

120 Years • 1897 - 2017

Kayruv



קירוב

Celebrating the past, Welcoming our future!

April 2018

Nisan/Iyar 5778

## FROM THE RABBI



Dear Friends,

Now that Passover is over, we look forward toward *Shavuot*. Our tradition invites us to do so through the counting of the Omer, the spiritual discipline of counting each day and

week until *Shavuot*.

Now, *Shavuot* is one of the Jewish holidays that is most ignored among American Jews, and this is not just my opinion. American scholar Jonathan Sarna says so, in a piece in *Tablet* magazine<sup>1</sup>.

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***Kayruv* means “Welcoming.”**

Sarna points to the need of Jewish holidays needing “*mazel*” and since *Hanukkah* and Passover are located next to major Christian holidays, Jews need an alternative to keep identity alive: but poor *Shavuot*, alone in a long stretch between Passover and the High Holidays, does not have *mazel*.

A rabbi in the piece talks about how Passover “is the last Jewish gesture of the year before you disappear into summer camp, Memorial Day, et cetera.” Whereas this might be true for many Jews, I find the characterization of Jewish gesture something between sad and troubling.

Sad, because such characterization embraces the inevitability of Judaism being just one more activity we do. Troubling because I think this is not sustainable – if Judaism is reduced to “Jewish gestures”, for how long can it last? For as long as these gestures do not ask too much of those doing them. Humans, however, are creatures that operate with the “lesser effort” rule. Eventually, any gesture will be too much.



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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/33796/field-study>

And so the real question that both the Omer counting and *Shavuot* ask of us, since *Shavuot* is a celebration of the giving the Torah, is how do we embrace and incorporate a continuing relevance of Torah in our lives. How do we keep it alive? How do we keep it as a compass, moral and ritual, in our lives?

There is an aspect of *Shavuot* which is the first fruits, *bikkurim* in Hebrew. But that, too, requires attention, discipline and care. The Mishnah of the First Fruits<sup>2</sup> asks: "How does one designate the *bikkurim*?" and it answers: "A person goes to one's field and sees a date that is bearing fruit, a bunch [of grapes] that is bearing fruit, or a pomegranate that is bearing fruit, and ties it with a string and says, "Behold these are *bikkurim*." The idea would be that the farmer would walk around his or her property with awareness: this is budding, that is not.

It is easy to go around in life and not see the growth of things, the blooming, the small things. This is nothing new, regardless of our technological advances: not everything can be blamed on smartphones.

Besides the Omer, the *bikkurim* tie *Shavuot* and Passover together: as I explained before, the central text of the Haggadah is the declaration that the farmer would do when bringing the first fruits, found in Deuteronomy/Devarim 26 verses 5 to 8. "My father was a wandering Aramean and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there, few in number; and he became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians dealt ill with us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. And we cried to Ad-nai, the God of our ancestors, and Ad-nai heard our voice, and saw our affliction, and our toil, and our oppression. And Ad-nai brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders."  
*Shavuot* might be a difficult holiday to get excited about – because it is a more brainy holiday, with its night-long study session of

Jewish texts and its celebration of receiving of the Torah. But it is also the holiday that asks us, "What does this all mean?" And, like all the children in the *haggadah*, it expects an answer.

May we find our true answers and then even more questions.

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.

## **Donations for CBI's Year Long Food Drive**



Our ongoing food donation program continues to be a success. Don't stop now! There are people in our Danbury community that need our help. This is a monthly donation program. Please bring a little something whenever you can.

<sup>2</sup> 3:1

## FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

I am always writing about the community that is Congregation B'nai Israel. I also write about how we need more members to step up. PLEASE DO NOT STOP READING.

This is our 120th year. So, many ideas and programs were in the works and then one person was ill and everything stopped. Organizations need to be stronger than just one person. I am happy to report that Susan Tritter is doing great and we hope to have her back to her full self in a few months. But meanwhile, the 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary planning needs to continue. We are the ONLY synagogue and one of only a few houses of worship in this area that are 120 years or older.

