



קירוב

The Bulletin of Congregation B'nai Israel

Sivan/Tammuz 5769

June 2009

*Judaism for Today
In a Warm and Caring
Environment*

FROM THE RABBI

Dear Friends,

B'nai Israel is once again at the cutting edge of Jewish life, both in Danbury and in the Conservative movement. We have experienced being at this very same spot twice already: four years ago, when we launched the Jewish Summerfest; and almost two years ago, when we began our Outreach programs to the general Jewish community.

The basic idea behind Jewish Outreach is that we, the Jewish institutions, cannot afford to just sit back and wait for those who are unaffiliated to show up at our door step. "Just build it and they will come" has worked wonders in the past, but nowadays this approach is working less and less. The unaffiliated, for a myriad of reasons, remain unaffiliated – at best affiliating during family moments such as bar/bat mitzvah or death, in many cases not even then. Jewish outreach proposes to go where the unaffiliated are, showing a Judaism that is both warm and welcoming, that happens outside of the institutions – at the bookstore, at the supermarket, the orchard and the mall.

B'nai Israel has courageously embarked on the outreach idea – and we are the only Jewish institution in the area that has grown, both in numbers and in commitment of new members. We all know: numbers only tell half of the story. That

we have a solid 30-people group that shows up for Shabbat morning is amazing: many 300 family congregations cannot muster that many. That we have the Jewish SummerFest is another immense testimony to the power of our community – not only is there no other congregation in the area doing this, but I have yet to find any congregation that has an event that draws 400 to 500 people. We are strong in commitment and in programming, not only in numbers.

Now B'nai Israel is embracing a fantastic opportunity, not only of growth but also of service to the rest of the Jewish community, both affiliated and non-affiliated: the PJ Library program.

The PJ library is a nation-wide Jewish outreach program, implemented by local communities, that offers twelve age-appropriate books or CDs with Jewish content per year, to families raising Jewish children – at no cost to the family, and with no questions asked. No strings attached. Its main premise is that Jewish literacy begins at home: children from six-months to eight years old are eligible. The books not only are of very high quality, but also are accompanied by a parent's guide to each Jewish concept, idea and expression found in them. This provides parents with the necessary background for having discussions or giving explanations to the child as they read the book. The program was created by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Harold Grinspoon was in a taxi when he heard of singer Dolly Parton's Imagination Library story on the radio. Born incredibly poor, Dolly Parton never had a children's book, and swore to herself that if she ever made it big, she would help poor children to have access to and own children's books, fostering literacy for children in the inner city¹. Harold Grinspoon had the idea of doing the same for Jewish children, fostering Jewish literacy – for whoever wants to raise a Jewish child. More details regarding the implementation of this program in our community can be found in Barbara Levitt's article on page 10.

What can we expect, as a community, if we are able to muster the resources needed? An even more energized community, doing what it can to help the Jewish people. An even better community, in the most important and least quantifiable sense: a community doing service to others. A community that understands that its own growth depends on the healthy growth of the general Jewish community. Of course, we'll be more visible. Of course, people will know of us, and look for B'nai Israel. I personally think we'll probably get a few new members. But this is NOT the main goal, and should not be the reason why we're doing PJ library for all of Jewish Danbury: we're doing it because it is the right thing to do, for our Jewish community and for the Jewish people.

We are the little *shul* that could. We have done it many times, it's time to do it again!

Warmly,
Rabbi Nelly Altenburger

Ed. Note: At our recent congregational meeting Paul M. Simon was elected B'nai Israel's new president. Paul became a member of our community in 2004. Since then, he has displayed his commitment to CBI through his participation in many aspects of the life of the synagogue. In addition to regular attendance at services, he has been a member of the Outreach, Summerfest, Technology Committees, and several ad hoc groups. He has worked in the field of College Student Development his entire professional life. Paul is obviously one who leads by action and example.



