



When the architectural firm, Miller Dunwiddie, renovated our building, they wanted to express our desire to be a welcoming home and a beacon of hope. They did this with the addition of the 26th Street glass entrance that shines brightly in the night and that features the menorah from the Penn Avenue building.

In this edition of the Shofar, you'll read about how Beth El is striving to realize our desire to shine a light of blessing on our community and world.

Insert: Manny Kaplan who is preparing for his bar mitzvah, holds a Torah during Sukkot services.

STOP LEARNING!

By Rabbi Alexander Davis



In my family, there are many things we do to get ready for Chanukah. We decorate the house, buy potatoes for latkes, arrange colorful candles in our chanukiyot. I learned this year one thing not to do before lighting Chanukah candles and at first, it caught me completely by surprise. According to the Mishnah Berurah (672:10),

an early 20th century halakhic code, it is forbidden to study Torah before candle lighting: "Family should gather together and light candles. But it is forbidden to study when the time for lighting arrives... and if he started studying, he must stop."

That's unexpected! I thought learning was always encouraged. Apparently, that's exactly why it is discouraged. Because learning is so highly valued and enjoyed, the rabbis feared that once a person picked up a book, she'd have a hard time putting it down. Thus, candle lighting would be delayed. Ironically, the prohibition against learning reflects our very love of learning.

Although the Mishnah Berurah does not explain his ruling, I'd suggest that there is another reason why learning might be forbidden before lighting Chanukah candles. It mirrors the story.

When the ancient Greeks conquered Israel, they forbade Torah study. In fact, they burned the scroll of the law. We read in the Book of Maccabees: "When the Greeks had rent the Books of the Law in pieces, they burned them with fire. And whoever was found

with any of the books or if any consented to the Law, the king's commandment was that they should be put to death." (1 Maccabees 1:56-57).

This horrendous act of persecution inspired not only resistance, but fables. According to legend, when Greek soldiers would approach a school, Jewish children would quickly stash their books and pull out dreidels. This popular tale originates in 19th century Europe- 2000 years after the time of the Maccabees! But the fact that it was created speaks volumes. It says that we are willing to risk our lives for Torah.

The Greeks understood that the way to destroy Judaism was to put an end to learning. By implication, we understand that learning is a way to protect Judaism and ensure Jewish continuity. For learning creates community and inspires Jewish living.

Recently, I was teaching as part of our new initiative, Community Learning @ THE WELL. At the conclusion of my class, participants continued the conversation about our learning and spent time just getting to know each other. The problem was, we needed the room for another program. So eventually, I had to ask them to leave. It seems the Mishnah Berura was right! Once we start in with Torah, it is hard to stop.

The B'nai Yissichar (19th C, Poland) teaches that we follow Hillel's advice and add one additional candle each night of Chanukah because, "the more we increase our learning, the more light we receive." I would go one step further. We not only receive light- we shed light.

In these dark days of winter, let's illumine our lives and the lives of others with the light of learning.

Walking Community

By Rabbi Avi S. Olitzky



Ten years later, homegrown Minnesotans still ask me what I think of our winters. I love them. I love a state with seasons—and I love a state where it is cold enough that the sky is blue and clear, free of moisture. Indeed, I love being cozied up on the couch with a warm cup of cocoa—but even in the

winter, I like being outdoors. And not just for skating or sledding. I love going for runs and walks.

On a daily basis, I have the opportunity to get together with so many different people. If the situation and the conversation permits, my preference for that setting is to go for a walk—even in the winter. I generally stick to the same route for each conversation, knowing how long it takes from start to finish—but it is not just about getting a breath of fresh air.

On one hand, it is about allowing the blood to flow and our conversation to remain freeing and casual. But more than that, there is a deeper motivation to my walks with others. My vision of Beth El is a spiritual home without walls. It is a center where everyone and anyone feel welcome—and they carry that sense of warmth and home with them when they leave. There is no better way to implicitly live this vision than to move beyond our walls. For many, it is quite liberating.

Every winter (this year the middle of February), synagogues read parashat terumah. Therein lies the

key verse that synagogues use to reflect on their holy spaces: *V'asu li mikdash, v'shachanti b'tokham* – often translated as “And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8). I’m reminded of the lessons of my childhood: it’s not *that* I may dwell among them; rather, it is *but* I dwell among them. Or better restated: You can and should build Me these holy spaces, but I, God, will dwell among you, the people. Because it is in the sense of sacred community that I dwell.

The conversations outdoors feel less encumbered and that feeling is what we want to translate to our experiences at Beth El writ large. How can we exist as a sacred community free of stumbling blocks? What can we do to live up to our role as a community pillar, caring for those in need and providing balance for those feeling off-kilter? And most important, how can we be a community within which God dwells?

