Thank you, Beth El, for this amazing opportunity!

AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, I will be on leave from Congregation Beth El from July 2014 through June 2015. I will very much miss being present in our community for that year, and I am also extremely excited about the opportunity to study and live in a country and culture I have never experienced before. Many of you have asked me what I’ll be doing during this period, and what my role will be here when I return. I’m happy to tell you about it!

First, the big picture. I am very happy to be returning to Beth El beginning July 1, 2015, as our synagogue’s music director. I love working in this community and am delighted that I am able to return after this year away. I also let our leadership know that I would need to continue at Beth El in a reduced capacity. For more than four years I have served our congregation in two roles, as assistant rabbi and music director. I love the wide range of responsibilities that I currently have here – this combination job offers variety, joy and meaningful work beyond any other job I can imagine. At the same time, my partner Erika and I have concluded that it is best for our family for me to reduce my work hours and spend more time at home.

The music director position will be roughly half-time, and will include nearly everything that I currently do with our music programs: leading services for Shabbat and holidays, teaching classes, working with our chorus, band, b’nei mitzvah students and preschool, and offering music at members’ lifecycle observances and other community events. For July 2014 – June 2015, we are assembling a music team to cover these roles temporarily. Many of our candidates have worked here very successfully before, and I am confident that they will do a terrific job in my absence and bring their own unique contributions. I will be coming home from Chile for the High Holy Days 5775/2014 to lead services at Beth El.

Meanwhile, during the year I’m away, the non-musical responsibilities that I have had over the past four years will be taken over permanently by whomever is selected as our new full-time associate rabbi. It is wonderful that our congregation is, after several years, now able to return our clergy staff to previous levels; it will allow all of us to be more available to you and the community.

So…what, you might ask, will I be doing in Chile for a year? As some of you know, I have been working on a master’s degree in choral conducting at San Francisco State. My partner, Erika, has a sabbatical from her job, and her goal is to learn Spanish. So, she will be in language school, and I will be finishing my degree and master’s thesis as part of SFSU’s study abroad program. As it happens, this program includes only one university in Latin America that accepts music graduate students: the Pontifical Catholic University of Santiago. I am looking forward to a year of learning in a very different kind of religious and cultural setting!

I want to express my deep appreciation to our Board of Directors and staff, especially to our President Paul Sugarman, to our Executive Director Norm Frankel, and to Rabbi Yoel Kahn, who have been so supportive and are working hard to guide our congregation through this transition. And I am grateful to the many members of the Beth El community who have expressed support and enthusiasm for this adventure. Not all communities would be so quick and heartfelt in seeing the value of this experience, and so generous and flexible in allowing it to happen. I truly look forward to bringing back to Beth El new skills, a refreshed spirit and new music from the Chilean Jewish community!
LOOKING BACK AND PLANNING AHEAD

by Diane Birnbaum

Midrasha’s year has started off with a bang. Our teachers are creative, charismatic and a pleasure to work with. Our teens are really happy with their classes. (I can always tell because teens that don’t like their classes come to me to switch into new ones; this year, everyone is really happy with their original choices!)

So what has happened so far and what’s next on the horizon:

Our backpacking trip in October sent a group of adventuresome teens to Castle Rock State Park. Trip members strung an eruv, celebrated Shabbat in the wild, had perfect weather and can’t wait to go again next year. In fact, some of this year’s participants were repeaters from last year.

By the time you read this, we will have had our first retreat with over 100 teens from all four Midrasha campuses together at Walker Creek Ranch under the leadership of director Isaak Brown, our new director of experimental education. Isaak took the retreat staff to Camp Newman for a weekend in early October so that staff could plan the upcoming year of retreats, the first time we’ve had an out-of-town overnight staff training in years.

Our 8th graders spent a morning at Midrasha with our annual Ability Awareness Workshop, our 10th graders have had a workshop on Yitzhak Rabin and democracy in Israel by guests Uriel Levy and Sivan Bamberger from Israel, our seniors all have letters of recommendation from Midrasha to include in their college applications and break-time has found us with a few “Surprise Sundays,” an excuse to just have fun at our mid-morning break.