Soon the nominating committee will reach out to the membership to join the Board. It is not a major commitment in time; and unlike many not-for-profit boards we do not ask for monetary donations, just your time. After serving on the Board for almost 10 years, I can tell you it is actually FUN. Since I know some of you want to help but just aren't sure where you fit in, just ask. We can get together to evaluate your skills and interests and find the perfect area in which you can excel.

I am always amazed at the achievements of our Hebrew School children. Each Purim they display their thespian skills performing a play. This year's was particularly difficult because of the length. I am proud to say they met the challenge.

On Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, the students led the services for the second day of Pesach. It was a thrill to see the caliber of their reading and reciting the prayers. We are so fortunate to have Rabbi Altenburger because she goes above and beyond with the students. We have a Bat and Bar Mitzvah coming up in June. Both students are working hard to get ready for this exciting ritual. Both are currently leading portions of Shabbat services and get stronger each week. I was telling the rabbi that when I went to Hebrew school all we did was read our Haftarah, or a portion of the Haftarah if there was more than one *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*. We never led services. Rabbi Altenburger prepares these young people to make their families and all of B'nai Israel proud of them.

Our 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Barbie Steinberg has been working hard on a fundraiser for the shul. Remember to bring your used printer cartridges to the shul for recycling. Not only will you be protecting the environment but also helping to raise funds for CBI. Shortly, information will go out concerning our SAVERS fund raisers. So, start your spring cleaning and get your items ready to bring to the shul. Remember not all items can be accepted. Check the email carefully.

If there is anything that I or CBI can do for you, please let me know.

Thank you,  
Paul M Simon

## GOOD TIMES WE SHARED

### **PESACH, DAY 2**

Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup> was no joke at B'nai Israel as the students of the Hebrew School led us through the 2<sup>nd</sup> Day of *Pesach* holiday service.

The entire school enthusiastically led the blessings before the *Sh'ma* and Psalm 132. Laura Takken read Psalm 148 and was joined by Isaac Graber for the Holiday Torah Service. David Hirsch, one of our younger students, impressively led *Ashreinu* and read three verses from the Torah reading.

Mark Takken read Torah and the *haftarah* beautifully for the congregation. Elliott Altenburger performed *Birkhot Ha-shachar* and *Aleinu*. Adina Koldewyn did a lovely reading of *Birkhot Ha-shachar* and Michaela Altenburger gave rousing renditions of *Shachar Avakeshcha*, *Pit-chu Li*, Psalm 150 and *Min Ha-meitzar*.

All of our students, including Daniel and Helena Mazarakos, Rachel Frenkel and Ben Raver, did an exceptional job with the service. We have a bright future at B'nai Israel.

Many thanks to Paul Simon who provided the delicious *Pesach* kiddush.

Gretchen Kennedy Graber

## FINDING MY ROOTS

In last month's Kayruv genealogy article, I left our readers with the question as to whether a long lost relative in Florida would respond to my letter seeking to reconnect with her family. At our publishing deadline, I did not know the answer.

Now, I do. First cousin Jaqueline was very happy to hear from me and we made arrangements to speak on the phone. We had not seen nor spoken to each other since we were both children and oddly, there was no hesitation in our nearly hourlong conversation. She provided me with much of the information I had been missing about her, her children and her late parents.

Fortunately, there are several Facebook sites devoted to Jewish genealogy that have been very helpful. Some are wide ranging, like "Tracing the Tribe" and "Jewish Genealogy Portal", while others are family-specific (I'm a member of "Searching for Kaplans". My maternal grandfather was a Kaplan). All are free to join and run by volunteers. Many people post poignant pictures of gravestones, asking if someone online can translate Hebrew inscriptions. I have yet to see any gravestone posted go untranslated.

Like many others, I have posted photos of inscriptions written in Russian or Yiddish on the backs of photos, postcards and documents sent to my grandparents from their relatives in Ukraine and Belarus, early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The responses have been heartwarming and eye-opening. I would never have discovered the names of my paternal great grandfathers if kind-hearted Russian and Yiddish speakers had not translated information on passports from 1907 and 1910. They were Leib (my father's Hebrew name) and Yossel (my Yiddish name).

