

# Kayruv



# קִרְבָּה

**"Judaism for Today In a Warm and Caring Environment"**

June 2015

Sivan/Tammuz 5775

## FROM THE RABBI



Dear Friends,

Let's talk about the power of words, and of mental images. Let's talk about the power of being who we are. Let's talk about the power of believing in ourselves.

We will soon read a story in the Torah that is as fundamental to the Jewish people as the leaving from Egypt, but this one is neither celebrated nor remembered. And it wouldn't be talked about were it not for the fact that the cycle of Torah readings forces us to confront it year after year. It is the story of the spies.

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**Kayruv means "Welcoming."**

I imagine that most of you remember the basics: how Moshe sends the spies, twelve of them, to scout the land before going up and conquering it. Ten of the spies come back disheartened and disheartening the rest of the people. Two come back with a 'yes, we can' attitude. God gets furious, and decides that this generation is simply not ready to enter the land. Forty years wandering in the desert follow as punishment. The story does not end there, but this is a good place to end. Because there has always been, in my mind, a couple of questions to ask at this point in the narrative: Why did God give that punishment now? And how could B'nai Israel behave like that?

The first question, I think, is pretty obvious: for a God who claims a special relationship with Israel, a God that self-describes as "*el kanah*", which is usually translated as "a jealous God", but actually means "a God that has an exclusive relationship" – this is not the moment for such a harsh punishment. There was a much more serious crime committed two months before: the Golden Calf. And yet, at that moment, Moshe intercedes and God forgives. Here, by contrast, God does not forgive.

One would imagine that there is a much more serious problem in not believing in God than in having cold feet at the prospect of war against other people, even if they are seen as giants. Compare with a wedding – what would you think is more serious: the groom/bride having an affair two days before the wedding or having cold feet and cancelling?

The second question is more complicated, I think. After all, B'nai Israel has seen incredible things: the ten plagues, the opening of the sea, the manna falling from heaven, the giving of Torah itself. You'd imagine that by now they would have "gotten the message". Once in a Torah exam in Brazil the extra credit question was, "Do you think it was easy or difficult to be Moses?" and a student answered: "Easy, of course. After all, Moses had all that help from God!"

But we know miracles don't help to sustain faith, or at least I have said this enough times that you know this is my position. The problem with the spies, however, is not lack of faith in God – whom they don't mention at all. It is lack of faith in B'nai Israel, and in themselves as leaders. They utter a telling phrase: "We were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." (Bamidbar/Numbers 13:33)

As former slaves, they are still unwilling to be the driving force of their own destiny. They simply see themselves as small and incapable – grasshoppers. That mental image defines and freezes them. The reaction of the people is telling – they sit around, cry all night long, and demand to go back to Egypt, where their slavery had a name and an address outside of themselves. In the desert, at that very moment, they are being confronted with their inner Pharaoh – their fear of autonomy – and they'd rather remain slaves.

So what is the solution for both questions? Well, I think it is that God can deal with one's lack of faith in God. God, as rabbi Brad Artson likes to say, is a big guy, no gender intended. God can deal with it. But God cannot accept that we don't have faith in our own power, in our own goodness, in our own greatness. God, after all, made each of us the way we are, trusting that our individual gifts will make this world a better place – is there any bigger show of faith than that?

In our congregation, we are being called to embark on a voyage of defining who we are, and how we, as a group, will change the world. Those are called mission and vision. What do we do best, and why? What is our vision of a better world, one that is changed through our actions?

I believe deeply in this community – otherwise I wouldn't have stayed here for these past nine years. I believe deeply in you – in your desire to live Judaism with energy and depth, with connection and commitment, with study and action. And I believe that we are poised at a crossroads – either we believe in ourselves and go up, or not, and accept disappearing as the option.

So as you will be called, come and participate in the Visioning Committee. What are your dreams and hopes for B'nai Israel? How great can we become? How are we going up, and going *mechayil lechayil*, from strength to strength? Come, bring your thoughts, your answers, your vision, and be part of our future.

Warmly,  
Rabbi Nelly Altenburger

## SHAVUOT

When Israel exited Egypt  
And sundered its ties with the past,  
God fed and protected the people  
And led them to Sinai at last.

And Moses went up on Mount Sinai  
In thunder and light, to its brim,  
Our Creator then "sat down" with Moses  
To create a new contract with him.