Do you know Midrasha has a job bank of teens willing to work for you? When they register, Midrasha students are asked if they want to make their names available to people looking for teens to babysit, help with computers or office work, do housework, moving or lifting, work in the garden, tutor younger children, pet sit or help at parties. If you would like a copy of the list, e-mail us at diane@midrasha.org or call the Midrasha office, 510-843-4667.

And remember, teens register all year long at Midrasha, so if your teen or any teen you know is not at Midrasha, this is a good time to enroll. And start saving the date right now: Sunday, March 23, 2014 is our annual Midra-Shabang and I know you won’t want to miss it this year.

The congregation is cordially invited to attend the service and kiddush following to honor these bar and bat mitzvah candidates:

Sylvie Gizzi will be called to the Torah as a bat mitzvah on Saturday, December 28 at 10:15 am. Sylvie is the daughter of Valerie Gutwirth and Elio Gizzi.

Daniel Huebner will be called to the Torah as a bar mitzvah on Saturday, January 11 at 10:15 am. Daniel is the son of David Huebner and Sandy Bacskai.

Jolie Gobler will be called to the Torah as a bat mitzvah on Saturday, January 18 at 10:15 am. Jolie is the daughter of Aaron Gobler and Lisa Cain.

Eli Kane will be called to the Torah as a bar mitzvah on Saturday, January 25 at 10:15 am. Eli is the son of Scott and Nancy Kane.
SAVE THE DATE – BETH EL’S GALA CELEBRATION AND FUND-RAISER!

PLAN NOW TO ATTEND BETH EL’S 10TH ANNUAL GALA on Saturday, February 8 from 6:00 to 10:00 pm. The theme for the evening is Hot Desert Nights. Picture the Sahara and multi-colored veils and exotic tents.

Join the Beth El community as we celebrate our dynamic youth and family education (YAFE) programs. This elegant evening with Mediterranean flare will feature live music, dinner, dancing, silent auctions and more.

Check your mail for an invitation to this year’s event and raffle tickets to purchase for a chance to win!

If you’d like to join the Gala event team, please contact Dana Zell at danazell@me.com.

BETH EL’S GALA

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 *

* ___________________________________________________________________________________

Please credit the fund checked at the right:

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

It is a Jewish tradition to give Tzedakah to commemorate lifecycle 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.
AARON PЛИSHNER CHILDREN’S LIBRARY FUND
Phyllis Zisman in honor of the birth of Adam David Zisman
to Tim Zisman & Molly Capron

ANNUAL APPEAL
Matthew Feldman
Judith London in honor of her grandson, Jonah Meier
Noushin Pirnazar
Abigail & Craig Rudnick

BENS SCHOLARSHIP FUND
Jessica Wolin & Matthew Rosen in memory Samuel
Menachem Rosen

CAMP KEE TOV SCHOLARSHIP FUND
Herbert & Sondra Napell in memory of Emanuel Joel
Matkowsky and Barbara Matkowsky Gorin

GENERAL FUND
Joanne Backman, Henry Pollack & family in memory of
Edmund Backman
Barbara Fierer & Robert Brandfon in honor of the wedding
of Elisabeth Wechsler & Jeff Seideman
Richard Dallet in memory of Lucille Lipson
Fred & Kathy Fabricant in memory of Lucille Lipson
Stacey & Edward Holly
Patrick & Julie Matloff Kennedy in memory of Lucille Lipson,
in honor of the birth of Elijah & Gabriel Cherin, in honor
of Rabbi Kahn & Rabbi Zellman’s wonderful leadership of
High Holy Day services
Rosa Mayeri in memory of Noor Yashar and Yahya Mayeri
Marv Pearlstein in memory of Marilyn Dorfman
David Scheirer in memory of Lucille Lipson
Hilda Steckel
Madelyn & Anthony Stone in memory of Sidney Stein
Renee Passy Zale in memory of Isaac Zale
Joel & Karen Dash Zeldin in memory of Fae Dash
UC Storage for the continued donation of storage units for
Beth El

HOMELESS MEAL
Joan Alexander in memory of Janet Sachs
Clarke and Maria Daniels
Anna Mantell & Robert Goldstein in honor of the wedding of
Elisabeth Wechsler & Jeff Seideman

