

Kayruv



קירוב

“Judaism for Today In a Warm and Caring Environment”

January 2015

Tevet/Shevat 5775

FROM THE RABBI



Dear Friends,

How green is your Torah?

Tu B'Shevat, the beginning of the year counted for the trees, is around the

corner, on February 4th. The origins of *Tu B'Shevat* were very humble: it is only a cut-off date in the calendar to mark when the agricultural cycle begins or ends for the purpose of tithes involving trees and fruit.

Even its name bears its utilitarian beginning: *Tu B'Shevat* merely means the 15th day of the month of Shevat. Yet, as a late bloomer, *Tu B'Shevat* has grown into a celebration that has not only many meanings, but also many ways of celebrating.

In Israel, the flowering of the almond tree, which grows wild around the country, coincides with *Tu B'Shevat*. When one walks and sees the almond tree flowering, one senses that the winter is about to end. The almond tree, called in Hebrew *shaked*, appears in the Torah in a story fraught with tension and discord – when Korach decides to dispute the right of Aaron and his descendants to be the *cohanim*, the group that serves at the Tabernacle. You probably remember that Aaron and every other leader of the tribes are commanded to put their staffs in the Tabernacle, and in the morning, his staff sprouts not only almond flowers, but almonds as well¹. The almond tree becomes, then, a symbol for stopping and taking account – and a symbol of hope: the winter is over, and we'll spring into action!

This date has been transformed, in recent years, into a celebration of ecological awareness, and many are the Jewish texts that deal with the importance of trees and of having awareness of our own impact in the world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Rabbi's Message	Pg. 1
President's Message	Pg. 3
January Events	Pg. 5
Good Times We Shared	Pg. 6
2014 Baby Faces	Pg. 8
<i>L'dor V'dor</i> : From Generation	
To Generation: Alvin Goldman	Pg. 10
Schedule of Services	Pg. 11

Kayruv means “Welcoming.”

¹ Shemot/Numbers 16:1–18:32 gives you the full story.

Surprisingly or not, none of those texts were written after the 8th Century. One example is:

When God created the first human, God led him around all the trees in the Garden of Eden. God said to him, "See My works, how beautiful and praiseworthy they are. Everything I have created has been created for your sake. Think of this, and do not corrupt or destroy My world; for if you corrupt it, there will be no one to set it right after you."²

This *midrash*, written around year 400 C.E., is already sensitive to the impact of human existence in the world, and points out that the partnership between God and us is actualized in how well we keep God's creation. Or, in a more contemporary way - how aware we are of the impact of human existence on the ecosystems, and how much we are working to diminish our impact. Awareness and action – the two sides of *Tu B'Shevat*.

But *Tu B'Shevat* is not just a time to think about what needs to be done. It is a time of doing and celebrating - a time for action as well as for joy.

Warmly,
Rabbi Nelly Altenburger

RABBI'S OFFICE HOURS

Rabbi Altenburger invites you to meet with her and will be available any day except Wednesday and Shabbat. Please feel free to call or stop by.

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU!

If you or anyone you know is ill or in need of support, please call our ***Bikur Cholim*** (Caring) **Committee** at 203-792-6161.

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² Kohelet Rabbah 7:13

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

Our Texas Hold 'Em Dreidel Night was a great success, thanks to Marcia Hutter and Reina Shafiroff pulling it all together, and everyone had a great

time. We've got another fantastic evening coming at the end of this month with our annual Peter Ohring Foods by Dudes night on Friday, January 30th, a beautiful Friday night service followed by truly superb food. Don't miss it!

[Dramatic key change] Having completely and catastrophically failed to find a palatable segue into what I'd really like to talk about, please excuse me while I pull out the world's smallest violin and notice, perhaps in passing, that there come times in everyone's life and work in which frustrations seem to mount endlessly, and the big picture and long term horizon appear ever darker and more forbidding. Maybe it's just Seasonal Affective Disorder, but if you've ever felt this way, as I have lately, a couple of ideas I've run into may be worth contemplating.