Dear Friends,

As I write my first article as president, I have many thoughts going through my mind. First I want to thank Joel Levitt for helping me reach this point. His encouraging words, when I had doubts, helped me decide to accept the nomination. Joel has set a standard which I hope I can live up to. One reason to accept the position was the opportunity to work with Rabbi Altenburger. I have never met a more caring and committed Rabbi. She gives her heart and soul to our synagogue. We are fortunate to have her. Most importantly I want to thank you, the congregants, for the trust and faith you have shown me. The kind words I received at the annual meeting and through email have alleviated some of the fears and trepidation I had going into this position; although many still remain.

¹ For more, see www.dollysimaginationlibrary.com

During the annual meeting I spoke about the four major goals I will focus on during my term:

- Fiscal Constraint
- Building Community through Involvement
- Discussions with area Synagogues
- Expanded Outreach

I would like to expand on the first two, this month, because they go hand-in-hand. The other two will be discussed in future articles.

As you know, the Board of Trustees approved an operating budget that was not balanced. This raised many questions during the board and annual meetings. We are living in very tough economic times. Many people, me included, have lost thousands of dollars in the stock market. Disposable income is down which leads to a decline in donations. The budget committee presented a realistic projection of income and expenses. The expenses are “bare bones” without cutting what I consider the heart and soul of the synagogue. The only way we can meet our expenses is to raise income.

Families must weigh many competing factors before they decide to donate to the *shul* above their membership dues. I ask you to reflect on the joy and spiritual satisfaction you have received from the *shul*. The *shul* was there for you during times of joy and times of sadness. How many lasting friendships have been developed because of Congregation B’nai Israel? We have been serving the needs of this community for over 100 years and will continue for another 100, with your support. I ask those who can to please keep Congregation B’nai Israel in your thoughts for financial support so we can continue the excellent work we do.

For some, paying membership dues is now a hardship because of lost jobs. Those families must know that Congregation B’nai Israel will not abandon them during their greatest time of need. When they are back on their financial feet I know they will be there for us. Support does not always have to be financial. This leads me to my next goal – Building Community through Involvement.

Many of you are already involved though participation on the Board, a committee or by helping out for a specific function or event. Ghandi put it best when he said “*The best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service of others.*” There are many ways to get involved. In its first year the Outreach Committee under the able leadership of Doreen Waver conducted the first Passover in the Aisle and Fall into *Sukkot*

programs. We received national attention for our programs. This year the committee, now chaired by Becky Heiden, has already held the second Passover in the Aisle program and has many others in the planning stage. The Sustainability Committee led by Peter Ohring has conducted two very successful cleaning days and is working towards the “greening” of our synagogue. Our newest committee, Media and Technology, is in the process of reformatting our web presence. You will hear more from that committee in the near future. Our Summer Festival has become the must go to event in Danbury. The ritual committee, led by Charlie Cahn, insures that our services and religious traditions meet the needs of our membership. Steven Berr and the Education Committee are insuring that our children are learning about the religious beliefs and values we hold important.

None of these and our other committees can function without your support; support through your time and energy. To paraphrase President Kennedy, “*Ask not what your synagogue can do for you, ask what you can do for your synagogue.*” Support comes in various formats: financial, time and dedication.

Together for a Strong and Proud
Congregation B’nai Israel....

Paul

CONGRATULATIONS TO CBI'S NEWLY ELECTED BOARD

Paul M. Simon, President
Barbara Levitt, Vice President
Lois Stein, Treasurer
Michael Weinstein, Financial Secretary
Nada Adler, Recording Secretary
Henry G. Tritter, Corresponding Secretary

Board of Trustees

Steven Berr
Charles Cahn
Alvin Goldman
Marcia Klebanow
Shalom Lampell
Julie Leventon
Sam Markind
Peter Ohring

JUNE EVENTS

Shabbat, June 13th Rachel Berr is Called to the Torah as a *Bat Mitzvah*

Victoria and Steven Berr invite the congregation to share in their *simcha* as their daughter, Rachel, is called to the Torah as a *bat mitzvah*.



