



*Judaism for Today
In a Warm and Caring
Environment*

קירוב

The Bulletin of Congregation B'nai Israel

Adar 5769

March 2009

FROM THE RABBI

Dear Friends,

If Purim is around the corner, Passover is not far behind. Do you see a link between the two celebrations?

The story of Esther is, ultimately, a story of the awakening of a Jew in power to the fact that our fates are all connected. Esther, you might remember, does not tell her origins to anyone, first because she was told to do so by Mordechai – but later the same Mordechai has to tell her that “do not imagine that all Jews will perish but you’ll survive.” We express that communal connection in a twofold way: with *mishloach manot*, the gifts of food we send to each other and with *matanot laevionim*, gifts to the poor. Both gifts are indicated by the Scroll of Esther, making sure that same sense of communal responsibility found in the story will continue to reverberate with us today.

In our Passover story, we get out of Egypt as a mixed multitude and slowly grow into a more cohesive group, the shared experience of being a slave is the glue that keeps us together – and the Torah makes sure to remind us of that glue an incredible amount of times: at least 36 times, others count 47. The Passover *haggadah* reinforces the communal aspect with its famous “whoever is hungry come and eat.”

The rabbis link the Shabbat before Purim with Passover through an extra Torah reading. That special *maftir* is *Shekalim*, which is a reminder for all to contribute a half-shekel towards the poor in the community to enable them to celebrate Passover. That is also the origin of the *Maot Hittin*, the donation for wheat for Passover: communal responsibility. Clearly, observing Passover has included a certain financial strain since the 3rd century, and the needy were the most affected – and this has certainly not changed.

These past years, the economy has brought challenges to all Americans. In our own B'nai Israel family we have no less than 7 families where one or both adults are currently looking for jobs, or have had to embrace jobs that pay less than the job they had before in an effort to maintain their families afloat. It is thinking about those families that today I write, asking that you consider a donation to the rabbi's discretionary fund so we can support the effort of some of those families to celebrate and observe Passover.

Our sages remind us that *tzedakah* begins at home: we have to think first of those in our own families, then locally and then globally. This system of circles of care is learned from the verse *when you lend money to My people, to the poor with you, don't be to him like a creditor, don't take interest*¹. The verse refers to helping the needy through an interest-free loan but it also applies to general *tzedakah*. The Talmud infers from the expression "the poor with you" that we give precedence to

¹ Exodus 22:24

those needy individuals who are closest to us: [when deciding between helping] ...*your poor and the poor of your city, your poor have precedence. The poor of your city and the poor of another city, the poor of your city have precedence*².

Another important point of *tzedakah* is how we give – the best donation is the one where the receiver does not know who gave, and the giver does not know who received. The *Mishnah* marks such ways of giving as present already in the Second Temple³: *There were two chambers in the sanctuary. One was called chamber of the secrets, ... [there] the pious secretly gave charitable gifts, and the poor received there secretly their sustenance*⁴. Being in financial straits is hard enough: this system also preserves the inherent dignity of those who find themselves in need. Nowadays, that “chamber of secrets” is found with the rabbi of each community, who takes upon him or herself to give *tzedakah* without making public those who receive from it.

Please, do consider helping those in our own B’nai Israel family for this Passover. Any amount will help those families, not only physically but also spiritually: they will know that the community cares for their needs, is with them in their difficulties, and at the same time respects their privacy.

Warmly,
Rabbi Nelly Altenburger

Passover in the Aisle Prize Donations Needed

The Outreach Committee is looking for prize donations for our Passover in the Aisle event to take place on March 29th. Last year prizes included Tupperware, gift certificates, etc. If you or someone you know would like to donate to this worthy cause, please contact Mary Ohring at 203-746-3745 or mary.ohring@gmail.com.

Thanks for your help!



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

² Baba Metzia 71a

³ Up to first century CE.

⁴ Shekalim 5:6

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

The other morning while walking down the corridor of an elementary school, a teacher called out from behind, “Hey Joel, are you counting the days (toward my retirement as Danbury arts coordinator)?”

“Actually,” I answered a little bit nonplussed, “I’ve never even thought about doing that.”

Honestly, “counting the days” sounds like an activity more suitable for convicts than coordinators, and although I am looking forward to retirement, why rush to the finish line of a career I’ve been blessed to enjoy for over 37 years.

Since that day, though, I’ve thought about the often quoted Psalm 90:12, “So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.”

And irreverent scamp that I am, I’ve also thought about Woody Allen’s comic retort, “Why are our days numbered and not say, lettered?”

Of course, the Biblical psalm refers not to the retired life, but in a way to what Socrates referred to as “The unexamined life.” The Bible cautions us that our days are numbered and fragile, compared to the omnipotence and omniscience of God. Given the finiteness of our lives and the infinity of God’s power and presence, it serves as a kind of call to action for righteous living (or else).

So my days as arts coordinator are numbered, but who’s counting? Still, retirement is a line of demarcation and along with another milestone last month (my 60th birthday) it’s given me pause to consider what to do as I enter what for me is new and uncharted territory.