From relatives I had not been in touch with for decades, I've learned fascinating and sometimes disturbing stories about my ancestors. One distant cousin, while serving on a US Navy vessel off the coast of Japan during World War II, witnessed the dropping of the atom bomb on Nagasaki. An uncle had a brush with the Mafia and lived to tell the tale. My great grandfather met with a terrible fate and was murdered by highwaymen while transporting a wagon-full of furs from a forest in Belarus. On my mother's side, the family name was Musicant and they were musicians in Russia and in America. A cousin who was a popular pianist, had a radio show in Philadelphia. Another is mentioned in a book about Klezmer musicians. They often performed in Jewish-owned nightclubs that had been speakeasies during Prohibition.



My uncle Alex Levitt on Atlantic City Boardwalk, ca. 1938, who survived a brush with the Mafia.



My cousin Louis Morrison (Musicant), ca. 1935, popular Philadelphia pianist.

I will be self-publishing my book within the next few months. It's been a remarkable journey for me; actually, an obsession. My goal was to honor the memory of my grandparents Sarah and Jacob Levitt and Tillie and Isaac Kaplan, whose courage, under truly adverse conditions, brought them to America and permitted me the freedom to tell their stories and those of their descendants.

I hope I've done them justice.

Joel Levitt

## SCHEDULE OF SHABBAT SERVICES

☆ **Shabbat, 29 Nisan, April 14, Shemini:** The dedication of the sanctuary and the death of Aaron's sons. *Haftarah:* I Sam.20:18-42

☆ **Shabbat, 6 Iyar, April 21, Tazria-Metzora:** The laws and boundaries regarding ritual purity of the human body. *Haftarah:* 2 Kings 7:3-20

☆ **Shabbat, 13 Iyar, April 28 Aharey Mot-Kedoshim:** The establishment of the annual atonement ritual for the People of Israel (*Yom Kippur*) and the ethical laws that govern Jewish society in the Holiness Code. *Haftarah:* Amos 9:7-15

☆ **Shabbat, 20 Iyar, May 5, Emor:** We read of the holiness among the priestly class followed by description of holiness in time: The Jewish Holy Days. *Haftarah:* Ezekiel 44:15-31

☆ **Shabbat, 27 Iyar, May 12, B'har-B'hukotai:** The blessings and the curses "If you walk in My ways or not." *Haftarah:* Jeremiah 16:19-17:14

## CANDLE LIGHTING

April 13, 2018:	7:14 PM
April 20, 2018:	7:22 PM
April 27, 2018:	7:29 PM
May 4, 2018:	7:37 PM
May 11, 2018:	7:44 PM

## Yahrzeits

### 5 Iyar, April 20, 2018

Ralph B. Osnoss (Kenneth Osnoss)

### 12 Iyar, April 27, 2018

David Tabachnick (Rochelle Hutchings)

### 14 Iyar, April 29, 2018

Milton Small (Pam Lampell)

Milton Steinberg (F. Richard Steinberg)

### 23 Iyar, May 8, 2018

Betta Pagrach Smeer (Dina Essinger)

Manny Ashkenas (Nada Adler)

### 29 Iyar, May 14, 2018

Louis Levitt (Joel Levitt)

## THANKS! THANKS!

### For the General Fund

☆ Roz Friedman in memory of Pearl Silverstein

☆ Pat and Alvin Goldman *refuah shlema* to Susan Tritter; in memory of Joyce and Martin Shenker's daughter; thank you to Paul for all he did during *Pesach*

☆ Susan and Henry Tritter in memory of Joyce and Martin Shenker's daughter

### For Their Generous Kiddush

☆ Dina Markind in memory of her father Max Kruzansky

☆ David Maser in memory of his mother Helen Maser

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- \* Medical-related topics – medical helplines, equipment and supplies; disability resources
- \* Other normal life cycle transitions and stressful life events

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AND FRIENDS MAY  
WE HAVE ANSWERS...ALL YOU NEED  
DO IS ASK!**

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**IN THE COMMUNITY**



**Love & Knishes Lunch Features  
Great Music in April**

(Southbury) Music and Entertainment at Love & Knishes Lunch on Wednesdays in April. All area adults are invited to make reservations for the lunches, which feature great programming, good company and a delicious meal. Lunch takes place at 12 noon in the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Community Function Hall of the Jewish Federation of Western Connecticut, [444 Main St. North](http://www.jewishfederationofwesternct.org) in Southbury.