We would like to invite you to share our pride and love when our daughter

Rachel Elizabeth

becomes a *Bat Mitzvah*

Saturday June 13, 2009

9:30 A.M.

at

CONGREGATION B'NAI ISRAEL

193 Clapboard Ridge Road

Danbury, CT 06811

Steven and Victoria Berr

Sunday, June 14th from 10:00 to 11:30 A.M. Women's Group Meeting

This month's topic will be the Jewish Woman's role in the family. Light refreshments will be served.

Friday, June 19th, at 7:30 P.M. *Oneg Shabbat* in Honor of Joel Levitt

Joel Levitt is a talented artist who often employs the language of artistic symbolism to express his ideas. When, early in his presidency of CBI, he was diagnosed with a rare bone disorder (always an original, our Joel) he was assigned a metal neck brace to be worn 24/7. This brace was alternately described as a halo and a crown of thorns. And this, in fact, could be an apt metaphor for Joel's leadership of our congregation.

Joel was consistently able to face the many thorny issues that beset a small congregation in its attempts to survive -- and he dealt with them in a realistic and creative manner most often emerging with a halo of success.

Perhaps Joel's greatest assets in this process were his spontaneous sense of humor, ability to listen respectfully to all points of view and creatively synthesize reality with a sense of optimism and mission.

With these unique qualities he has not only sustained CBI during difficult times but has also made us a more fiscally solvent community; unified in its commitment to survive.

And now, Joel has passed the mantle of leadership to Paul M. Simon, who will add his very special talents to this inspiring legacy.

On Friday, June 19th, following Shabbat services, we will honor Joel in a dessert gala and tribute. Do you have a special recollection story or photo you'd like to share? Get them to Cheryl by phone 203-792-6161 or email cbi193clap@sbcglobal.net no later than June 10th.

Please join us to celebrate CBI's renaissance man who thankfully has shed his crown of thorns but will, in our hearts, always retain his halo.

RSVP to Cheryl by the 10th if you can make it.

Pat Goldman

Sunday, June 28th, 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. CBI Tag Sale

Are you thinking of spring cleaning? Well keep B'nai Israel's tag sale, which is being held on Sunday, June 28th from 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M., in mind.

The items we are looking for and that tend to be most popular are: kitchen, decorative, art work, frames, books (no school textbooks) CD's, children's toys, towels, linens, comforters all in good condition, tools, garden tools, lamps, jewelry, and small (working) appliances.

As in the past, we cannot accept the following items as we have found these types of items do not sell and we have to arrange to have them disposed of: Computers, monitors, air conditioners, TV's, clothing, large furniture, tires, or items that are stained and/or have a moldy/musty odor.

Your items may be dropped off beginning June 15th to the big room downstairs. Contact Cheryl at 203-792-6161 for hours during the day and Lois Stein at 203-746-5868 for evening hours.

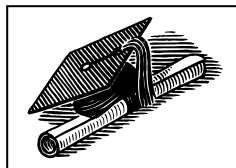
Nada needs volunteers to help price items, set up, work the day of the tag sale and clean up after the tag sale. Please give her a call at 203-426-3720 if you can help or if you have any questions regarding an item that you would like to donate.

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).



**CONGRATUALIONS
TO OUR GRADUATES!**

OUR COLLEGE GRADUATES

Joshua Hecht, son of Patti and Gerald Hecht graduated from Castleton State College in Vermont. Joshua received his degree in Sociology and is planning to seek employment in the CT area.

OUR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Jenna Waltuch, daughter of Martin and Susan Waltuch will be graduating from Bethel High School. Jenna is near the top of her class and will be attending WCSU in the fall where she will be in WCSU's Honors Program. Jenna wants to pursue a career in the entertainment industry and will work toward a Bachelor degree from WCSU School of Visual and Performing Arts.