Well, I began to plan for my retirement by doing what I’m always doing: raising money. I applied for and was awarded a \$5,000 grant from a philanthropy in Boston to fund an idea that has lodged in my brain since the result of my illness last year. What does it mean for an artist or musician or anyone whose art form is connected to their fine motor skills, to have their artistry affected by illness or accident? With the funding from this grant, I will create a conference in Danbury this fall for visual and performing artists/educators to explore those issues, attend workshops, listen to speakers and performers and network with each other and area medical, arts, educational and disability advocacy organizations.

And there are other things I want to do with the promise of newfound time (although many active retirees I know say that they’re busier than when they worked). How I’ll spend that time; work, leisure, volunteer is something I am beginning to think about, and of course B’nai Israel will be a welcome part of that mix.

“Number our days,” we are told, because our days are numbered, and I can’t think of a better gathering of people to spend those days with than the members of B’nai Israel.

But whether our days are numbered or even lettered, the important thing...is that they count.

Shalom,
Joel



OUR SUPER BOWL RAFFLE WINNERS

This year the first place prize went to Alice and Charlie Cahn who have generously donated the money back to the synagogue.

Our second place winner was Doug Wise.

MITZVAH OF THE MONTH

Preparing for Passover: Dealing with *Hametz*

What exactly is *hametz*? And why can't we have it for Passover? This is all dealt with in the letter of the rabbi. This section is intended to be an easy "how to" guide for *Pesah!*

DO NOT MAKE YOURSELF CRAZY. The most important thing to know when you clean for Passover is that only the necessary work has to be done. It is not necessary for *Pesah* cleaning to make you feel like you really never left Egypt and are still in bondage. You can take this opportunity to do a thorough spring cleaning, or operate on a more superficial level. Also, remember to pace yourself.

Passover Kitchen Countdown - Making the Passover Changeover

If you have children, you do have to do a more thorough cleaning – all rooms have to be cleaned, including closets, if your children are pre-*bnai mitzvah* age. **As you finish each room, you might post a sign, such as "Kosher l'*Pesah!*" or even "*hametzbusters* were here!"** These signs remind the family both that food is not to be taken into these rooms, and that the task of cleaning for *Pesah* is gradually being accomplished. This is also a wonderful time for going over toys and books that have been outgrown. Each person can realize that he or she has changed since last *Pesah*, and that it is time to recognize that new person by removing the "*hametz*" of the old.

Once your kids are old enough that you would trust them not to forget food in their clothes and jackets, you can allow yourself not to clean the closets. Any place in your house that you know no one takes food to eat, such as an attic, does not have to be cleaned.

The kitchen can be seen as a serious challenge. However, if you take it step by step, you can keep it from being completely overwhelming. Listed here is a suggested order for *kashering* different parts of the kitchen so that you don't lose your mind along with the *hametz*! For actual *kashering* methods see the next section.

Kitchen Countdown! (print out and affix to your refrigerator)

1. About a month in advance: stop buying *hametz*, and try to use what you already have at home.
2. About two weeks before: begin buying and storing *Pesahdik* foods, preferably out of the kitchen, so that they will not be confused with things that are "*hametzdik*."

3. Here we go: Select an area to be *hametzdik*, where you will still do some of the meals during those days.
4. Clean the kitchen cupboards. If you don't have special *Pesah*-only cabinets, remove the regular dishes from the cabinets you will need and get them *Pesah*-ready. The food for *Pesah* can then be put inside. **If you don't need to empty all of your cabinets, DON'T!!** Tape them shut and mark them so that they will not be used. The outside surfaces should still be cleaned.
5. Kasher the refrigerator and freezer. One small corner lined with foil can be used for *hametz* until the morning before the *Seder*. The foil is discarded at the final changeover.
6. Kasher the stove and oven (this needs to be done after a 24-hour waiting period). After this point, *hametzdik* meals should be prepared in a toaster oven or other appliance. Microwave ovens can be kashered, but they also have to be unused for 24 hours beforehand. The process itself is quick, however, so the microwave can remain available longer than the oven.
7. Kasher the sink and the dishwasher (the dishwasher takes two days to be *kashered*, read below).
8. Kasher part of the counter so that you can put *Pesah* dishes on it.
9. Sweep and wash the floor (this will probably have to happen again). Take a rest while it dries!
10. Kasher pots, pans, and silverware (flatware).
11. Take all remaining *hametz* out of the kitchen. Finish kashering all of the counters.
12. Bring out the *Pesah* dishes.
13. Admire how far you've gotten!!

And just how long is this going to take??!

It is a very good idea to have as a goal a completely *kashered* kitchen **at least one day before the morning of the *Seder***. Balancing *hametzdik* meals and a *Pesah* kitchen is NOT easy, but lends to the sense of adventure. People end up eating dinner on the porch or even outside when the weather is warm enough. In order to manage everything, it is a good idea to start the kitchen four to five days ahead of the holiday, allowing more time if you have a very busy regular schedule. IT DOES GET FINISHED!!

