



Congregation B'nai Torah Megilla

The Center Of Jewish Family Life In The Greater Trumbull Area

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From the President's Desk

Submitted by Fred Knopf



What is Happening to Religion?

Just after the High Holidays, the Pew Research Center published an update to its seminal studies on religion in the United States. It reported a continuing, sharp decline in people who identified themselves with any religion. Although the report focused mainly on Protestants and Catholics (as the largest US religions), what really stood out was the fact that the number of people who reported their “religious identity as atheist, agnostic or ‘nothing in particular,’ now stands at 26%, up from 17% in 2009.” The decline includes religious identification and participation, and is happening across all ages, races, and political affiliations, with millennials changing the most.

As synagogue Presidents, we get inundated with programming ideas, information about how to increase participation, and new ways to define success in our shul. All of them sound great, are supported by well-reasoned ideas, and receive broad support. But, how do we know if these things are right for B'nai Torah?

Should we experiment with different programs? Should we expend valuable and sometimes scarce volunteer resources for things that don't interest our members? How do we motivate people to attend services?

Or programs? How do we prove that BT is a proposition worthy of your time and money? And, why do we even have to convince you that your religion is worthy of your time — shouldn't this be automatic?

These questions make me think about what we do at B'nai Torah and how we can change the seemingly prevailing trends.

First, consider that a synagogue is much more than a place to worship. Throughout history, it is a place for prayer and a place for study and assembly. Although BT's Board of Directors spends time on ritual topics, we spend a lot of time figuring out the “study” and “assembly” pieces of our goals.

Since the new board took over in July, we have initiated an effort to embrace the concept of “small groups” as a way to reach the greatest number of members. The logic is simple — appeal to the most diverse number of individual interests you can in order to increase engagement and social interaction. It's a great approach.

But, we can't all sit in silos based on individual interests. Therefore, programs with a larger social appeal, like the successful comedy night, or the havdalah and bingo night, are equally as important. They bring the cross sections of the small groups together as a single community.

The Presidents all started the year with long to-do lists, and we have made good progress. But these were our ideas based on our experiences. Reflecting on the successes of

the past six months, a pattern emerges. We have had greater success when four things happened:

1. There was a clear goal shared by the members.
2. We invested time up-front on the vision and process.
3. We had a clear timeline mapped out in advance.
4. The project had an experienced leader or adviser to help shoulder responsibility and guide the project.

We also have realized that we need more people involved in helping to define our goals, vision and process. Many of our members have amazing ideas but may not have the time available to join a board or committee. We need to do everything possible to include as many

members as possible in sharing their ideas and views about our Jewish home.

We therefore are establishing a monthly BT Member Forum. This will be a conference call led by one of the Presidents that will take place in the evening and last no more than thirty minutes. The purpose of the call will be to ask our members to share their ideas about BT and help shape our future. That's it. No further commitment of time or money will be requested. We simply want your thoughts and advice. Please let us know by e-mail to presidents@bnaitorahct.com if you would like to participate in the first call. We plan to have our first call in mid-January and will provide a dial-in by phone or computer.

Together we can strengthen and enhance our community. Thank you.

Do you know about our smile.amazon.com fundraiser? If not, ask a board member or call the office at 203-268-6940.

From the Office

*Submitted by Robin Magilnick,
Office Manager*



I think of B'nai Torah as my second home and family.

I have gotten to know so many members not just as the office manager, but on a personal level too.

I have seen how many members have taken on roles volunteering over the years, and it feels so good to see the bonding and ownership that comes with that. Kudos to

all who helped with our most recent project and did an amazing job painting and moving all that furniture to make it happen.

Please stop by the office to pick up your 2019-2020/5780 calendar if you would like one.

I'm happy to see how many of you are using the BTCloud to make your payments, donations and to RSVP to events. When doing this, please log into your account first. This way your account will be updated immediately, instead of having to wait for me to connect your payment to your account.

High Holiday Services Thank you

We are very fortunate to have so many talented members who participate in the High Holiday services by reading Torah, Haftarah and blowing Shofar each year. Thank you to the following individuals who added so much to our High Holidays.