We continue to make progress in strengthening the relationships people have with and within our Beth El community. But we still have quite a road ahead of us. We welcome and need our community’s continued support and feedback as to what we can do better.

Still, as our conversations progress around the neighborhood, down by the lakes, along the greenway, aside Benilde-St. Margaret’s, it is we who are Beth El far more than our beloved address. Our relationships and the community we continue to build give our beloved synagogue building meaning—but it is we who exist to give meaning to life and to the world.

We continue to make progress in strengthening the relationships people have with and within our Beth El community.

Reflections on Eastern Europe

By Cantor Audrey Abrams



It is hard to call our trip to Eastern Europe “good,” though the words “inspiring, enlightening and thought provoking” are definitely apt descriptions. To be sure, we had good times visiting markets, walking pedestrian streets, taking in the beautiful sites of the cities, and most of all, getting to know each other better as an extended Beth El community. But Eastern Europe is complicated. Even as we walked through the valley of the shadows of a destroyed world, we valued the opportunity to learn about the richness of pre-war Jewish life and the struggles to create Jewish life today.



At the hidden synagogue in Terezin, (in Prague) we were reminded of the words of Rabbi Byron Sherwin from his book, Sparks Amidst the Ashes: “We come to these camps in order to assure the souls of those who were killed that they are not alone. At the same time, we take a piece of them with us to accompany us on our journeys going forward.”



In Budapest, we visited the Shoe Memorial on the Danube. I’ll never look at shoes the same way again. At each camp, cemetery, and memorial, we held a short ceremony to honor those who had been murdered in that particular place, sharing stories of individuals who died there and also stories of people who survived that particular horror and, post-war, resided in Minnesota. As we stood in the spots where people we knew personally had been victimized by these horrible atrocities, it brought everything closer to home.



In Krakow, in addition to paying homage to those murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau, we spent time at the Krakow JCC. We enjoyed a Shabbat dinner with 150 other visitors, attended a concert of the JCC intergeneration choir (which includes a Holocaust survivor) and a non-Jewish German choir, and held our own egalitarian minyan on Shabbat where we celebrated an impromptu b’nai mitzvah when six of our travelers had their first aliyah to the Torah.

My mother died as we were leaving the country where so much death occurred. And, it was also the country my grandfather left so he could survive and, consequently, help bring my mother into the world. I believe these strange set of circumstances have meaning which I am yet to understand.

A special thank you to everyone who has supported me and my family through the loss of my mom. My dad, Marvin, David and I, have felt the loving comfort of the community and are so very grateful.

May the memories of all those who were murdered in the Holocaust, and my mother who lived a rich and full life, be forever a blessing. Rest In Peace.

Heartfelt Partnership

BETH EL AND BENILDE - ST. MARGARET'S SCHOOL

Linda Goldberg



From left to right: Linda Goldberg, Beth El Synagogue; Susan Skinner – BSM Senior High Principal; Mary Andersen – BSM Assistant Principal

Many of you know that Benilde - St. Margaret's School is located across the street from Beth El, but did you know that we have enjoyed a wonderful, collaborative, and meaningful partnership that has grown and developed over the last 60 years?

This strong and respectful bond was forged right from the beginning. On September 17, 1961, ground was broken for the Beth El Youth and Activities building in St. Louis Park on land bought from the Brothers of the Christian Schools (informally known as the Christian Brothers.) The story is told that the purchase agreement was based on a handshake with Beth El, and honored by the Brothers despite subsequent higher offers.

Throughout the ensuing years, Beth El and BSM have enjoyed a cordial and warm relationship. When I first came to Beth El in 1996, I was warmly welcomed by then President Jim Hamburge and Vice Principal Mary Andersen. Mary and I have a great professional relationship and friendship, working together on a variety of projects and initiatives.

In 2000, BSM embarked on a major capital campaign and renovation project which severely limited their parking and meeting spaces during construction. We were delighted to offer our parking lot and facilities to their staff, students, and families. The arrangement worked so well that parking has been a true collaborative effort ever since. BSM students park in

the Beth El lot during the week and for special events. BSM has graciously agreed to open their parking lot to us on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. In addition, BSM students park in the JCC parking lot on those days and BSM transports them by bus to school, leaving the Beth El and BSM lots for High Holy Day attendees. As if this wasn't accommodating enough, BSM has graciously hosted us for High Holy Day services in their beautiful Hamburge Theater – both during the school week or on the weekend. This Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur alone, close to 1,000 Beth El Apples & Honey and Drash attendees experienced BSM hospitality in their theater. I hope you noticed the lovely message on their marquis as you drove by on your way to shul, "May You Be Inscribed in the Book of Life."