But I have so much *hametz!* Observing *Pesah* is expensive, but it is not supposed to cause financial hardship. It is a good idea to try to use up as much regular, opened food as possible before the holiday. If, however, you have just too much left, by *halakhah* (religious law) you can sell it. This is called *mehirat hametz*. All of the *hametz* must be in a specified place, described, and paid for by a non-Jew. Because the process is complicated, it is usually conducted through a rabbi.

See B'nai Israel's sale of hametz form at the back of this issue of the *Kayruv*.

The combination of children and cleaning

Drawing children into the activities is one of the central goals of *Pesah* and the *Seder*. However, the serious cleaning of the holiday is hard for adults to enjoy, let alone youngsters! Aside from the plain hard work, there are often strong chemicals around, heavy boxes to move, and sometimes stressed people to contend with. THIS may be the time to get a sitter. Alternatively, work with the children on preparing for the *Seder* and get someone else to clean your kitchen!

HOWEVER, if you are on your own with children demanding your attention while you are trying to make progress, get them started in one of the activities to get ready for the *Seder* (such as making place cards or pictures for one of the table songs) within shouting distance. You can then continue to work (although you will be interrupted) and the children will be contributing to the preparations. When a major job is almost done, the children may be able to symbolically "help" complete it. As they see it getting finished, they can get the feeling that everyone in the house is working together to "bring *Pesah* closer."

Of course, the children should have an active part in the culminating activities of searching for and burning the hametz (see further). They should be made aware that all hametz is now nobody's property: it is like dust, not for eating, until *Pesah* is over. They can be reassured, if necessary, that the change is not permanent, and they will get to enjoy Cheerios again before too long! **YOU DID IT!!**

Kashering guide ~

The following cannot be *kashered*, so store them away:

- Decanters or baby bottles
- Colanders
- Filter/screen over drain in sink
- Graters and utensils where food can get trapped between the blade and handle
- Slotted spoons, wooden spoons, cutting boards and spatulas
- Sponges, brushes, toothbrushes
- Ceramicware — all types — including brick, china, coffee mugs and enamel
- Glass bakeware — all forms — including Corning Ware, Corelle, fiberglass, porcelain enamel (for example, porcelain sinks and enamelized pots), Pyrex or thermoses.
- Frying pans, sandwich makers, toasters, toaster ovens, waffle iron
- George Foreman Grill, barbeque and barbeque accessories

General rules: There are two steps in *kashering*.

1. Cleaning — removing all tangible traces of hametz and
2. Purging — using heat to remove all absorbed hametz flavor.

All methods of kashering noted in this section presuppose that the equipment was thoroughly cleaned.

Refrigerator, Freezer, Food Shelves and Pantry

These areas should be thoroughly cleaned—paying special attention to the edges where crumbs may get trapped— and the shelves should be lined with paper or plastic. The refrigerator and freezer will operate more efficiently if one pokes a few holes in the lining.

Counters

Special care must be taken to prevent Passover foods and utensils from coming in contact with your kitchen countertops. After thoroughly cleansing and scalding all surfaces with boiling hot water, new liners should be used to cover the surfaces from the time hametz is prohibited until after the Passover holiday. This procedure is also required for tables or countertops made of Formica. Other countertops, such as Vendura, Avonite and Corian countertops, as well as those made of granite, must be thoroughly cleaned and scalded with boiling water, but may be left uncovered unless they have cracks or crevices; in those cases, the counter must be covered.

Oven

Kashering a Self-Cleaning Oven:

1. Remove any large pieces of food (or other items) from the oven.
2. Go through one complete self cleaning cycle with the racks in place. It is preferable that the racks be cleaned and remain unused for twenty-four hours before they and the oven are *kashered*.

Kashering a Non-Self-Cleaning Oven:

1. Clean walls, floor, door, ceiling and racks thoroughly with an abrasive cleaner (for example, Easy-Off) to remove tangible hametz. Pay special attention to the temperature gauge, the window in the door and the edges of the oven chamber. Black discolorations that are flush with the metal do not have to be removed.
2. Once the oven is clean, it is preferable that it remain unused for twenty-four hours.
3. Place the racks back into the oven, and turn the oven to broil for one and-a-half hours.
4. Pesach food or pans may be placed directly on the door or racks once the oven has been *kashered*.
5. If the oven has a separate broiler chamber, it should be *kashered* in the same manner as the oven chamber. A broiler pan that comes in direct contact with food cannot be *kashered*.

Stovetop

The grates of a gas stovetop should be *kashered* in the oven chamber in the same manner described above. For an electric stovetop, just clean the coils and turn on high for ten minutes. For a gas or electric stove, it is preferable to replace the drip pans that are under the burners; if this isn't possible, the area should be covered with aluminum foil. The work area between the burners should be cleaned and covered with two layers of foil. The knobs and handles of the oven and stovetop should be wiped clean.