Sidney Aaron Kochman, son of ShariLynn Kochman, graduated from high school this year by taking the GED exam at the age of 16 in Danbury. He has been accepted into Humber College in Toronto for the fall.

OUR MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADUATES

Isaac Ohring, son of Mary and Peter Ohring, is graduating from New Fairfield Middle School. Isaac will be attending high school in the fall.



TREES FOR ISRAEL

\$18.00 PER TREE

TO BENEFIT

THE JEWISH NATIONAL FUND

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS

PAYABLE TO:

CONGREGATION B'NAI ISRAEL

Contact Gail Boms

For Information

203-740-9888

LOOKING AHEAD

SummerFest August 23rd, 12:00 - 6:00 P.M.

Three years ago we decided that the time was right for us to join in Danbury's long-standing tradition of summer-weekend ethnic festivals. We've all heard the bouzouki at the Greek festival, tasted the pasta at the Italian festival and watched belly dancing at the Lebanese festival. We wanted to create an event that allowed visitors to experience genuine Jewish Culture.



Over the past three summers our festival, on the fourth Sunday in August, has grown and improved. A diverse group of some 450 visitors of all ages and backgrounds came to last year's event and experienced grassroots Jewish Culture. Culture is not an armchair experience at B'nai Israel; it is hands-on, participatory, even messy. And that's what we have in our festival. We played the music, sang the songs, danced the steps, kibitzed and kvetched, created the crafts, and yes, we even baked the Challah rolls!

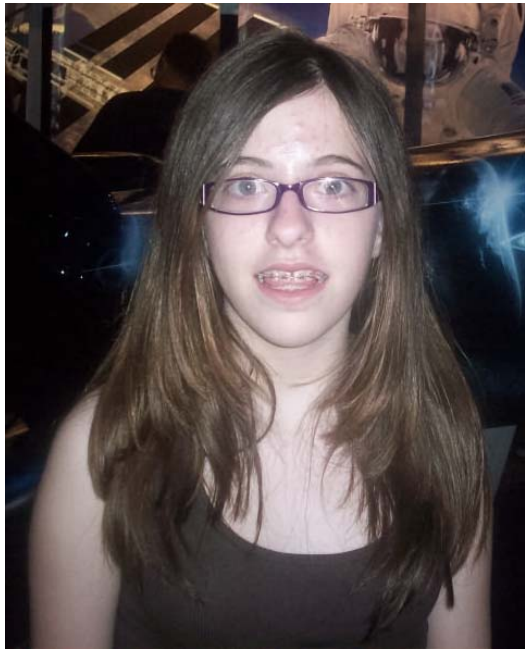


We will host our fourth annual summer Jewish Festival on Sunday, August 23, 12:00-6:00, rain or shine. This free, fun and entertaining event will take place at the synagogue, located at 193 Clapboard Ridge Road in Danbury, and will feature lots of live Klezmer and Israeli music by congregation members and their musician friends, delicious Kosher food including falafel, hot dogs, and bourekas, He'Brew ("The Chosen Beer") and fun family activities including crafts, face-painting, and story-telling. The first prize in this year's raffle is an Ipod Touch. Sponsorships are available to local businesses that want to support this community-centered event, while effectively promoting their business

Congregation B'nai Israel is located at 193 Clapboard Ridge Road. Please call 792-6161 for more info. We hope you stop by!



MEET RACHEL BERR



Rachel Berr, 12, is mostly excited and only a “little bit nervous” about her upcoming *Bat Mitzvah* on June 13th. She has been preparing since Rabbi Nelly returned from her maternity leave, at the beginning of February. Now that Rachel’s big day is getting closer, she is studying two days a week, in addition to her regular Hebrew school classes. It may sound like a tough schedule, but it has gone fast for Rachel, who can’t believe how much she’s already learned. “I actually thought it would be a lot longer,” she said.