First, in a provocative opinion article in the December 10th Jewish Daily Forward titled "Coming to Terms With Death of the Jewish Mainstream: A Despair Not Worth Fighting", Jay Michaelson bemoans anti-democratic tendencies in Israel and an increasingly Orthodox and insular American Jewish community, but rather than spout platitudes about "fighting the good fight," "writing good checks" and "being the change you want to see in the world" (as Mahatma Gandhi is usually misquoted), Michaelson refuses to ignore reality and embraces despair. Sound counterproductive? Au contraire: rather than give up on Jews or Judaism, he highlights creativity and experimentation ("creatively, I think ours is among the most fertile periods in all of Jewish history: more innovation; more hybridization; more exchange of the treasury

of Jewish cultural, spiritual and communal resources"), not because any of that will "save the Jews" ("if by this designation we mean the kind of large, multiplex-scale religious and cultural community that most of us have known all our lives"), but because the alternatives to the dying old order are genuinely exciting. Finally accurately quoting Gandhi, he persuasively concludes "we need not wait to see what others do."

Second, and more importantly, Rabbi Altenburger recently taught me a very practical insight from Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Emeritus Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth. Back in 1993, Rabbi Sacks had met with the principal of a failing school in which morale among teachers, students and parents was at an all-time low, the student roll had dropped by half, and test scores were terrible. The school was on the verge of closing. Rabbi Sacks told the principal "I want you to live one word — celebrate." She protested that there was nothing to celebrate — "everything in the school is going wrong." He persisted, "Find something to celebrate. If a single student has done better this week than last week, celebrate. If someone has a birthday, celebrate. If it's Tuesday, celebrate." Of course, you know what happened. She wrote to Rabbi Sacks eight years later to tell him that test scores had skyrocketed, the student population had doubled the school back to its former size, and she had been made a Dame of the British Empire (one of the highest honors the Queen can bestow) for her contribution to education.

We all need someone to believe in us, challenge us, and celebrate our achievements. So I'd like to switch out my tiny violin for a big brass band and conclude with a fanfare to some of our achievements over the past month. While Rabbi Altenburger was on vacation for a couple of *Shabbatot*, Sarah Namer meticulously organized two beautifully lay-led services. The quality of our service leaders, Torah and *haftarah* reading and *d'rashot* in the absence of our rabbi would be the envy of many congregations two or three times our size. And today, as I write these

words, one of our congregants has just donated \$25,000 to completely pay off our mortgage on the rabbi's house and the cost of cleaning the mold in the basement. So for a couple of weeks (until we get a small loan to tackle the waterproofing and reconstruction of the basement) we will have absolutely no debt as a congregation whatsoever, a remarkable financial achievement, and a testament to many years of prudent fiscal stewardship by former presidents and Boards of Trustees, and many years of phenomenal generosity on the part of not just this extraordinarily generous congregant, but many others as well. Our congregants care about each other and keeping CBI going to a degree that is truly worth celebrating.

Together for a challenging, innovative and celebrating community,

Kennis Koldewyn

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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.

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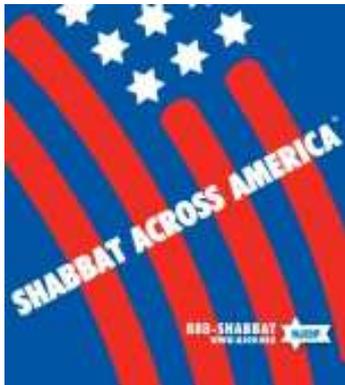
January 30, 2015 Foods by Dudes

Join us for the annual **Peter Ohring Foods by Dudes Dinner!** A culinary delight of scrumptious delicacies! Our wonderful “dude” chefs will be making a meal from soup to nuts. This event has become one of CBI’s favorite and most anticipated events. Everyone is welcome. Bring your friends, neighbors or co-workers and introduce them to B’nai Israel.

