



# קירוב

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**The Bulletin of Congregation B'nai Israel**

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*Tevet 5769*

**January 2009**

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*Judaism for Today  
In a Warm and Caring  
Environment*

## **FROM THE RABBI**

*Rabbi David Kosak is the assistant rabbi of Beth El Synagogue Center in New Rochelle, NY. Among his many talents are cooking and poetry, and prior to training for the rabbinate, he worked in several areas of the food industry. Rabbi Kosak ran his own catering business and helped a college friend to launch Numi, a line of quality kosher organic teas that are currently distributed worldwide. In 2006 he graduated with Rabbi Nelly Altenburger, with whom he shares a deep love for discussing halacha (Jewish Law).*

Recently, I attended the installation of Chancellor Arnie Eisen at the Jewish Theological Seminary. The ceremony began and ended with a rhythmic blend of African drums and percussion music. Afterwards, many people heatedly discussed the appropriateness of this ethnic drumming at a Jewish event. There is a line in the Talmud (MK), which claims that both young and old come running to listen to the beat of the drum. Despite this, some people were offended. No one, however, knew why the drummers were there. Were we being reminded, as a movement, to proudly follow our own drummer? Were we being invited to incorporate rhythm into our liturgy as one popular Los Angeles *minyan* does (and as some ancient Jews did)? Was the Chancellor trying to shake us up, or does he simply enjoy drum music? The power of music is that it can generate such powerful emotions. Sometimes we are not aware of why we are responding.

As a consequence, I have been thinking about music and silence, and the venerable, sometimes ambivalent, tradition of each in Judaism. The Bible is replete with mention of assorted instruments and many of the psalms we recite on weekdays and Shabbat were, by most accounts, performed by the Levites in the ancient Temple. The Talmud recounts tales of rabbis who would break into song at a wedding to fulfill the

*mitzvah* of gladdening the bride and groom. On the other end of the lifecycle, I remember learning about the strange dirges of lamentation that women would sing at funerals. Later, rabbis ruled that men should not listen to the voice of women in song, as the very quality and timber of the female voice was too suggestive to them. There is even a law on the books that a cantor with a beautiful voice is forbidden to lead services if he isn't praying in a heartfelt manner.

Claude Debussy supposedly stated that music is the sound between the notes. This silence also has a place in Judaism, whether in the silent *Amida*, or the hushed tones in which we receive many of our psalms and prayers. Silence is also considered assent in Jewish law. One *minyan* in Jerusalem famed for its culture of passionate singing and awe-filled prayer still finds it necessary to hang signs that read: *If you talk here, where will you pray?*

I suspect that the struggle to define the role of music and song in prayer is a particularly modern phenomenon that cuts across denominations.

Rabbi David Kosak

*Editor's Note: Music has always been an important part of the B'nai Israel service -- from the traditional Sephardic drum beat and poetic Ladino melodies to the Eastern European poignant and powerful melodies, we as a congregation, have enjoyed an exploration of Jewish music.*

*During Rabbi Altenburger's absence, we are fortunate to have cantorial student, Sharon Citrin, grace our bimah. Sharon brings her passionate commitment to performance of the many facets of Jewish spiritual music to us. Read more about Sharon on page 5 and be sure to come and experience her uplifting service.*

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

"There's a place for us,  
Somewhere a place for us.  
Peace and quiet and open air  
Wait for us  
Somewhere."

"There's a time for us,  
Someday a time for us,  
Time together with time to spare,  
Time to learn, time to care,  
Some day."

*Music by Leonard Bernstein, lyrics by Stephen Sondheim*

I was watching the Kennedy Center television tribute to its annual honorees last night when the culminating performance (in honor of Barbra Streisand, an alumna of my alma mater, Erasmus Hall H.S.) brought down the house with this ballad from "West Side Story". Immediately after, I watched the news; Gaza casualties totaling in the hundreds, several Israelis killed by missile attacks, no ceasefire in sight. So what do the romantic lyrics of a classic Broadway melody have to do with the grim reality of the violent cycle of Mideast politics (whether one considers the latter justified or not)?