Our people had come up from slavery,  
There had never been "Hebrew" scribes,  
So God wrote out ten commandments  
For Moses to give to his tribes.

That contract was something so precious,  
Forged in a bond with "The Lord",  
It is said we exchanged our own children,  
For those tablets, with one accord.

So it's up to our children to listen,  
To learn and remember that day.  
Like those tablets, they equal our freedom,  
With the promise to keep us that way.

Sarah Namer

## FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

This past month at B'nai Israel was so exciting, I'll need this month just to recover! We started off with a beautiful and well-attended Kabbalat Shabbat service led by Sam Markind, with a lovely story from Rabbi Altenburger and light refreshments from Sarah Namer. Our next Kabbalat Shabbat service will be Friday, June 12 (pardon my mistake in last month's Kayruv) at 6:15 pm, this time led by yours truly (but please don't let that dissuade you from attending).

A week later, our Touch A Truck event completely steamrolled my expectations. We had gorgeous weather, an incredible array of vehicles (I don't think I've ever seen so many trucks together in one place in my entire life), and a great turnout, with many repeat customers from prior years. Let's toot our horns loud and proud for Isabel Kaplan and a big team of volunteers for pulling it all together, along with the EMTs, policemen, firemen and businesses who generously displayed and explained their remarkable equipment. My daughter Adina couldn't stop talking about it for days, and everyone really had a blast.

We closed the month with an absolutely electrifying concert by Doni Zasloff (aka Mama Doni) and her partner Eric Lindberg at the Hammerhead Martial Arts Studio in Brookfield. By the time I got there (running late due to a previous engagement), Mama Doni had a room full of strangers on their feet, dancing up a storm and singing their hearts out. (Joel Levitt won the understatement of the year award with a wry quip to me about how she would be "OK once she gets over her shyness.") I'd like to thank Doni and Eric for their infectious music, energy and enthusiasm, and wish them a big *mazel tov* on their wedding this weekend! I'd also like to give a big round of applause to Barbara Levitt and her team of volunteers for putting the concert together (especially the goodie bags, which were very popular); Jessica Aframe from the PJ Library, our co-sponsor, for getting the word out on a multiplicity of channels and achieving an

impressive turnout; and Tyler Raymond for generously lending us the use of the Hammerhead Martial Arts Studio, which turned out to be a perfect venue for dancing and singing.

Every month I procrastinate about writing this letter for the Kayruv, but this month I've been especially reluctant (Sorry, Cheryl!) because I've got a difficult topic to address. Unfortunately, the work of rebuilding the basement after the mold remediation has been more challenging and expensive than originally expected. Joel Levitt and I have persuaded extraordinarily generous donors to cover most of the shortfall, but the Board of Trustees ultimately decided that we couldn't complete the work without engaging the entire B'nai Israel community through a one-time assessment of \$100 per member family.

The basement isn't just where we hold our breakfast after *Yom Kippur*, or seat lots of guests at luncheons after *bar* and *bat mitzvahs*, it's a critically important space for our Hebrew school kids. We're on track to literally double the size of our Hebrew school with our new preschool program this fall, and the basement classrooms and bathrooms simply must be ready in time. The next two months are crucial.

Marcia Hutter and Chris Kimball have been doing heroic work in getting contractors, supplies and fixtures to waterproof the walls and repair the studs, drywall, and bathrooms, Barbie Steinberg has been meticulously keeping track of the expenses; and teams of intrepid volunteers working with Henry Tritter and Isabel Kaplan have been busy priming and painting. Together as a community we can complete this project and make the basement brighter and more inviting than it's ever been, "for the people's heart was in the work" (*Nehemiah 3:38*). Please send in your payment as soon as you can.

Finally, on a more celebratory note, our annual congregational meeting is scheduled for Monday evening, June 22 at 7:30 pm. It's an opportunity to vote for a new slate of officers and trustees, see how we managed to pull off a 14% increase in our budget without raising dues, and explore plans for beginning the process next year of revitalizing and re-imagining B'nai Israel. Do you have a vision of what B'nai Israel could be, and how we can change the world? Don't laugh, I'm serious! To bowdlerize Hillel a bit (*Avot 1:14*), "If we are only for ourselves, what are we?" Without

a vision of what we could be and why we matter, not just to ourselves but to others, we're rudderless, lacking focus, direction and motivation.

I'm hoping that all of you who care deeply about B'nai Israel will be involved in this process and that many of you will consider joining the Visioning Committee-the board needs input from everyone to guide this process and make sure it reflects and inspires the whole community.