Cost: \$12.00/adult, \$25.00/families.

RSVP is a **MUST** by January 26, 2015 to help our chefs plan their menu needs.

**SAVE THE DATE!!
SHABBAT ACROSS AMERICA
MARCH 13, 2015**



SUPER BOWL XLIX FUND RAISER



Super Bowl XLIX will be held on **Sunday, February 1, 2015**. The first place cash prize for our fund raiser is \$600.00 with a half-time prize of \$150.00. The price of boxes is the same as in previous years, **\$50.00 for one** and **\$100.00 for three**. We will be following the same ground rules as we have in past years. The random selection of boxes will be made at the synagogue on the morning of February 1st.

We plan to email each participant, whose email address we have, a copy of the grid indicating which boxes belong to whom.

Have fun while supporting CBI. Mailed entries should be **RECEIVED AT THE OFFICE** by Friday, January 30th. If you are late, please contact either Paul Simon at 203-791-2102, Shalom Lampell at 203-775-9080, or Henry Tritter at 203-748-4250 before Sunday morning.

I want a chance to win the grand prize of \$600.00 or the half-time prize of \$150.00. Chances to win are... **\$50.00 for one box and \$100.00 for three boxes:**

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Enclosed is my check for \$ _____

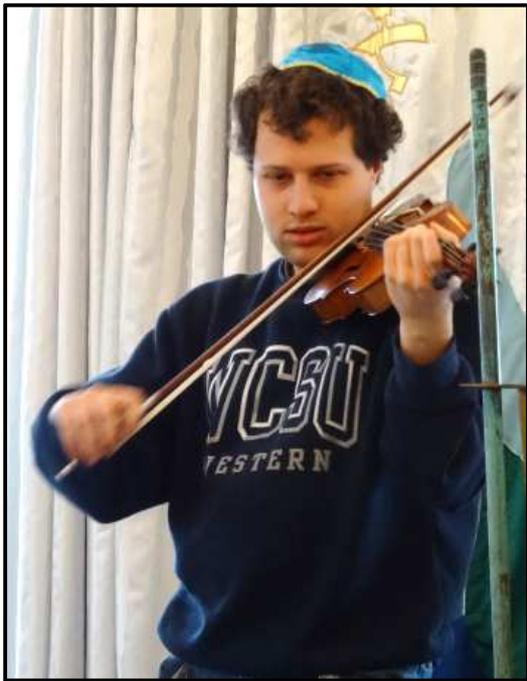
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GOOD TIMES WE SHARED

CBI's Hanukkah Party





CBI Members Help Dish Out Food at New Hope Baptist Church



Joel Levitt, Dina Markind, Barbara Levitt, Mark Altenburger and Paul Simon represented B'nai Israel in helping to feed the needy at New Hope Baptist Church in Danbury on Christmas Day.

Fun at the Texas Hold'em Dreidel Night



L'DOR V'DOR: FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

When the *Kayruv* Editorial Staff decided on Dr. Alvin Goldman as our next *L'Dor V'Dor* profile we agreed that we would probably need a multi-part series of articles and even that would not do Alvin's many years of service to the Jewish and general community justice. So space being what it is, here is a deeply abridged version.

Alvin was born in Brooklyn ninety one years ago and experienced a rich background in Jewish practices and studies through his family and his years at *yeshiva*. After a tour with the Navy in Okinawa toward the end of WWII, he attended medical school in Zurich followed by graduate studies at the University of Texas. While on break from a residency in Memphis he met native Texan and love of his life, Esther (aka Pat, who merits her own series of articles) on a blind date in NYC. Alvin recalls that after their first date, he told himself, "This is the girl I want to marry." That they did in April of 1957 and soon after they settled in Danbury. A family ensued with the arrival of Hillel and Beth, expanded in later years by grandchildren Elisha, Benjamin, Evan and Gabby.