I'm not trying to be naive by oversimplifying the comparison and I hope I'm not trivializing the tragic circumstances of what is going on in the Middle East, but it did strike me, in the almost immediate juxtaposition of ballad and battle last evening, that at the heart of the conflict of the former and the latter is the ever present yearning for peace, for safety, for normalcy and for growth. That, I believe, is what drives the Israelis (I'll leave it to mosque presidents to articulate the yearnings of their constituents).

It's a bitter irony that even within the year of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel, that yearning for the most basic of human needs still persists. I hope, God willing, that by the time this article appears or hopefully

sooner, there has been a ceasefire and follow-up actions that will lead to peace and progress.

Now while these few stanzas of "Somewhere" created a connection for me to the Middle East, they also struck closer to home. And while American Jews don't have the need to yearn for literal peace, safety, normalcy and growth as do our brethren in Israel, we yearn for those things figuratively. And also, we yearn of course, for "Time to learn, (and) time to care" and as I have come to realize, time itself.

I think that at B'nai Israel, "There's a place for us..." so to speak, that affords each of us a time to learn, to care, to pray, to interact, and to grow in a warm, affirming and nonjudgmental atmosphere. And I think that each of us yearns for that place and that time.

"Somewhere."  
"Some Day."  
Some Synagogue!

*Shalom,*  
Joel

### *Stew Leonard's* Gift Card Fundraising Program



Do your shopping at *Stew Leonard's* because the synagogue receives 5% (sometimes 10%) when you shop using the gift card(s).

Call Cheryl at the office (792-6161) for your gift card(s).

## JANUARY EVENTS

### **Sunday, January 25 from 10:00-11:30 A.M. Women's Group Discussion and Brunch**

Our next meeting takes place January 25 from 10:00-11:30 A.M. We will discuss, "The Jewish and Secular New Years: Twice the Time to Make (Or Break) Our Resolutions". What are some of your resolutions? Can we as a community of Jewish women help each other achieve our goals? We look forward to your joining us!



### **TREES FOR ISRAEL**

**\$18.00 PER TREE  
TO BENEFIT  
THE JEWISH NATIONAL  
FUND**

**PLEASE MAKE CHEKS  
PAYABLE TO:  
CONGREGATION B'NAI  
ISRAEL**

**Contact Gail Boms  
For Information  
203-740-9888**

## LOOKING AHEAD

### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO HELP WITH PURIM BASKETS**

Member Vanessa Hirsch has once again taken on the Purim Basket fundraiser. Vanessa is in need of volunteers to help out. She is looking for bakers, delivery people for the weekend before Purim and people to help put the baskets together. The baking will be done two weekends before Purim because Purim falls early in the week and delivery will be the weekend before. Baskets will be put together on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday mornings prior to Purim.

Please contact Vanessa at 203-790-8648 or [hirschvanessa@sbcglobal.net](mailto:hirschvanessa@sbcglobal.net) and let her know you can help.

### **CBI EVENTS & CLASSES**

**Mondays at 8:30 A.M. Torah With Modern  
Commentary - we will let you know when classes  
resume.**

**Sunday, January 25<sup>th</sup> from 10:00-11:30 A.M.  
Women's Group Discussion and Brunch**

**Religious School: Tuesdays 4:00- 6:00 P.M.  
Sundays 9:30-12:30 P.M.**

## GOOD TIMES WE SHARED

### WOMEN'S GROUP RAP

*(Snap your fingers and tap your toes to the following rap and here's how it goes!)*

There's a saying that's quoted all over the street,  
If some foxy, smart ladies you'd like to meet.  
Take your homeys, your buddies, the *gantza* troop,  
And bop on down to our Women's Group.  
We laugh, we talk, we have great fun,  
There's room at the table for everyone!  
If you haven't been there, whatcha waiting for?  
Come to our *shul* and open the door,  
We'll greet you with food and sisterly cheer,  
Come join us in this happy New Year!