Rachel likes studying with Rabbi Nelly because of the way the Rabbi relates the material to everyday life. For example, at one study session baby Michaela was present. Rabbi Nelly was holding her when she then decided to lift her daughter up in the air, to emphasize the sections of prayers where Rachel needed to go higher with her voice.

At Broadview Middle School, Rachel is in the seventh grade and likes English and science classes, which she says she’s getting better at. Math, however, is her favorite subject. She is currently taking pre-algebra, which is an eighth grade subject, and definitely wants to continue taking advanced math classes when she gets to high school.

When she isn’t in a classroom, Rachel can be found on the soccer field or practicing the mallets with the school band. “It’s basically a xylophone,” she explained of her unique instrument. She used to play the snare drum in the fourth and fifth grades but chose to switch to the mallets for sixth and seventh grades when the field of snare drum players became too crowded, with 15 percussionists. Rachel opted to be one of four mallet players, all of whom are friends.

Speaking of friends, at least four or five are planning to be at her *Bat Mitzvah* and likely more still at the party that her family, including parents Steven and Victoria and brothers Jonathan, 10, and Harrison, 7, are hosting for her afterwards at their Danbury home.

Mazel Tov, Rachel!

Tiffany Citroen

ON BEING A JEW

By Rachel Berr

How does being a Jew make you feel? How it makes me feel is an interesting question because until I was nine years old, I didn’t really have any religion in my life. We did celebrate Hannukah and a Passover here and there, but we didn’t go to synagogue and I didn’t go to any Hebrew School. Then our family joined B’nai Israel and I started going to Hebrew School and services. I began to learn more and more about being Jewish and knowing more about being Jewish helped me learn more about myself.

Being Jewish is very special to me because it is meaningful to be able to carry on the religion of my relatives. Being a part of a Jewish community is important to me because it is nice to be around people that I have being Jewish in common with. When I went to Israel with my father two summers ago, we got to visit Jerusalem. I got to see lots of people, Jewish people, praying at the Western Wall. I thought that it was amazing, the amount of people praying and that they were Jewish, just like me. It was an amazing time for me and I loved being in Israel. It also helped me realize that I love being Jewish.

GOOD TIMES WE SHARED

OUR SECOND ANNUAL SPRING CLEAN UP DAY

Cleaning windows, scrubbing cabinets, cleaning closets...and having fun. B'nai Israel now sparkles inside and out. Thanks to everyone who so generously donated their time on Sunday, May 3rd to make our building shine!



PAT AND ALVIN GOLDMAN: A TRIBUTE

by Joel Levitt

Yes, over 200 people broke the box office record at last month's annual Jewish Federation dinner honoring Pat and Alvin Goldman, but I felt cheated. That's not to say Pat and Alvin felt that way, but I did. After all, how could you sum up all of the decades of humanitarian works that Pat and Alvin have contributed to the Jewish and general Greater Danbury community (plus Israel!) in a mere three hours.

I was hoping the Federation would have a Pat and Alvin Weekend or better yet, a month long Goldman Festival (I was even willing to compromise on a Pat and Alvin Fortnight, but not too many folks know how long a fortnight lasts), so an evening it was. And it was wonderful.

As you can immediately guess by the quality of my reportage, I am not a New York Times writer, so I am not bound by the ethics of journalism that require an even-handed approach to my subject. I am totally biased. I love Pat and Alvin, not in the way people say they "love" someone whom they know well and admire, but in a deeper, more filial sense.

So on that evening, many, many people came to love and admire the Goldmans and I *kvelled* like a proud child to hear so many fine and accurate tributes to my very special Pat and Alvin.