Speaking of hosting us on the weekend, during Beth El's major renovation in 2007, BSM hosted the entire TaRBuT b'nai mitzvah and young children's Shabbat morning programs for an entire school year.

BSM students enjoy coming to Beth El as well. We host Advance Placement testing and various retreats for students and staff. Each year, BSM teens visit during Sukkot, experience classes (and, of course the mitzvah of eating) in the sukkah with Rabbis Davis and Olitzky.

The list goes on. In 2016, the Friendship Garden, a joint yearly effort of The Aleph Preschool and BSM donated over 225 pounds of produce to STEP and has been featured as the Garden of the Week by the Minnesota Food Share Program twice. BSM students regularly volunteer to usher at our speaker events. On a number of occasions, Beth El clergy and I have spoken before the St. Louis Park City Council in support of BSM building and growth initiatives.

A few years ago, then President Bob Tift came to a Friday night service and presented us with a beautiful painting by Mordechai Rosenstein depicting blessings for wine, bread, fruits of the earth and fruits of the trees. The plaque reads:

"To our friends at Beth El. We feel blessed to have you as our neighbor. Thanks for sharing. The BSM Community."

We are grateful for this unique and heartfelt partnership and look forward to many more years of sharing with the BSM community.

More than Neighbors

By Dan Mosow, Beth El President



We're proud that our forebears saw in our humble corner in St. Louis Park not only an opportunity for resettlement and growth, but room for a relationship with what would become Benilde-St. Margaret's. You can learn more about the breadth of that relationship in Linda's shofar article on page 5. This relationship – and really the relationship we share with all of our community partners – is implicitly important. Not only does this allow us to fulfill our biblical mandate of serving as a light unto the nations, but it embraces our moral imperative to welcome all humanity created in God's image. Relationships like this one are what help to eliminate anti-Semitism and ignorance in our world.

This spring marks a new chapter in our relationship with Benilde-St Margaret's. This will be the first time that we fully collaborate on a community event—and one that we intend to benefit both of our communities financially. It is our plan to partner together on one of our largest community efforts to date.

Though we are still developing the name for the event, the concept is fully fleshed out. We will have a concert in the back of our parking lot, with a major headliner as well as local talent. It will be a day of good food, good drink, good music, and good neighbors.

Beth El and BSM staff and lay leadership have spent considerable time vetting this concept. We're excited to be working directly with Sue Mclean & Associates on this effort, as well, knowing that they were the outfit that helped launch the Basilica Block Party. Rabbi Olitzky and Matt Walzer (our Director of Charitable Giving) are already working feverishly to ensure a successful first-outing. I invite you to reach out to them directly if you are interested in getting involved in this new effort. We also welcome the opportunity to bring sponsors on board for this event. If you have connections to any businesses in town who may want to get involved, please send them our way!

It has been an honor throughout my presidency to serve our congregation knowing that Beth El regularly leads our community in innovation and collaboration, especially when it comes to outreach and engagement. I am thrilled that this is one of the next steps in that effort. We pride ourselves as a community partner and we believe in giving back.

Looking forward to "rocking out" together.

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New Members

PLEASE WELCOME

Avivit Kecman & David Tobeck
with Leila and Nathan

Lisa & James Cohen
with Dahlia & Jonathan

Peggy Locke

Aklilu Dunlap

Tricia & Richard Rubenstein
with Sabrina, Desmond and Phoebe

Jaymee Chanen

Sue & Harry Bojman

NEW PLAY SPACE FOR OUR LITTLE ONES.



By Karen Burton, Director of Aleph Preschool



Giving from the heart is becoming a daily happening at Beth El Synagogue. One donor saw in their heart an opportunity to transform our littlest learners at Beth El.

Our Beth El Aleph Preschool has been blessed with a generous donation for a new natural play space playground. You may have noticed as you have driven by Beth El that construction began on our playground (following Sukkot in October) with a total tear down of the existing space and equipment.

Diggers, cement trucks, jack hammers and bulldozers have kept our Aleph Preschoolers entertained from their prime viewing stations as they watch the daily progress.

By creating a natural play space for our children, we will use the natural elements to inspire outdoor play while connecting to nature through sand, water, plants, woods, flowers, mud, dirt, insects, pebbles, and natural loose parts. In the process, our children will create memories and valuable connections to the natural world for rich open-ended play. In addition to the active play on climbers, hills, and tunnels, our new play space will meet the needs of creative nature-based and self-directed play that is so vital to children's cognitive, emotional and social development. We will bring to the natural space wonder and adventure that will engage the children's senses, spark the imagination, and invite our children to explore and discover.