On December 28, the Women's Group met to discuss how we face the December dilemma. We shared sometimes funny, sometimes sad, but always heartfelt stories of how we view our place as Jewish women during the hullabaloo of the Christmas and Hanukah season.

Our next meeting will take place on January 25 from 10:00-11:30 A.M. We will discuss, "The Jewish and Secular New Years: Twice the Time to Make (Or Break) Our Resolutions". What are some of your resolutions? Can we as a community of Jewish women help each other achieve our goals? We look forward to your joining us!

Natalie Slavin and Evelyn Weinstein

### MATAN MARKIND TO STUDY IN ISRAEL

On January 25<sup>th</sup>, Matan Markind will leave for Israel to participate in a four month high school program sponsored by Camp Ramah. The program, *Tichon Ramah Yerushalyim*, will offer Matan a curriculum equivalent to the one that he is taking at Danbury High School giving him the opportunity to receive full credit for his studies. In addition, an intensive course in Hebrew language and Israeli history will be offered. The group will travel throughout the country re-enforcing their studies by visiting the actual sites on which history was made.

When asked whether he was concerned about personal safety during a time of great tension and turmoil in Israel, Matan replied, "I'm not worried for myself but for the Israeli people who are consistently exposed to danger." He looks forward to studying with friends from Ramah and visiting with Israeli friends that he has met at camp during the past several summers.

Matan says that he anticipates a "great experience" and promises to share his experiences with us when he returns in June.

*L'hitraot*, Matan. Go in good health and return in good health, with a deepened understanding of and commitment to Israel.

Pat Goldman

## MEET SHARON CITRIN

Sharon Citrin is just months away from the realization of what many would consider “an impossible dream” -- she will be ordained as a Cantor at Boston Hebrew College in May. This dream could only begin to materialize in the last decade when Sharon, always inspired by Jewish music, learned of the possibility that women could assume the cantorial role.

Born in Jericho, Long Island into a Conservative Jewish home, Sharon feels that the seeds of her current accomplishment were planted by her exposure to the rich diversity brought by her grandparents to her early childhood environment. Her paternal grandfather was born in the Old City of Jerusalem and moved to the U.S. at age 16, subsequently marrying a woman from Morocco whose Judaic background included the poetic and melodious Ladino songs. (Her paternal grandfather, she shares with pride, was fluent in Yiddish, Spanish and Arabic and had a knowledge of Biblical Hebrew). Her maternal grandparents, from Eastern Europe, were more at home with the powerful and poignant melodies chanted by the Chazan in their Ashkenazi synagogue and Sharon remembers being intrigued with the “old time traditional chanting” during her participation in the High Holy days.

It was many years and many a career later that Sharon met and was deeply impressed by a woman cantorial student at Congregation B'nai Israel in Southbury. “She lit my fire” making me realize the educational scope of the cantor’s position and the possibility of a woman entering this field and making a profound contribution, she recalls. Her mentor encouraged her to participate in many areas of synagogue worship and education which greatly whet her appetite for more and deeper exploration of Judaism and Jewish music.

At that time, Sharon was a single mother with two young sons so the obstacles for enrolling in a demanding cantorial program loomed large. However, as her commitment and passion intensified the “obstacles melted away and she enrolled in the cantorial program at Boston Hebrew College.

What an interesting path Sharon had taken up to that point in her journey! She had served as an art teacher as well as a curator of a Prehistoric Art Museum in Manhattan. Her own commitment to feeding her beloved pets in a healthy fashion served as a catalyst to start a successful and original business of manufacturing natural organic pet snacks and lecturing extensively about these products. She has served as a business consultant for executives and as the principal of a Regional Religious School in Waterbury, CT. All of these careers share a strong central motif of love of education -- a love that Sharon carries with her to her newest career as a cantor.