First, Rabbi Nelly Altenburger did B'nai Israel proud in her warm and inspiring benediction. Former CBI Rabbi Sam Weintraub came up from his synagogue in Brooklyn for the occasion and had the honor of saying the *Hamotzi* to begin the meal. The featured speaker, Israeli Consul for Media and Public Affairs David Saranga did a fine job of illustrating the position of the new Israeli government concerning the peace process, but also spoke engagingly of Israeli initiatives to win the media war. The emcee, Dan Wolinsky cracked wise and efficiently moved things along. But the pearl in the oyster, so to speak, was someone who has known the Goldmans as long as they've been in Danbury, Pearl Turk.

Pearl's eloquent and heartfelt tribute to the Goldmans touched upon their contributions both professionally (Pediatric Associates and the Danbury Regional Child Advocacy Center), Jewishly (Congregation B'nai Israel, Maimonides Academy, Federation Women's Division, etc.), communally (Child Abuse Committee and Families Network, Wellness on Wheels, Ann's Place, Aldrich Museum, etc.) familial (the Goldmans were surrounded by family) and personally.

But the whole of Pat and Alvin's accomplishments as a loving, mutually inspiring, complementary team is greater than the sum of their vast individual contributions.

As Pearl concluded, "Pat and Alvin live the process of *Tikkun Olam* to heal, repair and transform our community."

And as she paraphrased a verse from the Book of Proverbs, "Many couples have done superbly, but you Pat and Alvin, have surpassed them all."



PJ LIBRARY PRESENTATION AT B'NAI ISRAEL

A group of B'nai Israel congregants and guests including Dr. Darla Shaw, Professor of Literacy from WestConn and Lisa Temkin Carrozza, Asst. Director, Career Development Center, WestConn and her charming son, Matthew were treated to an enjoyable and instructive presentation about a program that now has participants in 109 communities across the United States as well as in Israel and Canada called the PJ Library. (The "PJ" is from "pajama" a time when many parents read to their children). This initiative is a project of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation in Springfield, Mass. Our presenter, Rachel Berezin is the marketing director for PJ and gave us an enlightening tour of the books and CD's it offers children from 6 mos. to 8 years old.

Our group was very excited about incorporating PJ as an offering to the greater Danbury Jewish community and we are enthusiastically ready to share information with our Board at the June meeting. Basically, PJ sends, each month, a lovely picture book or CD that is age appropriate, to each registered child. Parents are provided with suggestions for discussion with their child(ren) through questions and additional information concentrating on Jewish values (which are integrated into each story).

Additionally, parents receive a parenting book at the beginning of the series (a new addition just this year!). Rachel's presentation and our Q and A that followed was punctuated continuously by Matthew who couldn't keep his eyes and hands off of all the books he had not received yet, no matter their "age level"! We couldn't have staged a better commercial!

Lisa and Matthew currently participate in the program through a Southbury affiliation. Lisa made a very positive point of telling us that PJ had made a great impact on her family's connection to Judaism and Matthew and all of them were anxiously awaiting each new book.

Rabbi Nelly had first seen PJ as part of the Jewish Outreach Institute conference that she attended several years ago. The Grinspoon Foundation provides all the initial marketing mailings to potential participants as well as materials for posting and training for local people to present Jewish values/literacy workshops to area children and their parents and a portion of the funding for each enrolled child. What a great outreach opportunity this would be for us!

The testimonials presented by Rachel were very poignant and spoke of the entire Jewish family benefiting from PJ. Also, many interfaith families can be reached and can learn or relearn Jewish culture, values, basic holiday information and may be encouraged to become affiliated with synagogues, federations and the Jewish community at large.

In order to fund the program, we will need to raise about \$4000 a year. This means that each child, in each family, in each community that we open the PJ Library project to, receives all the resources and any complementary workshops or family programs at absolutely no cost to them-ever!

More to come in the next issue! Stay tuned, put on your thinking caps and your PJs and think about how you can join the PJ groupies and make this happen for our kids and many others seeking to benefit from the experience of Jewish literacy in greater Danbury.

Barbara Levitt