Sink

Kashering a Stainless Steel Sink:

1. Remove the filter covering the drain and put it away for Pesach with the *hametz* dishes.
2. Clean the sink, faucet and knobs, and don't use the sink for anything other than cold water for twenty-four hours.
3. Boil water up in one or more large pots (clean pots that have not been used for twenty-four hours). The pots may be *hametz* pots.
4. *Dry the sink*, then pour the boiling water over every spot on the walls and floor of the sink and on the faucet and knobs. One may *kasher* part of the sink and then boil more water for the rest of the sink. *Extreme care should be taken during this type of kashering to ensure that none of the boiling water splashes onto the person doing the kashering or others who are nearby.*
5. Place an uncovered pot of boiling water directly under the faucet so that hot steam will rise and come in contact with the entire underside of the faucet.
6. Rinse the sink and faucet with cold water.
7. Put a new filter over the drain. One should also purchase new sponges and a fresh bottle of dishwashing liquid.

Kashering a Porcelain Sink:

Since a porcelain sink cannot be *kashered*, one should *kasher* the faucet and knobs as outlined above and, for the duration of Pesach, place a basin (or insert) into the sink. All dishes, silverware, et cetera, should be placed and washed in the basin, and washwater can be disposed of through the sink's drain. One should be careful not to allow the sink to fill with hot water while the basin is in the sink.

Dishwasher

1. Remove the racks. Inspect the racks, the inside of the dishwasher, and especially around the drain filter for any pieces of food. Be especially careful to remove the filter, clean in and around it, and to check inside under it to be sure there is no food.

Return the racks to the dishwasher. You must do this even if you are 100% sure there is no food in the dishwasher.

2. Let the dishwasher sit unused for 24 hours.
3. Run the empty dishwasher through a full cycle with soap on the highest temperature setting.

Electric Mixers, Food Processors and Blenders

If the motor area of electric appliances is exposed to *hametz*, and can be cleaned only with great difficulty, it is recommended that a special mixer for Passover be used. However, food processors and blenders that have totally sealed units in their motor area may be used if the bowls and mixers are changed.

Silverware, Pots and Other Small Items

Small items are *koshered* with boiling water, which involves:

1. Not using the utensil for anything, including non-*hametz*, for twenty-four hours. This also applies to the (non-*Pesah*) pot in which the water will be boiled.
2. Submerging the utensil in boiling water that is over the fire. The water must be at a rolling boil before the utensil to be *kashered* is put into it, and the water must touch every surface of the utensil. Therefore, each item should be *kashered* individually, and the water should be allowed to return to a boil before the next item is placed into the pot. Large utensils may be submerged in the water one part at a time.
3. Removing the utensil from the water and rinsing it in cold water.

Microwave Oven

1. Clean the inside thoroughly and do not use the microwave for 24 complete hours.
2. Fill a large paper container with water and bring to a boil. The glass tray has to be boiled in a large pot, or have boiling water poured on it in an already *kashered* sink.
- 3.

Note: *Some microwaves have a metal grate. Since the grate cannot be lined with aluminum foil, remove the grate from the microwave for the duration of Passover. For convection microwave ovens, follow the same kashering process as conventional ovens.*

Tablecloths, Kitchen Gloves, Aprons and Other Items Made of Fabric

Any item made of fabric can be *kashered* by washing it in a washing machine set on "hot" and then checking to make sure that no pieces of food remain attached to it. Vinyl and plastic-lined tablecloths cannot be *kashered*.

Pesah Food Guide

The Torah prohibits the ownership of *hametz* (leaven) during *Pesach*. *Hametz* is anything made of the following five grains: wheat, barley, spelt, oats, rye. Therefore, we arrange for the sale of the *hametz* to a non-Jew. The transfer, *mekhirat hametz* is accomplished by appointing an agent, usually the rabbi, to handle the sale. It is a valid and legal transfer of ownership. At the end of the holiday, the agent arranges for the reversion of ownership of the now-permitted *hametz*. If ownership of the *hametz* was not transferred before the holiday, the use of this *hametz* is prohibited after the holiday as well (*hametz she-avar alav ha-Pesah*).

Since the Torah prohibits the eating of *hametz* during *Pesach*, and since many common foods contain some admixture of *hametz*, guidance is necessary when shopping and preparing for *Pesach*. During the eight days of *Pesach*, *hametz* cannot lose its identity in an admixture. Therefore, the minutest amount of *hametz* renders the whole admixture *hametz* and its use on *Pesach* is prohibited.

Kosher le-Pesach labels that do not bear the name of a rabbi or one of the recognized symbols of rabbinic supervision, or which are not integral to the package, should not be used without consulting your rabbi.

HAMETZ AND NON-PASSOVER UTENSILS: Non-Passover dishes, pots and *hametz* whose ownership has been transferred, should be separated, locked up or covered, and marked in order to prevent accidental use.

THIS IS A LIST OF THINGS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE A KOSHER-LE-PESAH LABEL:

Aluminum foil and pans, paper and plastic goods, and plastic utensils.

