

Kayruv



קירוב

“Judaism for Today In a Warm and Caring Environment”

January 2016

Tevet/Shevat 5776

FROM THE RABBI



Dear Friends,

As I write this, President Obama is signing an executive order to diminish gun violence in America.

Happy New Year.

And as I pause to absorb the moment, I am left with the question: Is 2016 really going to be a different year?

Many people make New Year resolutions. Only some – very few, indeed – stick by them and are actually changed. Why?

There is a story about Rabbi Israel Salanter, who is the founder of the *Musar* Movement, also called the Jewish Ethical Mindfulness Movement. As he is about to die, he calls his children and says: “When I was a young man, I wanted to change the world. But I found it was difficult to change the world, so I tried to change my country. When I found I couldn’t change my country, I began to focus on my town. However, I discovered that I couldn’t change the town, and so as I grew older, I tried to change my family. But you, my children, were already grown, and it was impossible to change you.

Now, as an old man, I realize the only thing I can change is myself, but I’ve come to recognize that, if long ago I had started with myself, then I could have made an impact on my family. And, my family and I could have made an impact on our town. And that, in turn, could have changed the country and we could all, indeed, have changed the world.”

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***Kayruv* means “Welcoming.”**

The jarring aspect of this teaching is that it gives us listeners a challenge. Fixing the world, which is put in the center of Judaism in many communities, is dependent on something much more profound: changing oneself which is much harder to do and to measure, and so not put at the center, usually.

But look at the world. Has it really changed? Do we not continue to have the same problems we did, twenty years ago, that are still unsolved? Sure, cures and medications abound, true. But what of wars, famine, racism, corruption, indifference to suffering?

Rabbi Salanter is not saying we shouldn't change the world and he is not saying we shouldn't try – but he is saying that change, to actually happen in the deep way it needs to happen, has to be coupled with internal, personal change.

This teaching also seems to speak with accuracy about the arc of a typical human life – we aspire to great things when we are young, and settle, eventually, for what we get. We age and are beaten down by the unexpected challenges to those great things. We become realistic. But this teaching, or some form of it, was delivered by Rabbi Salanter in his old age. And the question that I want to raise is: Is old age an age, or a mindset?

In the ceremony of *Selichot*, a moving line says: “*Al tashlichenu le-et haziknah, kechol kochenu, al taazvenu*”¹ – usually translated as “do not cast us off in our old age, when our strength fails, do not abandon us.” And an obvious question is: Why are you asking this of the Holy One? Do you really believe in a God that would forsake someone who is old and frail?

And one of the answers is that it is not about God, but about us – our perceived “old age”. Doing the same things, thinking the same thoughts, refusing to change – those are the hallmarks of the “old age”. This mindset can be found in people of all ages. If a person is young and already so “set in her ways”, she only looks young. And there are many people, well above 60, that exude what we call “young age”.

¹ You can see Yehoram Gaon and Avi Hu Medina singing a version of this song here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cN8BjWxl_NO

Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote², “There is a question that follows me wherever I turn. What is expected of me? What is demanded of me?... Meaning is found in sensing the demand.”

If we start on our own change – the internal, the personal growth that needs to happen; if we, as a child, open our hearts to what is asked of us - then we are young, and then our changes in the world will be here to stay.

So this is my hope for 2016:

May we embrace change inside and outside.

May the works of our hands and the meditations of our hearts lighten our burdens and renew our souls.

May our shared light bring more hope for the year to come.

And may the year to come be more meaningful, and better, than the last.

Amen.

Warmly,
Rabbi Nelly Altenburger



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² Who is Man, p. 107

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

I'm afraid I must start off the new year with a bit of a confession: in the middle of December, I played Jewish hooky for a couple of weeks—which is to say, with some generous help from my parents, my family had a beautiful vacation in Hawaii. But Hawaii, while known for its rugged volcanoes, lush tropical rainforests and breathtaking coastlines, is not known for the size of its Jewish population (nearly seven times smaller as a percentage of its total population than the state of Connecticut). Our hotels weren't anywhere close to any synagogues, so while I've got some great stories about humpback whales, dolphins, sea turtles, and *Ōlelo Hawai'i* (the Hawaiian language), I unfortunately can't tell you much about Jewish life in the middle of the North Pacific Ocean.

Luckily, while I was gallivanting around helping Adina find seashells on the beach, Jewish life at Congregation B'nai Israel was as active as ever, and I'd like to highlight some of the excitement I was missing. A very generous anonymous donor has donated the full cost of building a brand new, professionally produced website for CBI, and Barbara Levitt and Julie Leventon have been putting in some serious time and effort with our talented website designer to bring the site to life—more details to come as the project nears completion.