Torah readers

Hayley Baron
Michael Belousov
Dan Belousov
Sarah Broad
Beverly Fein
Daphna Fineberg
Larry Hillman
Julia Hirsch
Harrison Jarit
Jeff Levi
Rachel Levinson
Alex Petshaft
Laura Petshaft
Olivia Petshaft
Lou Rosen
Ari Schultz

Mark Shames

Sandy Soson
Maddy Weinstein
Rick Weinstein
Julia Wendt

Haftarah readers

Fred Knopf
Lou Rosen
Mark Shames
Amanda Wendt

Shlichei Tzibbur (Daveners)

Beverly Fein
Fred Knopf

Baalei Tekiah (Shofar blowers)

Josh Knopf
Alex Petshaft
Mark Shames

Gabbais

Hal Schwartz
Danielle Schwartz
Beverly Fein
Laura Petshaft
Mark Shames
Penny Volpe

We would most certainly wish to thank Dr. Joshua Fein, our High Holiday Hazan, who once again provided a beautiful and spiritual High Holiday experience for us all. We were delighted to welcome him and Michal together with their children, Binyamin and Tamar. As Rabbi Colin recalls, "One of my

favorite moments of the holidays was on Kol Nidre when Tamar became transfixed by Bernice Friedson's rendition of Kol Nidre, moving towards her until she was ultimately plucked up by Grandma Bev, truly a beautiful moment".

Bernice Friedson and Mike Lantowski for another wonderful musical opening to Kol Nidre.

Thank you to Lanny Boles for his beautiful singing of Avinu Malkenu.

And many thanks to our team of Ushers and Greeters, headed by Alan Frankel, who facilitated both the welcoming and the security process this year:

Ken Blumberg
Amy Broad
Mara Brosler
Manny Cohen

Ike Heitlinger
Sy Hirsch
Jason Peck
Linda Shames

Linda Schulman
Margery Verlezza
Miriam Yekutiell
Jeff Zakim

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Nourish Bridgeport Soup Kitchen

Submitted by Rabbi Amanda

“Helping the world” and “tikun olam” are such abstract phrases. Having heard my husband’s sermon for Rosh Hashanah, I was moved to action. He gave me a task. Now, those who know me well, know that just because he says something, doesn’t mean I always do it. But, this time his words made sense to me.

So I decided to volunteer at the Nourish Bridgeport Soup Kitchen. With some trepidation, I walked into the hall in Calvary Saint George Episcopal Church, a large room full of volunteers who looked like they all knew what they were doing. I saw Hillary Yellen and felt mildly less nervous. Lynn, the volunteer coordinator, gave us our instructions so clearly, I could understand them through my anxiety. Now I have been a few times, and each time Lynn repeats the instructions every time we meet, which is helpful for every new volunteer.

For each “Feel the Warmth” dinner the volunteers choose their roles. Sometimes it’s greeting at the door (Rabbi Colin’s favorite), sometimes it’s collecting tickets, sometimes it’s serving the food and sometimes serving drinks. It seems mundane and ordinary; it’s anything but. The people who come to share a meal are real people with real ideas and real talents. For whatever reasons they come, and we give them something they need; it could be a smile, a “how are you doing tonight,” a chance to sing to someone or tell someone about their aspirations,

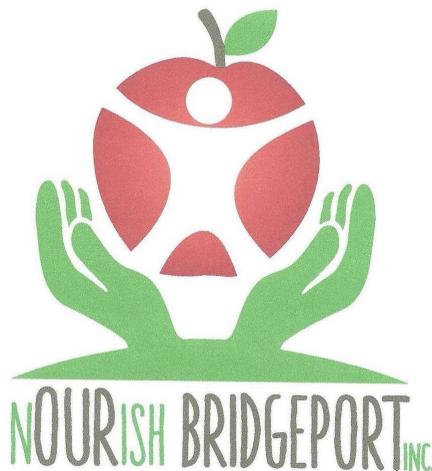
and, of course, a hot, hearty meal. Just being there for those moments feels like “holy work.”

After work on a Thursday, do I honestly drive to the soup kitchen with alacrity? Not all the time. Sometimes I think about the lesson plan I could be writing or a phone call I need to make. But, by the time I turn into the church parking lot, my only questions are, “How can I help?” “Who will I meet this evening?” “Am I going to get to serve dessert tonight?” “Which volunteers will I be working with?”

The truth is I probably get more out of going to the soup kitchen than the clients. The camaraderie with the other volunteers is supportive and I feel like I am making a difference. No matter what stresses I am experiencing in my life, those two hours make me forget all of that. In a time when our political news is so complicated and frustrating, these two hours erase all of that. It’s all about the clients, their

needs, their wants and their goals. I need those moments of quiet when I am focused on being a holy vessel when my problems are not on the top of my priority list. It’s a blessed time.