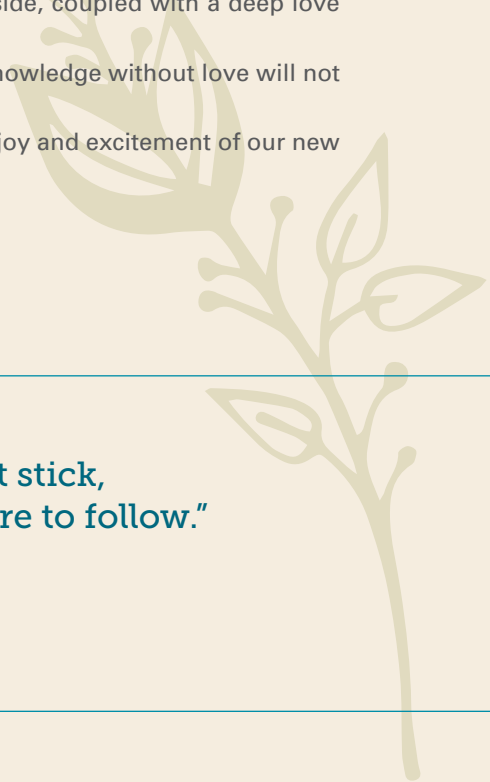
It is our hope and desire – and really one of our mandates – that our children fall in love with nature and have fun learning about it. We will bring the inside classroom outside, coupled with a deep love and understanding of nature-based opportunities to life.

In the words of John Burroughs an American Naturalist (1837-1921) "Knowledge without love will not stick, but if love comes first, knowledge is sure to follow."

We invite you to stop by and visit our new playground and share in the joy and excitement of our new natural play space.

**"Knowledge without love will not stick,
but if love comes first, knowledge is sure to follow."**

– John Burroughs





DANA ROGNEY: **Shabbat and Holiday Young Children's Coordinator**

By Dana Rogney

It has been a pleasure to take on the role of the Shabbat and Holiday Young Children's Coordinator. I am excited to spend more time with the Beth El community and build relationships with your children.

I was born and raised in Dallas, Texas, with my mother, father and two sisters. Throughout my childhood, I always had an interest in working with younger children. As soon as I was old enough, I began to babysit for families in my community. I also became interested in volunteering at local food shelves, homeless shelters and at schools in disadvantaged communities. After I graduated high school, I attended Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado, and received a Bachelor's Degree in Human Development and Family Studies.

Throughout college I nannied and worked at CSU's Early Childhood Center, in which I focused on curriculum development. After I graduated, I moved to Minnesota with my husband. I began working at Sabes JCC's Early Childhood Center as a preschool teacher. After a few years, I moved on to teach at Beth El's Aleph Preschool, in which I have been a toddler teacher. While working at Beth El, I attended schooling to receive my Early Childhood Director's Credential.

As the Shabbat and Holiday Young Children's Coordinator, I will be organizing and facilitating activities for the Shalosh Regalim (Sukkot, Pesach, and Shavuot) and the High Holy days, in addition to supervising and planning activities for Saturday morning Shabbat Programming. I will prioritize creating appropriate and stimulating activities for each specific age group. We will provide preschool children with interactive games, stories and crafts, while also caring for their specific individual needs. Older children will have the opportunity to engage in a special Shabbat service in the classroom, as well as coordinating games and activities geared to their age group.

Throughout my time at Beth El, I have noticed our growing population of young families. I am currently working to accommodate more of our families by extending the age limits of our program. Beginning January 2018, we will be including toddlers ages 16-24 months during Shabbat and Holiday Programming. I will release more information about this new program in the coming months.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to work within the Beth El Community. I am so grateful for my time with all of your children. I am excited to continue this year with Beth El and to continue to grow our Shabbat and Holiday Young Children's Program.

If you would like to reach out with questions or comments, please e-mail me at Drooney@bethelsynagogue.org.

Thank you,

Dana Rogney

**Beginning January 2018, we will be including toddlers ages
16-24 months during Shabbat and Holiday Programming**



Creating Community: A Serious Proposition

By Mary Baumgarten, Education Director

When you see a bar or bat mitzvah on the bima reading Torah or leading tefilot, you may be impressed with how much they learned. But our B'nai Mitzvah Training Program is designed to do much more than teach about synagogue skills. It is designed to instill a love of community.