Sharon speaks with humility and a sense of profound challenge related to meeting the unique needs of the diversified congregation in today’s Jewish world. She clearly defines her own mission in the following way: “I envision my role as a cantor to engage, educate and empower congregants of all ages through musical expression for the purpose of facilitating worship, building community and developing leaders.”

We are grateful that Sharon will share her deep commitment and beautiful voice with us during January Shabbat services and wish her *yashar kochech* (continued strength) for now and in a future that will, no doubt, do much to enrich contemporary Jewish life.

Pat Goldman

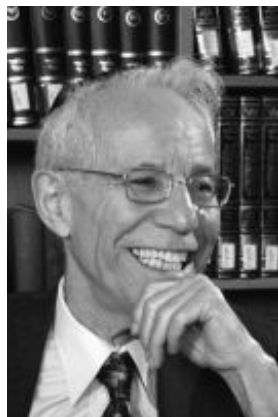
## FROM RABBI ALTENBURGER

*Dear Friends,*

*Baruch Dayan HaEmet – Blessed be the true Judge.  
Naflah Ateret Rosheinu – the diadem which was on our  
head has fallen.*

*It is with sadness and deep sense of loss that the Conservative Movement mourns the passing of Rabbi Dr. David Lieber, z"l, whose name you probably know as connected to the Etz Hayim chumash. As someone who learned with him, I can only add to the excerpt below from the LA Times that Dr. Lieber, as we called him, was not only an engaging scholar and a brilliant mind, but also a mensch who would welcome any question and any contact with the warmest smile, a pleasant demeanor and a full desire to listen and to discuss. May his memory bring us blessings.*

Rabbi David L. Lieber, the president emeritus of what is now American Jewish University and the guiding force behind a modern Torah commentary for Conservative Judaism, died of a lung ailment Monday at his Beverly Hills home. He was 83.



Lieber was president for 29 years of the University of Judaism, which last year was renamed American Jewish University after merging its Bel-Air campus with Brandeis-Bardin Institute in Simi Valley.

As the university's first full-time president, Lieber oversaw its expansion from a tiny campus in Hollywood that concentrated on training Hebrew teachers to a more comprehensive institution in the Santa Monica Mountains that encompasses programs for undergraduates, graduates and adult learners. He also started its rabbinic program, the first on the West Coast for Conservative Judaism, and an MBA program.

Lieber was one of the nation's longest-serving college presidents when he stepped down in 1993. A biblical scholar, he returned full-time to teaching and was elected in 1996 to a two-year term as president of the Rabbinical Assembly, the international association of Conservative rabbis.

He also devoted himself to a project he had wanted to pursue for more than two decades: the creation of a new interpretive text for Judaism's Conservative branch that would reflect contemporary beliefs and modern scholarship. When the idea was approved by the movement's Rabbinical Assembly in 1987, Lieber became general editor.

Unveiled in 2001, the 1,560-page volume called *Etz Hayim*, or "Tree of Life," replaced a Torah translation and commentary that had been used in Conservative synagogues since the late 1930s. Traditional enough to be accepted by many Orthodox synagogues, the older commentary, written by J.H. Hertz, the Orthodox chief rabbi of Britain, was "antiquated and apologetic," Lieber said, particularly about sex and gender.

The new commentary, issued by the Jewish Publication Society of America, takes a less literal approach to the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. Reflecting recent archaeological finds, it questions some biblical narratives, such as whether Joshua ever really conquered Canaan and whether Moses was a real person or a folk hero. It also softens the interpretation of passages concerning homosexuality, which the Hertz commentary had described as an "abyss of depravity" and avoids references to God as "He."

"There's a need always for a new Torah commentary to reflect the age in which it is made," Lieber told the Jewish magazine *Forward* in 1999.

Lieber was born in Poland on Feb. 20, 1925, and came to the United States when he was 2. After graduating from City College of New York in 1944, he received his rabbinical training and a doctorate in Hebrew literature at Jewish Theological Seminary of America. He also had a master's from Columbia University.