Mama Doni closed her concert by having all of us stand together in a circle, hold hands, and give thanks for the important people in our lives and for each other as a community with a contemporary setting of *shehecheyanu*. I sang with a full heart, knowing B'nai Israel always pulls together, and can surely find the vision to energize us for another 118 (!) years.

Together for a vibrant, visionary and inspiring community,

Kennis Koldewyn

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### **DONATIONS NEEDED!**



### **FOR OUR LOCAL FOOD PANTRIES!**

This is CBI's ongoing project to help our local food pantries. Items most in need are dried/canned beans, canned fish, peanut butter, jelly, fruit juice, sugar, flour, personal care items such as soap and shampoo. (The pantries get cereal, canned veggies and rice from area supermarkets.)

CBI is a generous and caring community and as always, we thank you for your donations and support as they are truly appreciated.

## JUNE EVENTS

### June 12<sup>th</sup> *Kabbalat Shabbat Service* **(Welcome the Sabbath)**

Come one, come all! You are invited to come welcome the Sabbath on Friday, June 12<sup>th</sup>. We ask that you arrive between 6:15 and 6:30; services will start promptly at 6:30. Light refreshments after service.

### June 13<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 A.M. Religious School Culminating Event

Join us for the Hebrew School Culminating Event. This year our Hebrew School will be leading a few parts of the Shabbat morning services! Students will lead those few sections that can be led by pre-b'nai mitzvah people, mainly the first part of the service and the last prayers after Musaf.

### June 16, 2015 Dessert Reception at the Markinds

You're invited to join Dina and Sam Markind at their home for a dessert reception on Tuesday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 P.M. in support of Israel Cancer Research Foundation. Dr. Carmit Levy, one of Israel's Premier Cancer Researchers will be speaking about "Latest Breakthroughs in Malignant Melanoma and Other Cancers." For more information please contact the Markinds.

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## GOOD TIMES WE SHARED

Dear Friends,

We could not have asked for a more beautiful day for our fourth annual **Touch A Truck** event. Take a moment and look at the pictures (taken by Alice Cahn and Brenda Fegley). The pictures say it all and though I cannot thank each of you individually, I do want to send a very special thanks to ALL of our volunteers. There were those who made phone calls to all the "vehicles of distinction". Thanks to them, 21 vehicles made an appearance. To those who posted signs, got treats donated, pitched tents, baked, cooked and directed traffic...my hat is off to you. Ten Danbury High School National Art Honor Society students helped paint faces, made assorted crafts and assisted kids on and off trucks. An endeavor such as this takes lots of time, energy and coordination. With your help, we have pulled off yet another "fundraising" event for CBI.

*Kol hakavod (job well done),  
Izzy*





Photos courtesy of Alice Cahn and Brenda Fegley



## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE GRADUATES

### High School Graduates

Isaac Benjamin Kochman, son of Sharilyn Kochman, will be graduating from Brookfield High School on June 20th and will be attending Ohio Wesleyan University, in Delaware, Ohio which is his brother's alma mater. Isaac intends to study mathematics and plans to become a math professor.

### College Graduates

Matan Markind, son of Dina and Sam Markind, graduated May 20<sup>th</sup> from Columbia Engineering. In June, he will be starting a job at Kulite in Leonia, NJ.

Lia Levitt, daughter of Barbara and Joel Levitt, received a Master of Philosophy in Organizational Dynamics, Executive Coaching and Organizational Consulting with a 4.0 Magna Cum Laude from the University of Pennsylvania.

## BUBBLE MANIA!!!



WHEN: SUNDAY, June 28, 2015  
at 3:00 PM

WHERE: Jewish Federation of Western CT  
444 Main Street North, Southbury

Admission: \$5.00 per child, \$ 20 per family  
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## L'DOR V'DOR: FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

### Shalom In Israel

When we last saw Shalom, the year was 1944 and he was on a train headed for the promised land, Palestine. His first destination, Kfar Hanoar, was an agricultural school founded by a German philanthropist, who was interested in fostering better relations between Arab and Jewish children. "Every two or three weeks, Bedouin children came for dinner. Sometimes, we'd visit them in their tents. I'd never seen people who lived that way before; it was an eye-opening experience." But Shalom's odyssey was destined to take a new turn. After a year and a half - attending school and working in the fields - his uncle (who lived in Tel Aviv) decided that he should work and study in a more religious environment. So he sent Shalom to Kefr Chasidim, a youth village for religious Jews.