IRAC
Laurie Swiadon

ISRAEL SCHOLARSHIP FUND
Frances Alexander in memory of Dora and William Connolly

MAH TOVU CAMPAIGN
Rabbi Yoel Kahn & Dan Bellm
Sandy & Vivian Golden

MITZVAH COMMITTEE
Allen King in memory of Joanne King

MUSIC FUND
Bruce and Susan Carter in honor of Livya Shira Maimon
Edythe Heda in memory of Sydell Lemerman
Rabbi Reuben Zellman & Erika Katske
Elaine & Allan Sobel in honor of Susan & Bruce Carter’s
granddaughter Rebecca’s bat mitzvah

NURSERY SCHOOL FUND
Frances Alexander in memory of Ernest Alexander

ONEG/KIDDUSH FUND
Paul & Susan Sugarman in memory of Louis and Natalie
Sugarman

RABBI’S DISCRETIONARY FUND
Susan & Michael Austin in honor of the wedding of Elisabeth
Wechsler & Jeff Seideman
Brian Parker & Leyna Bernstein in memory of Jean Bernstein
James and Marcia Emery in memory of Naomi Rose
Michael & Rosalie Sederoff Gotz in memory of Lucille Lipson
Martin & Selma Graham in memory of Laddie Lisa Graham
Joan Sarnatt & David Hoffman in memory of Bernard Sarnat
Zena Ratner in memory of Eda Levi
Marcel & Margrit Schurman in memory of Mina Turkavka
Gail Zellman in memory of Sydell Lemerman

YOUTH & FAMILY EDUCATION FUND
Nancy Gordon in memory of Joanne King
## December 2013 / Kislev - Tevet 5774

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHANUKAH: NIGHT 5</strong>&lt;br&gt;No Midrasha&lt;br&gt;4:00 pm Special Needs Chanukah Party&lt;br&gt;5:00 pm Latkefest</td>
<td><strong>CHANUKAH: NIGHT 6</strong>&lt;br&gt;9:30 am Parent-Child Play Group&lt;br&gt;2:00 pm Library Committee</td>
<td><strong>CHANUKAH: NIGHT 7</strong>&lt;br&gt;6:30 pm Beth El Band Rehearsal&lt;br&gt;7:00 pm Adult Ed: How to Chant Torah with Rabbi Zellman&lt;br&gt;7:00 pm Hannah Arendt Reading Group</td>
<td><strong>CHANUKAH: NIGHT 8</strong>&lt;br&gt;BENS Closed: Parent/Teacher Conferences&lt;br&gt;6:00 pm Men's Club Presents Prof. Nacht on the Middle East&lt;br&gt;7:30 pm Midrasha Board Meeting</td>
<td><strong>CHANUKAH: NIGHT 9</strong>&lt;br&gt;7:00 pm Israel Committee Meeting&lt;br&gt;7:30 pm Ritual Committee Meeting</td>
<td><strong>Shabbat Evening Service</strong></td>
<td><strong>8:30 am Early Minyan&lt;br&gt;9:15 am Torah Study&lt;br&gt;10:15 am Shabbat Service: Bnei Mitzvah Family Program</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1:00 pm BSTY Meeting<br>2:30 pm IRAC’s Anat Hoffman Program (off-site) | 9:30 am Parent-Child Play Group<br>2:00 pm Library Committee<br>7:00 pm Beth El Life Stories (off-site)<br>7:30 pm Rabbi Arik Ascherman - Rabbis for Human Rights | 7:00 pm How to Chant Torah with Rabbi Zellman<br>7:30 pm Executive Committee Meeting | Camp Kee Tov Registration Opens | **Limon & Latkes Sababa with BBYO**<br>1:00 pm BENS Closet<br>5:00 pm Tot Shabbat Yafe<br>5:30 pm Shabbat Yafe Catered Dinner<br>6:15 pm Shabbat Yafe Community-wide Service<br>7:15 pm Shabbat Yafe Activity | **8:30 am Early Minyan<br>9:15 am Torah Study<br>10:15 am Shabbat Service**<br>6:30 pm Limos & Latkes Sababa with BBYO | **8:00 am BENS Mini camp<br>2:00 pm Library Committee**