From 1950 to 1954 he was rabbi at Sinai Temple in Los Angeles. In 1956 he was named dean of students at the University of Judaism. In 1964 he became president and in 1979 oversaw the university's move to its present location in Bel-Air.

He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Esther; four children, Deborah, Michael and Daniel, all of Los Angeles, and Susan of Pittsburgh; and 11 grandchildren.

*Excerpts from a piece in the LA Times, written by Elaine Woo and printed on December 16, 2008.*

## SCHEDULE OF SHABBAT SERVICES

Services begin at 9:30 a.m.

✧ **Shabbat, 14 Tevet, January 10, Vayehi:** Jacob blesses his sons before he dies. *Haftarah:* I Kings 2:1-12

✧ **Shabbat, 21 Tevet, January 17, Sh'mot:** The Israelites are enslaved and Moshe is called by G-d to confront Pharaoh. *Haftarah:* Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23

✧ **Shabbat, 28 Tevet, January 24, Vaera:** Pharaoh refuses to set the Israelites free and Egypt is beset with plagues. *Haftarah:* Ezekiel 28:25-29:21

✧ **Shabbat, 6 Shevat, January 31, Bo:** Free at last! The Israelites leave Egypt. *Haftarah:* Jeremiah 46:13-28

✧ **Shabbat, 13 Shevat, February 7, B'Shalah:** Crossing the sea and singing for joy! *Haftarah:* Judges 4:4-5:31

✧ **Shabbat, 20 Shevat, February 14, Yitro:** Standing at Sinai and receiving the Word of God. *Haftarah:* Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:5-6

## CANDLE LIGHTING

January 9, 2009:	4:24 P.M.
January 16, 2009:	4:32 P.M.
January 23, 2009:	4:40 P.M.
January 30, 2009:	4:49 P.M.
February 6, 2009:	4:58 P.M.
February 13, 2009:	5:06 P.M.

## Yahrzeits

### 19 Tevet, January 15, 2009

David Slavin (Natalie Slavin & Evelyn Weinstein)

### 20 Tevet, January 16, 2009

Anna Berman (Sol Berman)

### 22 Tevet, January 18, 2009

Norman Bass (Gail Boms)

### 26 Tevet, January 22, 2009

Sara Dubois (Larry Dubois)

### 28 Tevet, January 24, 2009

Chaim Berman (Sol Berman)

### 8 Shevat, February 2, 2009

Bertha Blumenthal (Susan Tritter)

### 11 Shevat, February 5, 2009

Edmund Dubois (Larry Dubois)

### 15 Shevat, February 9, 2009

Harry Goldman (Alvin Goldman)

### 20 Shevat, February 14, 2009

Lisa Sharon Steinberg (F. Richard Steinberg)

## THANKS! THANKS!

### For the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

✧ Judy & Alan Maya in honor of Michaela

### For the General Fund

✧ Margo and Hy Reiser in honor of friend Phyllis Klausner birthday

✧ Pam and Shalom Lampell *refuah shlema* to Julie Leventon

✧ Paula Cook in memory of her mother Gloria Mark

✧ Pat and Alvin Goldman

- In memory of George Bruckman's father

- *Refuah Shlema* to Vivienne Bruckman

- *Refuah Shlema* to Philip Gelber

- *Refuah Shlema* to Julie Leventon

### For the Kay and Harry Robinson Children's Book Fund

✧ Barbara and Joel Levitt

- *Refuah shlema* to Julie Leventon

- Happy 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary to our dear friends Judy and Michael Turk

- For the continued recovery of Rabbi Menachem Gopin

- For the good health of Megan Sniffen

### For Their Generous Kiddush

✧ Bill Ross

✧ The Markinds

✧ Doreen Waver

## THANK YOU!

A special thanks to all of you who donated so many wonderful Thanksgiving items for our six families. The families were very pleased and loved them.

Vanessa Hirsch