We are very well aware of the importance of establishing community among the families in our Fiterman B'nai Mitzvah Program. That is why we go to great lengths to create community among our b'nai mitzvah families from the outset of the program.

Beginning in 5th grade, when students join our B'nai Mitzvah Program, building community is one of our highest priorities. To this end, we regularly bring parents together on Shabbat for learning, invite families to the homes of Cantor Abrams and Rabbi Davis for Shabbat dinner, and offer a wonderful 5th-6th grade Shabbaton. Of course, nothing builds community better than weekly attendance on Shabbat at Beth El.

In his book, *Relational Judaism: Using the Power of Relationships to Transform the Jewish Community*, Ron Wolfson writes: "What we need right now is relationships, not just passing acquaintances, but lifelong relationships that can develop within communities and that will lift us up beyond our own individualism. Relationships based on listening to one another's needs and on shared experience, and through commitments to work side by side and to join together in prayer. Relationships that require face to face encounters."

We delight in fostering such relationships among b'nai mitzvah families and look for those bonds of friendship to continue long after the simcha.

Aspiring & Achieving Community

by Debby Litman-Zelle, Interim Director of Talmud Torah



At the Talmud Torah of Minneapolis, the supplemental Hebrew school shared by Beth El and Adath Jeshurun, we have six aspirational principles that guide every decision we make; what we teach, how we teach it and whom we teach it to. First on the list is building connections to the Jewish community.

We want our students and families to feel like they are part of a Kehilla Kedosha, a sacred community. We do this, for example, by creating small learning communities. In these "micro-communities," students can develop deep, long lasting friendships and experience a sense of safety and refuge from our high stress culture.

But community alone is not enough. As our name implies, we tie community to Jewish learning and living. For example, we spent Sukkot together in a sukkah and learning about the holiday. We spent time "Doing Good Together" in which we decorated grocery bags for a local food shelf and wrote postcards to Children's Hospital and Sholom Home and more.

We know that all of the families in our Talmud Torah community are on a lifelong Jewish journey. We hope that during their time at Talmud Torah they have meaningful experiences that move their journey forward.

Pilgrimage

By Andrew Freeman, Youth Director



This year, 175 kids from the Emtza Region (Twin Cities, St. Louis, Kansas City, Omaha, Des Moines) left their families on Thanksgiving to go spend it at the Hyatt Regency in Downtown Minneapolis for the craziest, zaniest weekend of the year. Yes, our biggest convention of the year is on Thanksgiving.

Now why is this the case? Why do we plan a convention on the weekend so many families are also planning their gatherings? Whether it's in order to avoid missing school or for a longer shabbaton, it has been a consistent expectation for many years. And frequently the kids choose to come to spend their time with USY.

Our challenge is how to continue to build community here at home. Eitan Weinstein (BERUSY Religion/Education VP) reflected that "Kinnus is such a big part of Emtza because it allows for us to have a great experience and to build a community across the Midwest." Elliot Schochet (Emtza Regional President and BERUSY Member) shared that "(Kinnus) truly is a microcosm of what Emtza strives to be as a region. A region of dedicated ruach, service of others, advocacy for the state of Israel and most importantly a close nit family." Dena Rosen (Kinnus Co-Chair and BERUSY Member) added that "Kinnus is such a big part of USY because it is a chance to spend Thanksgiving with your USY family, stay at a hotel with all of your best friends and is unique in being the first convention for so many people, and allows them to continue with USY." Lily Smith (EMTZA Regional Communications VP and BERUSY member) shared that she felt that "(Kinnus) really starts off the year and brings people together. It is a ton of fun being with other Jewish teens from around the Midwest and reminds people why they love USY and Judaism so much."

Thanksgiving is indeed about coming together as family and community--but for many of our teens, an integral part of that community is found at USY. Beth El USY and more broadly, Emtza Region, has been a community that our teens can call their own. Kinnus presents opportunity to unencumbered spend time with their close friends from camp or summer programs. It is a weekend in which they can have fun, be a kid and spend time with their peers. It is a weekend that they can truly appreciate and understand what it means to be a part of a Jewish community, and be a part of programming that promotes Jewish Learning, advocacy for Israel and the act of Tikkun Olam.

Kinnus is such a big part of Emtza because it allows for us to have a great experience and to build a community across the Midwest.

B'nai Mitzvah



January 6, 2018 / 19 Tevet 5778
Shemot

MILES COLE SCHLAIFER

מתן צדיק בן ברוך אברהם ואמירה עדן

Son of Julie Ritz-Schlaifer & David Schlaifer

Miles is a bright, witty, independent thinker with a kind heart and a tenacious spirit. He has worked hard to achieve this milestone, and we are so proud of his success.