Candles

Cleansers and cleaners of all types

Detergents, regular, laundry and dishwasher

Canned fish- only if there are no other ingredients other than fish, water, and salt.

Baby ointments

Body wash

Shampoos, conditioners, hair gels, sprays, mousse

Lotions, skin creams and soaps

Hair removers & treatments, shaving cream and gels, shaving lotions

Fabric protectors

Furniture polish

Insecticides

Isopropyl Alcohol

Jewelry and silver polish

Scouring pads & powders

All polishes are fine.

All scouring pads are fine.

THIS IS A LIST OF FOODS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE A KOSHER LE-PESAH LABEL IF PURCHASED BEFORE THE HOLIDAY:

All regular granulated sugar.

All uniodized salt.

Tea bags only if regular (NOT decaffeinated).

All water fine, the same applies with distilled water.

Ground coffee.

All raw meat and poultry without other ingredients, eggs and fish.

All extra virgin olive oils.

Pepper, natural spices;

Frozen fruit juices with no additives; frozen (uncooked) fruit (with no additives).

Frozen (uncooked) vegetables.

Milk; butter; cottage cheese; cream cheese; ripened cheeses such as cheddar (hard); muenster (semi-soft) and Camembert (soft).

Baking soda.

THE FOLLOWING FOODS REQUIRE KOSHER LE-PESAH LABEL IF PURCHASED BEFORE OR DURING PESAH:

All baked products (matzah, cakes, matzah flour, farfel, matzah meal, and any products containing matzah); canned or bottled fruit juices (If one holds by *kitniyot*, see below); canned tuna (since tuna, even when packed in water, has often been processed in vegetable broth and/or hydrolyzed protein - however, if it is known that the tuna is packed *exclusively* in water, without any additional ingredients or additives, it may be purchased without a *kosher le-Pesach* label); wine; vinegar, liquor, oils; dried fruits; candy; chocolate flavored milk; ice cream; yogurt and soda.

PROHIBITED FOODS include the following: leavened bread, cakes, biscuits, crackers, cereal, coffees containing cereal derivatives, wheat, barley, oats, spelt, rye, and all liquids containing ingredients or flavors made from grain alcohol.

KITNIOT - Most Ashkenazic authorities have added the following foods (*kitniyot*) to the above list: rice, corn, millet, legumes (beans and peas; however, string beans are permitted). The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative movement has ruled unanimously that peanuts and peanut oil are permissible, as peanuts are not actually legumes. Some Ashkenazic authorities permit, while others forbid, the use of legumes in a form other than their natural state, for example, corn sweeteners, corn oil, soy oil. Lactose intolerant and vegetarians have the permission to eat soy derivatives, such as soy milk and tofu, if no other hametz ingredients are found. Sephardic authorities, as well as the Conservative (Masorti) Movement in Israel permit the use of all of the above.

MEDICINE: Since *hametz* binders are used in many pills, the following guidelines should be followed: If the medicine is required for life sustaining therapy, it may be used on *Pesah*. If it is not for life sustaining therapy, some authorities permit, while others prohibit. Consult your rabbi. In all cases, capsules are preferable.

✂ **Cut and Return to synagogue office**

Mehirat Hametz ~ Sale of Hametz

I, We _____

Hereby grant permission to
 Rabbi Nelly Altenburger
 to sell all *hametz* in my/our possession at

(address, and please specify where the *hametz* is found eg. *Kitchen cupboard, storage beneath the stairs, etc*)

to Cheryl A. Vanak, and to receive it back
 after Passover.

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).

MARCH EVENTS

Mondays at 10:00 A.M. Torah With Modern Commentary

Join us Monday mornings at 10:00 A.M. for our ongoing weekly portion with modern commentary. Everyone is welcome.

Shabbat March 7th Special Guest Speaker Daniel Weil - Turn on the Light- Fighting Poverty in Israel

Daniel Weil, Executive Director of the Israeli non-profit organization Machshava Tova, will be talking next Saturday about his organization's activities to reduce the technological and digital gap which exists in Israel. In order to confront this problem, the organization works to provide access to residents by establishing computer centers in less-privileged neighborhoods, allows individuals to acquire basic computer skills and, as a result, empowers them to build a different future for themselves and their families.

Since its inception, Machshava Tova has founded ten community computer centers (seven in Jerusalem, two in Beit Shemesh and one in Lod), initiated and operated two mobile computer centers (Israel's first and only) and helped more than 6,000 people learn essential computer literacy skills.



Monday March 9th at 7:00 P.M. Purim Extravaganza

Come in costume and be ready to make lots of noise to drown out the name of Haman as we read the *Megillah* in celebration of *Purim*.

✻ *Megillah* Reading: 7:00 P.M.

*Masquerade

*Hamantaschen & Groggers

✻ Wine Tasting

*Select Kosher for Passover (red and white) wines

*Cheese and Crackers

*Live music

*Suggested Donation - \$8.00

Friday, March 20th Shabbat Across America/Canada

It's time once again for the event we all look forward to: **SHABBAT ACROSS AMERICA**, where synagogues throughout the country and Canada observe with one another the joys of a traditional Friday night Sabbath dinner.