---

### Thursday, December 5, 2013
- **7:00 pm Israel Committee Meeting**
- **8:00 pm Men’s Club Presents Prof. Nacht on the Middle East**
- **7:30 pm Midrasha Board Meeting**

### Friday, December 6, 2013
- **6:15 pm Shabbat Yafe Community-wide Service**
- **7:15 pm Shabbat Yafe Activity**

### Saturday, December 7, 2013
- **8:30 am Early Minyan**
- **9:15 am Torah Study**
- **10:15 am Shabbat Service: Bnei Mitzvah Family Program**

---

### Monday, December 8, 2013
- **1:00 pm BENS Closet**
- **5:00 pm Tot Shabbat Yafe**
- **5:30 pm Shabbat Yafe Catered Dinner**
- **6:15 pm Shabbat Yafe Community-wide Service**
- **7:15 pm Shabbat Yafe Activity**

---

### Friday, December 13, 2013
- **1:00 pm BENS Closet**
- **5:00 pm Tot Shabbat Yafe**
- **5:30 pm Shabbat Yafe Catered Dinner**
- **6:15 pm Shabbat Yafe Community-wide Service**
- **7:15 pm Shabbat Yafe Activity**

---

### Monday, December 16, 2013
- **9:30 am Parent-Child Play Group**
- **2:00 pm Library Committee**
- **7:00 pm Beth El Life Stories (off-site)**
- **7:30 pm Rabbi Arik Ascherman - Rabbis for Human Rights**

---

### Wednesday, December 18, 2013
- **6:30 pm Beth El Band Rehearsal**
- **7:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting**

---

### Thursday, December 19, 2013
- **5:40 pm Kadima All School Service**
- **7:00 pm People of the Book: Adult Ed**
- **7:30 pm Roots & Branches Adult Ed with Rabbi Kahn**

---

### Friday, December 20, 2013
- **6:15 pm Yismechu Shabbat Evening Service**
- **6:15 pm Camp Kee Tov Reunion Shabbat Service**

---

### Saturday, December 21, 2013
- **NO CLASSES - Winter Vacation**
- **8:30 am Early Minyan**
- **9:15 am Torah Study**
- **10:15 am Shabbat Service**

---

### Sunday, December 22, 2013
- **NO CLASSES - Winter Vacation**
- **8:00 am BENS Mini camp**
- **2:00 pm Library Committee**