January 13, 2018 / 26 Tevet 5778
Vaera

ELIJAH NOAH KAUFMAN

נהום מאיר בן פנהס ומרים אסתר

Son of Justin & Elanna Kaufman

We are so proud of our bright, thoughtful, and studious son, Eli, as he follows in the footsteps of his ancestors, l'dor vador.



January 20, 2018 / 4 Sh'vat 5778
Bo

VANYA HENRY KASE

הוד משה בן יהודה ברוך

Son of Jeffrey & Yelena Kase

Vanya has always had great curiosity and a love of learning which he's carried through his studies at the HMJDS and preparation for his bar mitzvah.



January 27, 2018 / 11 Sh'vat 5778
Beshalach

RUBY SHOSHANA LIVON

שושנה בת יונה ומיכל

Daughter of Michelle & Jeff Livon

Ruby brought her sensitivity, optimism, friendliness, inclusiveness, and sense of humor into her bat mitzvah studies. We look forward to welcoming her into Jewish adulthood.

B'nai Mitzvah



March 3, 2018 / 16 Adar 5778
Ki Tisa

MICAH ZE'EV DAVIS

מיכה זאב בן אלכסנדר הכהן ואסתר מרים

Son of Esther Goldberg-Davis &
Alexander Davis

Micah makes friends in all places. As he enters Jewish adulthood, we are eager to see him take on community leadership roles.



March 10, 2018 / 23 Adar 5778
Vayakhel-Pekudei / Shabbat Parah

MANNY ZELIG KAPLAN

מנשה בן שמשון

Son of Juli Hanssen & Steven Kaplan

We are very excited to see Manny follow in the footsteps of his sister Ivy and brother Zollie, as he enters into Jewish adulthood.



March 17, 2018 / 1 Nisan 5778
Vayikra / Rosh Chodesh / Shabbat
HaChodesh

DANIEL WILLIAM BAUM

וועלול בן בנימין ודבורה רודי

Son of Julie Baum and Benjamin Baum

Daniel has studied diligently to prepare for this special day. He is looking forward to celebrating his simcha with family and friends.



Mazal tov to Professor Fionnuala Ni Aolain for being named a Regent Professor at the University of Minnesota. This is the highest distinction given to professors at the university. Professor Ni Aolain is internationally renowned in the field of international human rights law and is considered one of the world's leading scholars on the topics of conflict resolution and gender-based violence in conflict.

Beth El collected and donated 6,885 pounds of food during the Yom Kippur Food Drive! Thanks to all those who helped unload the truck!



Celebrating Sukkot with our B'nai Mitzvah students



Community Learning @ The WELL



From My Mother's Kitchen: Dr. Isaac Felemovicius shared stories and great food as he led a cooking demonstration.



25 people enjoyed an evening of Torah Yoga

A new new year has launched for the Artists' Lab



A moment of laughter during the Women's Study

An engaging discussion during a study group with Rabbi Davis





Showing Up

By Jan Hamilton, Congregational Nurse

I've reflected often since the national events of last fall about the important role a sense of community plays in our lives. Numerous examples can be cited of what happens when some among us feel forgotten, unheard, and generally not "part of." It begs the question, "What do we need to do to create community?" For sure we need a community that is open and welcoming. But we also have a role and responsibility in this equation. For a community can open the door, but we must walk through it.

A lesson I've been learning lately in my personal life comes to mind. It's that of simply showing up. Here is an example that illustrates the point: I have sometimes felt frustration that despite a passion for watercolor painting, I haven't progressed as I would like. It didn't take long to identify the problem. I wasn't practicing consistently. Regularly picking up the brush to paint has gradually led to better results.

And so it is with creating community. A big piece of it is showing up. Be there. Sometimes when I'm on the Shalom West Campus someone asks me if I'm there to "present." Once a month, I bring a subject of interest to discuss with Knollwood residents in the Sutin Lounge. But I'm actually there on a weekly basis. Often, it is to visit someone specifically but sometimes it is simply to be there, to check in with whoever I might find who needs a hello or listening ear. In so doing, I'm a Beth El presence.

Showing up and being present are the foundation of community building. But that doesn't just fall on me as a staff person. I am grateful that others have taken this message to heart. Recently, a member greeted me in the Nosh Room by telling me she was doing my job. She was there, listening to her friends. She was not commenting, advising, or otherwise interrupting, just listening. I smiled. She was indeed creating the kind of community I so value and want to enter.