The evening starts with Rabbi Nelly's beautiful *Kabbalat Shabbat* (Welcome the Sabbath) service and then we move on to a full course traditional Friday night dinner.

"What's Cookin'?" is the entertainment for the evening. Joel Levitt will set up an exhibit of Jewish cookbooks that he has collected over the years, including: general interest kosher, Israeli, Sephardic, vegetarian and international cuisines; holiday, including Passover; and vintage community fundraising cookbooks. Joel will discuss some of the books and recipes that are special to him. If you have a favorite Jewish cookbook, recipe and/or Shabbat meal story to "show and tell" please share it with us. If you'd like to bring in your favorite cookbook, please do so during the week or, at least, before sundown.

The cost is \$18.00 per person, Children ages 6-12 are \$8.00 (children under 6 are free). There is a \$50.00 family cap.

Reservations are a must so the evening's meal can be planned. Please call/email Cheryl in the office (203-792-6161, cbi193clap@sbcglobal.net) with your reservation by March 16th.

LOOKING AHEAD

Sunday, April 5th from 10:00 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. Women's Group Meeting

Our topic this month is Judaism and our relationship with food. We will be serving light refreshments.

Wednesday April 8th *Birkat Hahammah* at 6:15 A.M.

Every 28 years, the Jewish community worldwide celebrates the return of the sun to its original place in the heavens at the precise time and day of its creation. This celebration is called *Birkat Hahammah* - blessing of the sun.

The next date on which we mark this moment is April 8, 2009. Here at B'nai Israel we'll have a celebration at 6:15 A.M.

***Pesach* Schedule**

April 7th

Perform the search for *Hametz* after 7:30 P.M.

April 8th

Do not eat *Hametz* past 10:45 A.M.

Burn and destroy all *Hametz* up to 11:50 A.M.

April 9th & 10th

Services at 9:30 A.M.

April 7th

Services at 9:30 A.M.

April 15th & 16th

Services at 9:30 A.M.

Yizkor on April 16th

Sunday, June 28th Congregation B'nai Israel's Tag Sale!

We are once again excited about doing our Tag Sale. This year the Tag Sale will be Sunday, June 28th. Spring cleaning is around the corner so start saving those treasured items. You can begin bringing items into the synagogue on June 14th. More details will follow in the April bulletin.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Monday, March 30th at 7:30 P.M. at Congregation Beth El: Pre-Passover Communal Healing and Renewal Service

Cantor Sharon Citrin who helped us during Rabbi Altenburger's maternity leave, has asked us to make the congregation aware of the following Pre-Passover event. Congregation Beth El of Southbury will host a community-wide Pre-Passover Communal Healing and Renewal Service through the prism of the Pre-Passover themes of rebirth from affliction and emotional and spiritual plagues. The service will be held in the Beth El sanctuary where prayer, psalms, songs, mediations, blessings, and soft chants and music will provide comfort for those who seek emotional, spiritual and physical healing in the Jewish setting. The one hour gathering will be led by Rabbi Eliana Falk, Cantor Sharon Citrin and guest musicians. It will be followed by light refreshments. All are invited.

The Greater Danbury Chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women is sponsoring a new program called, "Passover with Purpose," which will provide Kosher for Passover food boxes to members of our community in need of assistance for the upcoming Passover season. Passover can be a huge financial burden, especially in these challenging economic times.

Contact Isabel Kaplan at 203-748-7852 or Judy Prager at GrDanburyNCJW@gmail.com or 203-746-1072

GOOD TIMES WE SHARED

Women's Group Meeting

In our last meeting we talked about stress and how we handle it as Jewish women. Carol Nuremburg facilitated the discussion and brought some interesting sources for us to consider. One of our members shared with us a Psalm that she finds most helpful when she is facing duress. We want to share that Psalm with you and hope it will be helpful to you as well. Please consider joining us at our next meeting on Sunday, April 5th from 10:00 A.M. - 11:30 A.M.

Psalm 30, verse 2

"I will extol thee, O Lord; for thou hast lifted me up,
and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me"

*The word lifted in Hebrew = d'litani
(you have uplifted me) from the root of d'li,
which means bucket.*

*Just as a bucket must be lowered into
a dark well in order to draw water for
our benefit, so too we may experience
dark, downward spirals - moments
when we feel we are stumbling, even plummeting,
and those moments are ultimately revealed to be
for our benefit,
pre-requisites for uplifting tranquility
and even transcendence.*

*As the Hebrew adage goes,
it is "a descent for the sake of ascent"*

"AND A CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM..."

On April 9th, Julia Heiden will celebrate her ninth birthday but there will be no traditional party and presents. But don't cry for Julia as this is her choice. Instead of gifts, she is asking for "gently used" baby clothing, equipment and toys to be donated to Birthright of Danbury, an agency that gives caring support and counsel to women who choose to sustain an unwanted pregnancy. It is her way of working toward bettering the lives of babies in need.