In these years, Shalom first learned to speak and read Hebrew. Today, when we hear his melodic chanting at *shul*, or listen to his fluent reading of the Torah, it's hard to believe that he is not a native Hebrew speaker. "It's still a mystery to me how I ever learned to speak the language," Shalom told me. "Later, even when I asked my cousins: *How did we learn Hebrew?* No one knew. But it has turned out to be such a great gift for me."

These were also the years that led to the War of Independence, and Shalom played a vital role in that effort. He joined *Gadna*, the youth arm of the *Hagannah*, in 1945. Just fifteen, he and his fellow volunteers trained in secret at night, right under the nose of the British army, whose camp was only three miles away. Shalom became adept at 'stick fighting,' (*Kapap*, in Hebrew) and trained other recruits in this formal, strenuous technique of hand-to-hand combat. He was an expert marksman. "Each of us was given only three bullets to shoot, so I learned to make them count! Also, weapons were hard to come by. One night," he recalled, "at 2 o'clock, some of us were sent on a mission to dig up oil drums in the desert. Why? Well, we found out soon enough. Inside those drums were guns which had been kept hidden from the British." This cat and mouse game never let up.

Shalom was drafted into the army in 1946, as a corporal. He was a member of *Nachal*, the fighting pioneer youth, where he trained until 1949. Although he was never involved in direct combat, his group provided much needed humanitarian aid and relief. "During a snowstorm – I remember, there were six inches of snow in Tel Aviv - a group of us was assigned to bring supplies to new immigrants who were living in an abandoned British camp. Our trucks got stuck and we were forced to walk miles, bringing everything in by foot." Shalom's group also helped evacuate the wounded from battle.

His military service ended in 1954 as a lieutenant. Before leaving, he trained as a paratrooper, but a serious injury to his left heel prevented him from continuing to jump. He flew on reconnaissance flights over Gaza and the Dead Sea. He trained new recruits who were entering the army, men and women from countries like Yemen and Egypt. He met the challenge of communicating basic instruction to them without knowledge of their native language. But the military had slowly begun to loosen its hold. Shalom yearned for something different; something new. He was just 24 years old. Despite the wealth of experiences he already had, he wanted more; much more.

When a girlfriend suggested attending a school for mining, Shalom jumped at the suggestion. A lover of geography, of the soil, he looked for a school in Israel, but found only one, a technical school in Haifa which did not have a mining department. He researched schools in the United States and England, before deciding on Columbia University in New York, where an uncle lived. He applied and was accepted. Leaving Israel with \$10 in his pocket, Shalom took the 10 day trip by ship from Haifa, via Morocco, to New York. The next chapter in his odyssey was about to begin.

Marc Heller

## IN THE COMMUNITY

### Mama Doni Concert

Add a dollop of charismatic performer, a dash of virtuoso guitarist and mix well with lively children and appreciative parents and grandparents and you get an energizing, uplifting concert of Jewish music. Those were the ingredients for the very successful Mama Doni concert held May 31<sup>st</sup> and co-sponsored and co-chaired by Jessica Aframe of the local PJ Library chapter and Barbara Levitt of B'nai Israel, as a joint outreach program. The concert venue, Hammerhead Martial Arts in Brookfield was generously donated by its owners and was filled with a little over 100 jumping, gyrating children and adults.

Mama Doni is an award winning singer who along with her guitarist Eric Lindberg shared their passion for innovative Jewish music for children. In real life Doni Zasloff and Eric Lindberg are getting married in a week. After the concert, at dinner with Barbara and me, they expressed all the joy and anxiety of a young couple facing soon-to-be nuptials and had to rush back to New Jersey that evening to finalize seating arrangements. They are a talented engaging couple who made great music and great friends in their brief local appearance. Bravo!