In 1957 Alvin and his partners started the first pediatric medical group in the Danbury area. With countless patients in his long career, one need not go further than B'nai Israel to find Dina Markind and Benny Mandell among them. While juggling his many years as a dedicated and caring doctor, Alvin found the time to serve the Greater Danbury Jewish community in many leadership roles; as a founder of Maimonides Academy, the area's Jewish day school, as Jewish Federation president, as president of the local B'nai B'rith Lodge, as an active fund raiser and ardent supporter of Israel and local Jewish causes and as president of our own synagogue. Alvin is especially proud of the Jewish Cultural Society, which he founded and led in the 1960s. The Goldmans hosted at their home many of the Jewish luminaries who came up from New York City to speak or perform in local venues. One was Nobel laureate in literature Isaac Bashevis Singer, whom Alvin remembers as, "A real character whose eyes were on the women all the time," although he arrived in Danbury with his wife.

Currently, Alvin enjoys coordinating the appearances of teenage Israeli “Emissaries” as goodwill ambassadors to area high schools. This he finds “a very effective diplomatic challenge, helping to give young people and their teachers a better understanding of Israel.”

The Goldmans joined B'nai Israel in the mid '80s, seeking “a more traditional approach and services.” B'nai Israelites he finds “interesting, warm and accepting.” “We've had very good rabbis,” he adds, “and a lot of special members.” And of course, Alvin can always be counted on to chant the *Haftorah*, even on short notice.

In the larger community (larger because he is always able to see the “Big Picture”), Alvin continues to volunteer as board member and Medical Director for Families Network of Western Connecticut, a child advocacy agency and serves with the area’s mobile health clinic.

The title of this ongoing column, *L'Dor V'Dor, From Generation to Generation* so aptly sums up Alvin's still active and enduring vision. His is the golden (or better yet as Alvin loves to pun, *Goldman*) thread that helps connect our Greater Danbury community, both children and adults in sharing responsibility for the larger world we inhabit. It may be a broken world, as indicated in the *Mishnah*, but who better than a dedicated physician and tireless Jewish activist like Dr. Alvin Goldman to successfully practice *Tikkun Olam*, “Healing the World”.

Joel Levitt

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SCHEDULE OF SHABBAT SERVICES

☆ **Shabbat, 19 Tevet, January 10, Shemot:** The Israelites are enslaved and Moshe is called by God to confront Pharaoh. *Haftarah:* Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23

☆ **Shabbat, 26 Tevet, January 17, Va'era:** Pharaoh refuses to set the Israelites free and Egypt is beset with plagues. *Haftarah:* Ezek. 28:25-29:21

☆ **Shabbat, 4 Shevat, January 24, Bo:** Free at last! The Israelites leave Egypt. *Haftarah:* Jeremiah 46:13-28

☆ **Shabbat, 11 Shevat, January 31, B'Shalah:** Crossing the sea and singing for joy!
Haftarah: Judges 4:4-5:31

☆ **Shabbat, 18 Shevat, February 7, Yitro:** Standing at Sinai and receiving the Word of God.
Haftarah: Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:5-6

CANDLE LIGHTING

January 9, 2015:	4:25 P.M.
January 16, 2015:	4:32 P.M.
January 23, 2015:	4:41 P.M.
January 30, 2015:	4:49 P.M.
February 6, 2015:	4:58 P.M.

THANKS! THANKS!