Julia emphatically explains, "Every baby needs loving care and some babies and their mothers are less fortunate and need special help."

Julia's passionate love of babies, she recalls, began with the birth of her own sister, Abby, a year and one

half her junior. And it was Abby who inspired her to take on this birthday project. For Abby's sixth birthday, she invited 27 guests, all of whom brought donations of food for the Dorothy Day House (a facility that serves nutritious meals to the needy in Danbury). This was a huge success with the collection of over 300 lbs. of food.

A tradition of performance of *mitzvot*, Julia explains, has been encouraged by her parents and has become a family tradition. And she is happy and proud to perpetuate this tradition on her own birthday. In order to facilitate the handling of donations, Julia has set up a website: birthdaybabies@snet.net. This site will be operative until 4/1.

CBI can help Julia perpetuate her family tradition of making birthdays a time of *Tikun Olam* (healing the world). Contact her with good wishes and a donation toward achieving her goal of "every baby receiving loving care."

Happy Birthday, Julia. You are a wonderful role model for us all!

Pat Goldman

Mazel Tots



Tiffany Citroen & Clementine with Rabbi Nelly & Michaela

If it's Wednesday at CBI, it must be Mazel Tots. Organized by Barbara Levitt, Mazel Tots is a new playgroup for infants, toddlers, and their parents and/or caregivers. Meeting Wednesday mornings at 10:00 A.M. at CBI, Mazel Tots is a way for babies to play and socialize with each other and for the parents to talk, share child-rearing tips or just get out of the house once in awhile. The playgroup met for the first time in mid-February and the first babies to join were Rabbi Nelly's daughter Michaela Altenburger, and Clementine Citroen, who were born just days apart in November. The girls are looking forward to meeting new friends soon!

Tiffany Citroen



Editors Note: *With this issue we are introducing Through a Jewish Lens, a new column in the Kayruv. We invite congregants to send us a short article regarding something they've done, read, and seen with a uniquely Jewish perspective. Contact the synagogue office if you would like to contribute to this column. This month's article by Paul Simon is excerpted from the Shabbat morning D'var Torah that he recently gave.*

What does it mean to be Jewish? Are we born that way or is it something within us? I know that if my mother is Jewish, I am Jewish. I know people can choose to be Jewish. Certainly our Rabbi and her husband are two excellent examples. Did I have a choice or was I born that way? I began my self reflection by asking questions, what exactly is a Hebrew, what is a Jew, what am I or more important what do I want to be? Growing up I remember that the Catholic students left school early once a week to go to catechism classes. Teachers were not able to teach because more than half the class was gone. As a Jew, I remember thinking that it wasn't fair. I had to go to Hebrew school after public school and would not get home until after 7:00 P.M. I also remember going to a friend's house every December 25 to see what Santa brought him. When he asked me what Santa brought me, I told him my family did not believe in Santa. He seemed genuinely sad for me and offered to let me play with his toys.

As a college freshman I remember sitting with a female in the dorm visitor lounge. We were getting friendly and we talked about ourselves. At one point she began to rub my head. She continued rubbing and I finally asked what she was doing. She told me she was "looking for my horns". I did not believe what I heard. She told me she was raised to believe Jews had horns.

Being Jewish I have, at times, had to fight for my rights. As a state employee I noticed that my list of holidays included Day of Prayer. When I took *Yom Kippur*, off I coded my time sheet as Day of Prayer. I was told that I couldn't because Day of Prayer is Good Friday. I tried to explain that I did not want to pray on Good Friday, but on *Yom Kippur*. No one seemed to understand my logic.

I have described situations that we have all faced at some time in our lives. We have understood the difficulty of being Jewish. Perhaps we have heard an anti-semitic remark or inflection. Perhaps we experienced the tension between the tenets of our faith and the norms of the surrounding society. Perhaps we experienced the most horrific example of all - the Holocaust. Throughout our lives we have made the choice: follow our faith or succumb to societal norm.

According to 2003 census data, the Jewish religion represents only 3.3% of the population of Connecticut and only 2.2% of the United States. It would so much easier to go with the majority. After all, you cannot fight the establishment. I should just blend into the majority and not stand out. After all, the only reason I am Jewish is because my mother was Jewish, I was circumcised and I was *bar mitzvahed*. There had to be more to this Jewish thing. Is being Jewish just a birthright or is there a spirituality component?

I was raised in a very loving and respectful home. I had loving parents, and an older brother. I visited my wonderful maternal grandmother often. As I stated earlier, I went to Hebrew school and had a bar mitzvah and then my formal Jewish education ended. While the family lit *Hanukah* candles and had Passover Seders, we did not light Shabbat candles. We did not go to synagogue weekly. I had become a three day Jew and it was enough for me.

When my mother died I began to question what this organized religion thing was all about. Can one be a passive observer of religion? Probably yes. After all most people are. Is Judaism a passive religion? I discovered, for me, it is not. We are a community. We need a minyan for prayer. Confession is said in the plural. We put mezuzah on doorways to signify our belief. We must take positive actions.