MAZAL TOV TO MEMBERS WITH UPCOMING MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES

NAME	DATE	YEARS			
			Mary & Jacques Koppel	February 20	35
Sheva & Tom Sanders	January 2	35	Amanda & Greg Simpson	February 22	20
Penny & Alan Bank	January 3	5	Gail & David Jordani	February 28	45
Barbara Bank & Phillip Finkelstein	January 3	30	Marcia & Aaron Pinkus	March 1	65
Marilyn & Harvey Chanen	January 5	60	Margie & Thomas Neiman	March 4	45
Amanda & Berek Awend	January 20	10	Pamela Wolfe-Honigstock & Gerald Honigstock	March 9	10
Abby & Ron Rabinovitz	January 30	15	Barbara & Lee Levitan	March 17	50
Sally & Eugene Gittelson	February 4	50	Pam & Howard Friedman	March 22	20
Liz & Greg Pomish	February 14	30	Jodi Lebewitz Davis & Michael Davis	March 27	30
Carrie & Raymond Oleisky	February 17	55			
Sharon & Martin Kieffer	February 18	45			

If you would like to ensure your (or your loved one's) simchah is acknowledged in future publications, please contact the Beth El Office at 952.873.7300 or info@bethelsynagogue.org.

Condolences to...

Ruth (Warren) Solom on the loss of her mother, **Esther Steinberg**

Henry Berg, Jerry Lehman and Marshall (Paula) Lehman on the loss of their wife and mother, **Elaine Lehman Berg**

Bobby Bloom, Sherry (Jim) Rudin, Harold (Eileen) Scherling, Brian (Sandy) Salita on the loss of their Husband and brother, **Phillip Bloom**

Friends and family on the loss of our member, **Marian Mickey Bernstein**

Barbara (Lee) Bearmon on the loss of her sister, **Esther Krovitz**

Friends and family on the loss of our member, **Clarice Cutts**

Larry (Elayne) Chiat on the loss of his brother, **Rick Chiat**

Dee (Joel) Muscoplatt on the loss of her mother, **Sylvia Kamenow**

Friends and family on the loss of our member, **Harriet Benowitz**

Daniel (Jennifer) Spiller on the loss of his mother, **Patricia Spiller**

Benjamin (Joan) Rischall and Isaac (Karen Hessel) Rischall on the loss of their mother, **Ruth Rischall**

Friends and family on the loss of our member, **RitaCook**

Jonathan (Sally) Minsberg on the loss of his father, **Solomon Minsberg**

Myrna Feldman on the loss of her husband, **Alfred Feldman**

Nancy Fursetzer on the loss of her husband, **David Fursetzer**

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Barbara (Roger) Rubin on the loss of her sister, **Miryom Kass**

Marvin Eisenstein and Cantor Audrey (David) Abrams on the loss of their wife and mother, **Annette Eisenstein**

With heavy hearts we mourn the loss of these loved ones within our community. This reflects the losses in our community through November 6, 2017.

Mazal Tov to...

Rhona Shwaid & Jon Wolpert on the birth of their son, **Lev Eitan** born on July 23, 2017

Carrie & Barak Steenlage on the birth of their daughter, **Annabelle Rose** born on July 24, 2017

Kerry & Michael Gershone on the birth of their son, **Simon Asher**, born on August 9, 2017

Sharon & Mark Rosenblum on the birth of their son born on September 12, 2017

Kori & Andrew Downey on the birth of their son, **Miles Levi** born on September 20, 2017

Kat & Marcus Magy on the birth of their daughter, **Charlotte Arlene** born on September 25, 2017

Dani & Brian Fuerstneau on the birth of their daughter born on September 25, 2017

Sid & Anita Konikoff on the birth of their grandson, **Tzvi Zev** born on September 26, 2017

Andrea & Fred Rose and Steve & Julie Rose on the birth of their great granddaughter and granddaughter, **Atara Raizel** born on September 29, 2017

Charitable Giving

Ensuring the vitality of our congregation now and in the future

Midwinter Reflections on Giving

By Matt Walzer, Director of Charitable Giving



Back on Sukkot, I was invited to teach an adult learning session for our young families. In the course of preparing, I learned of the deep connection between the holiday and philanthropy. Preparing for an adult learning session after an Apples & Honey Shabbat service this past fall is when I learned this myself for the first time.

In Deuteronomy 16:16-17 it states that three times a year – on the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), on the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot), and on the Feast of Booths (Sukkot)– “all your males (really, all of us) shall appear before Adonai your God in the place that God will choose. They shall not appear before Adonai empty-handed, but each with his own gift, according to the

blessing that the Adonai your God has bestowed upon you.”