For those of you for whom the secular new year presents the impetus to improve your lives by resolving to exercise your muscles or expand your mental horizons, I'm delighted to announce that Barbara Weisblatt has connected our congregation to Chai Mitzvah, a non-denominational adult learning program. Participants will attend nine monthly meetings and choose an independent study topic, a ritual or spiritual practice, and a social action to commit to during the year. It's a wonderful way to exercise our Jewish muscles, expand our Jewish knowledge, and strengthen our connections to the Jewish community. The first meeting will be in a couple of weeks, so don't wait to contact Barbara Weisblatt for details (we already have enough folks interested that we may have two

sessions that meet at different times to accommodate varying schedules.) It's open to the public, so please invite everyone and anyone who might be interested.

The excitement continues with a number of events to look forward to this month and early in February! First, our annual Peter Ohring Foods by Dudes dinner (as usual, a beautiful Friday night service followed by a sumptuous feast prepared by some of our finest culinary virtuosos—excepting yours truly, of course, but don't worry, I'm getting better) will be on Friday evening, January 29. Our annual Superbowl fundraiser follows on Sunday, February 7. I never win, but whether you (and your favorite team) win or lose, it's always a fun way to support CBI.

But most intriguingly, the previous day, Saturday, February 6, we'll have something really special: a "Conversation on Inclusion with Matan Koch." Not only is Matan the son of our member Rosalyn Koch and Rabbi Norman Koch z"l, but he is also a charismatic speaker, educator and consultant who has been lighting a fire for inclusion in a myriad of organizations, from national Jewish bodies to individual synagogues, local non-profits and bar associations all around the country. His expertise and history of disability advocacy was nationally recognized when President Obama appointed him to the National Council on Disability for a term which concluded in 2014. I am absolutely thrilled that our Board of Trustees has recognized how important igniting a passion for inclusion is within our own community, and several board members have committed to raising funds to make Matan's visit possible (along with a couple of generous anonymous donors who have started the ball rolling). Any donation you can make in support of Matan's visit or in memory of Norman will help light a flame under this issue, which we all know is important but have been allowing to languish on the back burner for far too long. Don't allow our apathy to carry the day—we can do better!

Together with passion, commitment, and *lokomaika'i/gemilut chasadim*/loving kindness,

Kennis Koldewyn

JANUARY EVENTS

January 29, 2016 Annual Peter Ohring Foods by Dudes Dinner, Services Begin at 6:00 P.M. Followed by Dinner

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 25, 2016 to help our chefs plan their menu needs.

LOOKING AHEAD

Saturday, February 6 at 11:00 A.M. Guest Speaker Matan Koch



It’s not every day (or in this case, every Shabbat) that B’nai Israel hosts a speaker with a national profile, but on Saturday, February 6, at 11am, Matan Koch, whom President Obama had appointed to a term on

the National Council on Disability will be our guest to talk about the subject of inclusion. Matan is the son of CBI member Roz Koch and the late Rabbi Norman Koch, Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Sholom in New Milford.

Matan, a graduate of Yale University and Harvard Law School has spent several decades as an advocate for people with disabilities, both within the Jewish community and the larger society. On his website, while giving ample credit to his years at Yale and Harvard, Matan writes that he, “...considers his summers spent at URJ (Union for Reform Judaism) camps Eisner and Kutz to have played an even more formative role in his life.”

Matan is at home working with individual synagogues, Jewish and general communal organizations, corporations and universities to remove the barriers; physical, spiritual and attitudinal toward full participation of people with disabilities.

Matan refers to, “Igniting a passion for inclusion.” On February 6, we will experience the spark that has led Matan Koch to a lifetime of advocacy for all people and for all possibilities.

Joel Levitt

Super Bowl “50”



Get ready for **Super Bowl “50”**. This year the game will be held on **Sunday, February 7, 2016**. We will be awarding a first place cash prize of \$600.00 as well as a half-time prize of \$150.00. The price of boxes is the same as 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 7th.

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

SUPER BOWL “50”

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:**

Please reserve _____ chance(s)

Enclosed is my check for \$_____

Name_____

Please make check payable to **Congregation B’nai Israel**.