For the General Fund

☆ Set Up crew from Campus and Student Centers of WCSU

☆ Rabbi Nelly and Mark Altenburger in honor of Samuel Cahn becoming a *bar mitzvah*

☆ Susan and Bob Small and family in honor of the generosity of my sister and brother-in-law Pam and Shalom Lampell

☆ Deborah S. Katz-Downie thanking Rabbi Altenburger for her help

☆ Paula and Philip Cook in memory of Ed Hutchings; in honor of Samuel Cahn becoming a *bar mitzvah*; *refuah shlema* to Marcia Klebanow

☆ Pam and Shalom Lampell *refuah shlema* to Marcia Klebanow

☆ Sol Lepson and Natalie Rapoport *refuah shlema* to Marcia Klebanow

☆ Dina Markind, Ken Kruzansky, and Jane Miller in loving memory of our their parents Max and Sara Kruzansky

☆ Sam Markind in memory of his father Simon Markind

YAHRZEITS

19 Tevet, January 10, 2015

David Slavin (Natalie Slavin & Evelyn Weinstein)

20 Tevet, January 11, 2015

Anna Berman (Sol Berman)

22 Tevet, January 13, 2015

Norman Bass (Gail Bom)

26 Tevet, January 17, 2015

Sara Dubois (Larry Dubois)

28 Tevet, January 19, 2015

Chaim Berman (Sol Berman)

1 Shevat, January 21, 2015

Louis Heller (Marc D. Heller)

6 Shevat, January 26, 2015

Benjamin Smeer (Dina Essinger)

8 Shevat, January 28, 2015

Bertha Blumenthal (Susan Tritter)

10 Shevat, January 30, 2015

Mira Shafiroff (Jeff Shafiroff)

11 Shevat, January 31, 2015

Edmund Dubois (Larry Dubois)

15 Shevat, February 4, 2015

Harry Goldman (Alvin Goldman)

20 Shevat, February 9, 2015

Lisa Sharon Steinberg (F. Richard Steinberg)

25 Shevat, February 14, 2015

Henry Heiden (Cory Heiden)

27 Shevat, February 16, 2015

Sara Kruzansky (Dina Markind)

For Their Generous Kiddush

☆ Simeon Lamour

☆ Reina and Jeff Shafiroff in memory of his parents

☆ Barbie and Jeff Steinberg in memory of their parents

Kayruv

Is a monthly publication of:
CONGREGATION B'NAI ISRAEL
193 Clapboard Ridge Road
Danbury, CT 06811

Kayruv means "Welcoming." Its goal is to invite you to a greater participation in the life of our synagogue.

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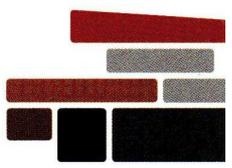
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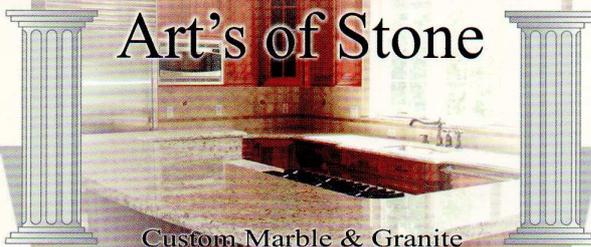
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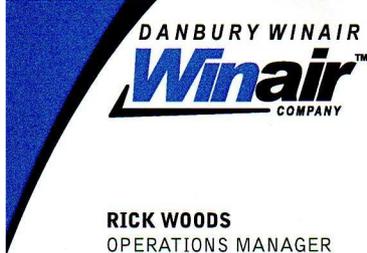
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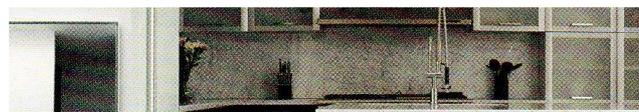
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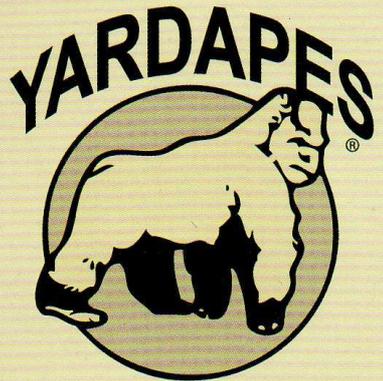
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