While I know the Torah far precedes Beth El’s new charitable giving model, I found this direct link between Sukkot and tzedakah to be a serendipitously relevant connection.

This, along with a few select Torah verses, allowed a group of adults to discuss the many ways that Judaism instructs a holistic value of tzedakah. The ensuing discussion was thought provoking and engaging and had adults discussing the importance of giving back to the community. As a way to share our dialogue with you, here are a few leading questions to consider talking about with your friends and family:

1. Why is being charitable a definitive characteristic of Judaism?
2. In what ways is charity redemptive?
3. Why is the manner in which we give charity important?
4. What gives us the right to force others to perform the mitzvah of tzedakah?
5. How does one become the ideal giver?
6. What are the advantages of giving a lot of little donations, instead of one larger one?

People often ask me what it’s like to “ask people for money.” I generally greet this question with a smile acknowledging the fear they hold in asking for support of an organization. I then follow this up by sharing how wonderful philanthropic conversations are, and that they allow for people to connect on shared values helping accomplish the goals of an organization.

At Beth El, we are in the process of changing how we discuss tzedakah at a larger level as well. It is important to recognize how conversations are connected, and help us meet the vision of our synagogue community. We welcome your voice to the conversation and want to engage you in what you’re interested in – for your passions are what will continue to bring vibrancy to our synagogue.

TZEDAKAH

Tribute donations to Beth El funds honor friends and family, commemoration of significant events, memorialize loved ones and provide essential support to the congregation. Endowment funds provide permanent funding where needed most or for a specific purpose. Endowment funds are held in the Beth El Foundation. Funds for immediate use are used to support specific programs or projects, are for general use and are spent in their entirety. To make a donation, or to establish a new fund through our Foundation, please contact Matt Walzer at 952.873.7309 or at foundation@bethelsynagogue.org.

TODAH RABBAH (THANK YOU)

Beth El gratefully acknowledges the following contributions:

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UPCOMING AT BETH EL

Below is a sampling of only some of the upcoming events at the synagogue. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend. Look for more details in future *Hakol* and *Kesher* publications, and as always, feel free to call the Welcome Desk at 952.873.7300 for additional information.

JANUARY

5	Choir at Knollwood
7	Kubeh, Kreplach & Nokhochi: Cooking Demonstration with Elizabeth Witkin & Cindy Witkin
13	Family Fun Night Havdallah
21	Beyond Lake Wobegon – Diving Into the Depths of the Diverse Religious Worlds of Minnesota
30	Tu B'Shevat Seder

FEBRUARY

2	Choir at Knollwood
9-11	Shabbaton: Learn to Change the World with Rabbi Jaffe
28	Purim Extravaganza (contact Cantor Abrams if you want to be a part of the shpiel)

Watch for upcoming information on a 3-part series on Gun Violence Prevention in February.

MARCH

1	Purim
4	Purim Carnival
9-12	Bread & Torah with Rabbi Rubenstein and Rabbi Motzkin
23	Choir at Knollwood
31	Pesach

APRIL

1-7	Pesach
6	Beth El Office Closed for Pesach
15	Aleph Preschool Family Fun Night Pasta Party
17	Yom Hazikaron (out of building)
20	Choir at Knollwood

SPRING LOOKING AHEAD

May 6	Trucksploration
May 20-21	Shavuot

ONGOING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Rashi to Rembrandt – meets monthly
Mindful Tuesdays – every Tuesday
Apples & Honey; Adult Learning – 1st Shabbat each month
Nosh and Drash – 1st and 3rd Monday each month



PURIM 5778

Wednesday, February 28

6:15 pmMegillah Reading and Shpiel

7:45 pmPurim Extravaganza

Sunday, March 4

11:00 am - 2:00 pm Purim Carnival

Please contact Cantor Abrams if you want to participate in the shpiel.



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SHABBATON:
LEARN TO CHANGE THE WORLD
February 10, 2018

Rabbi David Jaffe
NATIONAL JEWISH BOOKS
AWARDS WINNER AND AUTHOR



National Jewish Books Awards winner and Author, Rabbi David Jaffe, will inspire us to *Change the World from the Inside Out*.

David Jaffe is a writer and rabbi whose life work seeks to

integrate spiritual wisdom, social justice, reconciliation and deep personal growth.

Please join us for this day of learning.



BREAD & TORAH

MARCH 9-12, 2018

Learn baking technique and Torah with Jonathan Rubenstein, rabbi and founder of Slice of Heaven Breads bakery. Participate in the holy work of making parchment and writing a Torah with Linda Motzkin, rabbi and soferet (scribe).

Please watch for more information on this one of a kind opportunity!