GOOD TIMES WE SHARED

Spirituality Group at CBI

What is spirituality and what is your personal experience related to this abstract concept? These are probing questions that the Danbury area Jewish community has been invited to examine in an ongoing discussion group that has been meeting weekly for the past month at CBI following Shabbat services. The informal group, skillfully facilitated by CBI members Rochelle Hutchings and Paul Simon has been drawing an ever growing group of participants interested in honing and sharing their personal experience with spirituality. I was fortunate to attend a recent group and found the experience gratifying. As each group member shared his/her unique perspective (from secular to religious) an atmosphere of respect and interest pervaded. "Does a supreme being exist?" and "How do I find my personal moral barometer?" were two of the questions probed. To be willing to share one's deepest beliefs requires an environment of trust and this is obviously the ambiance that exists in the Spirituality group. Feel free to join the group at any time as a participant or observer. I think you'll feel as I did, stimulated and enriched by the experience.

Pat Goldman

B'NAI ISRAEL PRESCHOOL

Peering into PreSchool

Learning about Jewish values, holidays, and Hebrew vocabulary through creative play, stories, and craft activities is the basic structure of a typical day in our Preschool program.

Mary Ohring, a warm and friendly mother of two, is the teacher and creative force behind the preschool lessons. A typical morning could include a reading of Dr. Seuss' Horton Hatches the Egg, through which the children learn about the importance of keeping one's word; a favorite children's song such as "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" might follow, with Hebrew words for the body parts; and next might be discussions of how to treat friends, what are *Mitzvot*, or how each person has unique qualities. The children are learning to say the blessing before they have snacks, and are also enjoying their music classes with Jason Mix who plays the guitar and sings with

them.

The curriculum sounds so enjoyable that one wishes he/she could be peeking through a crack in the door to enjoy it with the children.

Harriet Lebetkin



SAVE THE DATE!
Shabbat Across America
March 4, 2016. Details will
be coming. RSVP a MUST!

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SCHEDULE OF SHABBAT SERVICES

☆ **Shabbat, 28 Tevet, January 9: Va'era,** Pharaoh refuses to set the Israelites free and Egypt is beset with plagues.

Haftarah: Ezek. 28:25-29:21

☆ **Shabbat, 6 Shevat, January 16: Bo,** Free at last! The Israelites leave Egypt. *Haftarah:* Jeremiah 46:13-28

☆ **Shabbat, 13 Shevat, January 23, B'Shalah:** Crossing the sea and singing for joy!

Haftarah: Judges 4:4-5:31

☆ **Shabbat, 20 Shevat, January 30, Yitro:** Standing at Sinai and receiving the Word of God.

Haftarah: Isaiah 6:1-7:6:9:5-6

☆ **Shabbat, 27 Shevat, February 6, Mishpatim:** Sealing the Sinai Covenant and receiving the Code of Civil Law. *Haftarah:* Jeremiah: 34:8-22;33:25-26

☆ **Shabbat, 4 Adar I, February 13, Terumah:** The Israelites are instructed to build a sanctuary to house the two tablets and to serve as a center for worship. *Haftarah:* 1 Kings 5:26-6:13

CANDLE LIGHTING

January 8, 2016:	4:23 P.M.
January 15, 2016:	4:31 P.M.
January 22, 2016:	4:39 P.M.
January 29, 2016:	4:48 P.M.
February 5, 2016:	4:57 P.M.
February 12, 2016:	5:05 P.M.

YAHARZEITS

1 Shevat, January 11, 2016:

Louis Heller (Marc D. Heller)

6 Shevat, January 16, 2016:

Benjamin Smeer (Dina Essinger)

8 Shevat, January 18, 2016:

Bertha Blumenthal (Susan Tritter)

15 Shevat, January 25, 2016:

Harry Goldman (Alvin Goldman)

20 Shevat, January 30, 2016:

Lisa Sharon Steinberg (F. Richard Steinberg)

27 Shevat, February 6, 2016:

Sara Kruzansky (Dina Markind)

1 Adar I, February 10, 2016:

Esther Breeman (Barbie Steinberg)

THANKS! THANKS!

For the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

☆ Debby Hindin in memory of her beloved father/grandfather, Martin Starkman

For Their Generous Kiddush

☆ The Goldman's

☆ Dina Markind

☆ Martin Waltuch and family in memory of wife/mother Susan

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.

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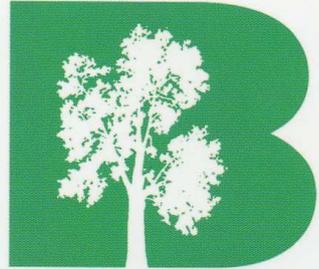
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