---

### Thursday, December 26, 2013
- **6:15 pm Shabbat Evening Service**
- **6:15 pm Camp Kee Tov Reunion Shabbat Service**

---

### Saturday, December 28, 2013
- **NO CLASSES - Winter Vacation**
- **8:30 am Early Minyan**
- **9:15 am Torah Study**
- **10:15 am Shabbat Service: Sylvie Gizzi Bat Mitzvah**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|        |        |         | 1 NO CLASSES - Winter Vacation  
BENS Closed  
New Year’s Day - Office Closed | 2 NO CLASSES - Winter Vacation  
8:00 am BENS Mini Camp  
7:00 pm Israel Committee Meeting  
7:30 pm Roots & Branches Adult Ed with Rabbi Kahn | 3 NO CLASSES - Winter Vacation  
8:00 am BENS Mini Camp | 4 8:30 am Early Minyan  
9:15 am Torah Study  
9:30 am Chug Mishpacha Resumes  
10:15 am Shabbat Service |
| 5 No Midrasha | 6 BENS Resumes  
9:30 am Parent-Child Play Group  
2:00 pm Library Committee | 7 Kadima Resumes  
9:30 am BENS Parent Workshop  
6:30 pm Beth El Band Rehearsal  
7:00 pm Hannah Arendt Reading Group | 8 7:00 pm BENS Parent Workshop  
7:30 pm Midrasha Board Meeting | 9 12:00 pm Lunch & Learn: Hannah Arendt & the Jewish Question  
7:30 pm Roots & Branches Adult Ed with Rabbi Kahn | 10 5:00 pm Tot Shabbat Yafe  
5:30 pm Shabbat Yafe Potluck Dinner  
6:15 pm Shabbat Yafe Community-wide Service  
7:15 pm Shabbat Yafe Activity | 11 8:30 am Early Minyan  
9:15 am Torah Study  
10:15 am Shabbat Service: Daniel Huebner Bar Mitzvah |
| 12 1:00 pm Ruach Tu B'Shevat event | 13 9:30 am Parent-Child Play Group  
2:00 pm Library Committee | 14 7:30 pm Executive Committee Meeting | 15 6:30 pm Tu B'Shevat Seder  
7:00 pm BENS Info Night for New Families | 16 TU B'SHEVAT  
5:00 pm Tu B'Shevat Family Celebration  
6:15 pm Sababa Meeting  
7:30 pm Lehrhaus’ Beyond the Basics: Delving Deeper into Jewish Experience  
7:30 pm Roots & Branches Adult Ed with Rabbi Kahn | 17 6:15 pm Yamechu Shabbat Evening Service | 18 No Chug Mishpacha  
8:30 am Early Minyan  
9:15 am Torah Study  
10:15 am Shabbat Service: Jolie Gobler Bat Mitzvah  
1:00 pm Adult B’nei Mitzvah Class |
| 19 9:30 am Midrasha  
2:00 pm Homeless - Medical Clinic  
5:00 pm Homeless Meal  
7:30 pm Beth El Kevah Group | 20 MARTIN LUTHER KING J R. DAY  
9:30 am Midrasha  
Office Closed  
BENS Closed | 21 6:30 pm Beth El Band Rehearsal  
7:30 pm Program Council Meeting | 22 5:40 pm Kadima All School Service  
6:15 pm Madrichim Training  
7:30 pm Lehrhaus’ Beyond the Basics: Delving Deeper into Jewish Experience  
7:30 pm Roots & Branches Adult Ed with Rabbi Kahn | 23 6:15 pm Shabbat Evening Service | 24 8:30 am Early Minyan  
9:15 am Torah Study  
10:15 am Shabbat Service: Eli Kane Bar Mitzvah  
1:00 pm 6th Grade Family Program |
| 25 8:00 am BENS Mini Camp  
6:15 pm Shabbat Evening Service | 26 9:30 am Parent-Child Play Group  
2:00 pm Library Committee | 27 7:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting | 28 6:00 pm 5th Grade B’nei Mitzvah Date Selection Family Meeting  
7:30 pm “The Jewish Secularist Tradition”: Adult Education with David Blae  
7:30 pm Lehrhaus’ Beyond the Basics: Delving Deeper into Jewish Experience | 29 Midrasha Retreat  
5:30 pm BENS’ Gan Devoim & Gan Alonim Shabbat Dinner  
6:15 pm Shabbat Evening Service | 30 8:30 am Early Minyan  
9:15 am Torah Study  
10:15 am Shabbat Service: Daniel Huebner Bar Mitzvah  
1:00 pm 6th Grade Family Program |
LAST-MINUTE “BLACK FRIDAY” HOURS!

We are writing this article before holding our biggest event of the year, the Chanukah Bazaar. We want to thank in advance the multitude of volunteers who make this large enterprise possible. The bazaar provides a major part of our yearly earnings that we contribute to the congregation. The gift shop is a convenient service to the community, offering a variety of Judaica merchandise. Whether you are looking for a ritual object, a tallit, a child’s game, a piece of jewelry, a wedding or b’nei mitzvah gift, if you check our displays you will probably find a very good selection.

Our latest fair-trade items – kippot for men and women, beaded animal key chains, bracelets, handbags, coin purses and banners – have created quite a buzz! They are very colorful and well-priced. Each item states its country of origin, in case you’re curious.

Also, a new item has been added to our collection of AHAVA products: Sun Protection Anti-Aging Facial Moisturizer (SPF 50). This product has proven very effective after testing.

The gift shop is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. A volunteer or the office staff will gladly assist you. And even though the office is closed, we will have special “Black Friday” shopping hours on Friday, November 29, 1:00 - 5:00 pm.

Happy Holidays!
Odette and Robinn, giftshop@bethelberkeley.org