Joel Levitt





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## SCHEDULE OF SHABBAT SERVICES

### ❖ Shabbat, 19 Sivan, June 6, B'Ha'Alotekha:

The lighting of the Menorah each day in the Tabernacle by Aaron and his sons. The Israelites begin their travels and complaints through the desert, and Moses despairs in his burden of leadership. *Haftarah*: Zechariah: 2:14-4:7

### ❖ Shabbat, 26 Sivan, June 13, Shelah-Lekha:

Scouts are sent out to the land of Canaan and bring back a fearful report which results in forty years of wandering in the desert. *Haftarah*: Joshua 2:1-24

### ❖ Shabbat, 3 Tammuz, June 20, Korah:

Korah and his band challenge the leadership of Moses and Aaron. The earth opens up and swallows them. *Haftarah*: 1 Sam. 11:14-12:22

### ❖ Shabbat, 10 Tammuz, June 27, Hukkat:

The death of Miriam and Aaron: Moshe leads alone. *Haftarah*: Judg. 11:1-33

### ❖ Shabbat, 17 Tammuz, July 4, Balak:

King Balak unsuccessfully contracts Bilaam the prophet to curse Israel. *Haftarah*: Micah 5:6-6:8

### ❖ Shabbat, 24 Tammuz, July 11, Pinhas:

In the fortieth year a census is taken of the Israelites and Joshua is appointed as Moshe's successor. *Haftarah*: 1 Kings 18:46-19:21

## CANDLE LIGHTING

June 5, 2015:	8:06 P.M.
June 12, 2015:	8:09 P.M.
June 19, 2015:	8:12 P.M.
June 26, 2015:	8:13 P.M.
July 3, 2015:	8:12 P.M.
July 10, 2015:	8:10 P.M.

## YAHRZEITS

### 30 Sivan, June 17, 2015

Harry Nackman (Joyce Shenker)  
Herman Hyman (Jeff Shafiroff)

### 4 Tammuz, June 21, 2015

Harry Kaplan (Barry Kaplan)

### 7 Tammuz, June 24, 2015

Jacob Smeer (Dina Essinger)

### 9 Tammuz, June 26, 2015

Yetta Horn (Roslyn Bank)

### 10 Tammuz, June 27, 2015

Larry Cohen (Susan, Zoe, and Libby Cohen)

### 12 Tammuz, June 29, 2015

Leon Bank (Alex Bank)  
Joseph Zimmerman (Shoshannah Zimmerman)

### 14 Tammuz, July 1, 2015

Louise Ellen Alpher (Harriet Lebetkin)

### 15 Tammuz, July 2, 2015

Claire Haller-Chwasky (Phyllis Cooper)

### 17 Tammuz, July 4, 2015

Joshua Hoffman (Melvin Friedman)

### 21 Tammuz, July 8, 2015

Kay Robinson (Barbara Levitt)

### 23 Tammuz, July 10, 2015

Etta W. Tritter (Henry Tritter)

### 24 Tammuz, July 11, 2015

Jerome Zimmerman (Shoshannah Zimmerman)

## THANKS! THANKS!

### For the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Libby Kasimer in memory of Pearl Turk

### For the General Fund

❖ Carole and Arthur Anderman for an enjoyable weekend with the rabbi and members and in appreciation of the Yizkor services

❖ Pam and Shalom in memory of Pearl Turk

❖ Sol Lepson in memory of Pearl Turk

❖ Caryn and Joe Golden in memory of Pearl Turk

❖ Fran and Chris Kimball in memory of Pearl Turk; in honor of the birth of Cheryl's twin grandchildren Noelle Marie and Luke Anthony

### For Their Generous Kiddush

❖ The Takkens

❖ Dina and Sam Markind in honor of daughter Sophie's birthday

❖ Simeon Lamour

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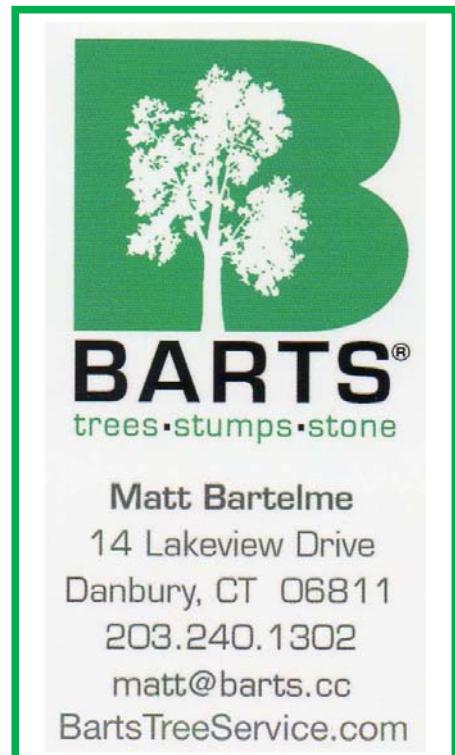
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