When I moved to Danbury, as a three day Jew, I was invited to High Holiday services at B'nai Israel. The next few years I went to the United Jewish Center of Danbury and my brother's shul or I went nowhere. After my father died, I was now an "orphan" and I knew something was **now** missing in my life. I needed something to believe in. My brother and his family belonged to an orthodox shul. They are Sabbath observers and relish the calm tranquility of the day. I observed how they observed religion and what they received from it. I look up to my nephew as a symbol of everything I was not religiously. He was, and is, never religiously judgmental towards me. He is always there to answer my questions and assist me in my spiritual journey. NOW I needed MORE. I want to be a member of this Jewish community.

I came back to B'nai Israel and found that warm and caring community the synagogue advertises, and I joined. My lonely struggle as a Jew was no longer lonely for me. I found a new local Danbury family; a genuinely caring family. A family that sometimes fought like any good family, but cared so much for its members. I was not alone. I found comfort and warmth being different.

Each one of us has the potential to meet our challenges. Our faith helps and guides us reach our full potential. To me that is what being Jewish is all about – reaching our potential.

Paul Simon

SCHEDULE OF SHABBAT SERVICES

Services begin at 9:30 a.m.

✧ **Shabbat, 11 Adar, March 7, Tetzaveh:** Moshe and Aaron are instructed about the intricate designs of the priestly vestments.

Haftarah: I Samuel 15:2-34

✧ **Shabbat, 18 Adar, March 14, Ki Tissa** Moshe is gone too long and the people of Israel build a golden calf. *Haftarah:* Ezekiel 36:16-38

✧ **Shabbat, 25 Adar, March 21, Vayakhel-Pekudei:** The portable sanctuary is built by the Israelites. *Haftarah:* Ezekiel 45:16-46:18

✧ **Shabbat, 3 Nisan, March 28, Vayikra:** We begin the third book of the Torah which deals with the sacrificial rites of the Priesthood (the Kohanim). *Haftarah:* Isaiah 43:21-44:23

✧ **Shabbat, 10 Nisan, April 4, Tzav:** The sons of Aaron prepare for the dedication of the sanctuary. *Haftarah:* Malakhi 3:4-24; 3:23

CANDLE LIGHTING

March 6, 2009:	5:32 P.M.
March 13, 2009:	6:39 P.M.
March 20, 2009:	6:47 P.M.
March 27, 2009:	6:55 P.M.
April 3, 2009:	7:02 P.M.
April 8, 2009: <i>Erev Pesach</i>	7:08 P.M.
April 9, 2009: First Day of <i>Pesach</i> light candles after	8:09 P.M.
April 10, 2009: Second Day of <i>Pesach</i>	7:10 P.M.
April 14, 2009: <i>Hol Hamoed Pesach</i>	7:14 P.M.
April 15, 2009: Seventh Day of <i>Pesach</i> light candles after	8:16 P.M.

For Their Generous Kiddush

- ✧ David Maser in honor of his wife and grandchildren
- ✧ Julie Leventon in honor of daughter Nina's birthday
- ✧ The Tritters

YAHARZEITS

19 Adar, March 15, 2009

Helen Maser (David Maser)

20 Adar, March 16, 2009

Abner Bennett (Myril Bennett)

24 Adar, March 20, 2009

Sarah Slavin (Natalie Slavin & Evelyn Weinstein)

25 Adar, March 21, 2009

Adele Small (Pam Lampell)

Hilda Hirsch (Peter Hirsch)

4 Nisan, March 29, 2009

Pearl Silverstein (Roslyn Friedman)

5 Nisan, March 30, 2009

Max Kruzansky (Sara Kruzansky & Dina Markind)

Sylvia Simon (Paul Simon)

10 Nisan, April 4, 2009

Audrey Kully (Larry Dubois)

13 Nisan, April 7, 2009

Bertram Sommer, Jr. (Lorie Mael)

15 Nisan, April 9, 2009

Seymour Friedman (Gail Friedman)

17 Nisan, April 11, 2009

Larry Shenker (Martin Shenker)

William Hirsch (Peter Hirsch)

THANKS! THANKS!

For the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

✧ Sol Lepson and Natalie Rapoport in honor of Michaela

✧ Natalie Slavin and Evelyn and Michael Weinstein in honor of Susan and Henry Tritter for their commitment to, and hard work for, B'nai Israel

For the General Fund

✧ Charlene B. Carstens thanking everyone who helped her daughter, Julie Leventon, during her recuperation

✧ Ronni and Tim Allen in memory of Ronni's mother, Helen Seifert

✧ Sol Lepson and Natalie Rapoport

-In honor of Sol Berman's 90th birthday

-In honor of Shalom Lampell's birthday

For the Kay and Harry Robinson Children's Book Fund

✧ Sol Lepson and Natalie Rapoport for the continued good health of Barbara and Joel Levitt

For the Mentor in Residence Fund

✧ Sara Kruzansky in memory of her husband Max Kruzansky