The Jewish Federation of Western CT invites you to our Love & Knishes lunch on Wednesday, April 18. A delicious catered lunch is followed by a live performance with the famed Jeff Weiselberg. Jeff will entertain you with his musical expertise and humor. Expect to hear songs from your favorite artists like Elvis, Billy Joe, Sinatra and much more!

On Wednesday, April 25, Bob & Claudia Hughes and the Mark Templeton Trio return! Claudia and Bob Hughes have been performing with the Mark Templeton Trio for several years including venues such as the Mattatuck Museum, the Waterbury Exchange and numerous senior and health facilities in the area. Their musical offerings include

the Great American Songbook, a Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme repertoire, Broadway hits, and numerous other jazzy duets.

Claudia has been a professional singer for many years fronting several bands as the lead singer. She is currently lead keyboard player with the band Echelon. Bob Hughes has sung with the Connecticut Choral Society and their a cappella sub-group, the Chamber Singers. He also performs a classical repertoire accompanied by Mark Templeton.

Mark Templeton is one of the nations most accomplished jazz pianists and arrangers. His credits include performances with jazz legends Dizzy Gillespie, Woody Shaw, Kenny Garrett amongst others. He has also played at numerous international jazz festivals over the course of his career. Joining Mark are jazz bassist Phil Bowler of Newtown and drummer Kurt Berglund of Watertown.

Lunch begins at noon with entertainment starting at 1:00 pm. Suggested donation of \$7.50.

To RSVP, call 203-267-3177 x 340 or email [rsvp@jfed.net](mailto:rsvp@jfed.net).

## Myths and Legends of the Palace Theater

*(Southbury) The Jewish Federation of Western CT is hosting a NEW program at its Enrichment Center located at 444 Main Street North, Southbury. ALL ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND!*

On Thursday, April 26<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 PM, we will host Myths & Legends of the Palace Theater! The Jewish Federation of Western CT welcomes the Palace Theater to share with us the mystery and prestige behind the iconic Waterbury Palace Theater. Whether you're a theater buff, interested in architecture, or an avid historian you won't want to miss this opportunity! All attendees will receive a voucher for a free group tour! This event is FREE and light refreshments will be provided. Please RSVP by Tuesday, April 24 at 203-267-3177, x340. NO WALK IN'S PLEASE

At the William and Audrey Walzer Enrichment Center, our purpose is to provide individuals and families of all ages and stages with educational, supportive and enriching activities that strengthen

individual and family identity, uphold Jewish values and positively impact the community at-large.

## Caregiver Series to Launch!

(SOUTHBURY) The Jewish Federation of Western CT is hosting a new Caregiver Series. This is a 3-part series with different topics. The first will launch on April 17 and the topic is *Understanding the Aging Process While Adapting To a Caregiving Role*. The following sessions are scheduled for May 15 and the last is on June 19. The sessions will take place on Tuesdays at 1:00 pm at the Walzer Family Jewish Community Campus, 444 Main Street North, Southbury.

On April 17, Denise Julian and Kathleen Pye will kick off the series, as they share over 70 years' combined experience working with elders and their families. Their topic will include: valuable insights on medical, psychological and social issues, tips on how to best support the aging adult in your life, navigating and using your physician network as a resource and successful supportive interventions via a multidisciplinary approach. This session is in collaboration with the Watermark at East Hill.

On May 15, Cynthia Hamell from the Lutheran Home will present a topic titled Cognition Ignition. On June 19, author CJ Golden will present a session around her book titled: *One Pedal at a Time*. Her book is based on a blog that she wrote while caring for her husband during an illness.

All of these sessions will provide valuable information for caregivers who are responsible for the care of others, as well as tips for staying healthy themselves. Attendees are not required to attend all of the sessions. They are standalone topics, therefore, the participants can attend either one or all three. These sessions are free, however, reservations are required. 203-267-3177, x340.

We host on-going programs, support groups and workshops designed for individuals who are looking to educate themselves on topics related to enhancing their lives. Expect to create a network of friends with whom you can enjoy life. Open to the public.