Please join us. I know you won’t regret it. Please be in touch with Hillary Yellen, the B’nai Torah Coordinator for Nourish Bridgeport to volunteer for the Soup Kitchen on Thursdays or the Food Pantry on Wednesdays. B’nai Torah has committed itself to be at each, once a month. You can volunteer as few or as many times as you are able, please contact: hillaryyellen@gmail.com



Nourish Bridgeport Programs

Submitted by Hillary Yellen

B'nai Torah has proudly partnered with Nourish Bridgeport Inc., a non-profit organization that strives to better the lives of those in need in Bridgeport. Their programs help our neighbors who are homeless, food insecure and struggling to build better lives. We have been volunteering once a month assisting in either the weekly Food Pantry or the weekly Feel the Warmth Community supper. All of us who have been able to volunteer have really enjoyed our time helping others who are less fortunate. We always leave with a great feeling of being part of such wonderful organization.

At the Food Pantry we help set up and stock the pantry items, check people in and assist those who

come through the door with their shopping. For the Feel the Warmth dinner we do food prep, help set up for the meal, serve and clean up. We also take the time to chat with the folks who come to enjoy a hot meal there.

We will be getting new dates for the new year and hope to see more volunteers.

If you are on Facebook, please like the Nourish Bridgeport page and you will see pictures of some of our volunteers, as well as a blurb or two about our synagogue.

Thank you to all of the members of B'nai Torah who have volunteered their services so far. Please feel free to contact me with any questions, hillaryyellen@gmail.com



Dear Friends,

Registration is now open for the **2020-2021** school year at B'nai Torah Nursery School.

We will offer the following programs:

Wonderful Ones & Caregiver: Wednesday or Thursday from 9-10:00 a.m., Fall session begins October 14, Spring session begins February 3.

Two year olds: Tuesday and Thursday from 9-11 a.m. through January 8, 9-11:30 a.m. beginning January 11.
Two year olds: Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9-12 noon.

Three year olds: Monday, Wednesday and Friday or choose 4 or 5 days a week from 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

Four year olds: Monday through Friday from 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

To be eligible for each of these programs, your child must be 2, 3, or 4 by December 31, 2020.

We offer an optional Lunch Bunch program for children from 12-1 p.m.

We will also offer our optional enrichment classes (drama, art, cooking, science, and physical fitness) from 1-1:55 p.m. to our 3 and 4 year olds, subject to sufficient registration.

If you have any questions, please call me at (203) 268-0227.

Sincerely,
Joan Watnick
Joan Watnick, Director

**Register Now for
2020-2021!**

News from the Nursery School

Submitted by Joan Watnick, Director

On November 14, B'nai Torah Nursery School coupled with PJ Library to present a story and craft hour to the public. Trumbull Library was kind



enough to allow us to rent the children's room and Monique L i o n s

Greenspan was a wonderful presenter. We look forward to a Tu B'Shevat PJ Library Shabbat Hop at B'nai Torah on Feb. 7.

Thank you to those of you who supported our Boon Supply Fundraiser and kudos to Audrey Looram for chairing!. Online orders can still be accepted and will benefit our nursery school through the end of the calendar year.

The event we held at Turning the Page Bookstore in Monroe on November 17 was very well attended. Everyone had a good time and left with some special books. Thank you to the owner, Pia for her help and contribution and to Emily Shufrin for the idea. We certainly appreciate your purchases and your attendance.

Our school Thanksgiving activities and celebrations were such fun. I hope yours were as well.



'Thanks for helping make holidays special for families in need by contributing to our TEAM Toys 4 Kids collection.



Sponsor an Oneg Shabbat or kiddush



If you are interested in sponsoring an Oneg Shabbat or kiddush, please contact the Synagogue office at 203-268-6940 or office@bnaitorahct.org.

You can commemorate a birthday, yahrzeit, anniversary, graduation or any occasion. A basic or fancy Oneg and kiddush is available.

Special dishes and favorite recipes are available upon request; we are very flexible. Please plan ahead so we have time to shop and prepare.



Thank you to the following Oneg and kiddush sponsors:



Michael & Heather Morsches in honor of the Aufruf of
Sarah Morsches & Joseph Noel

The family of Stan Kaplin in his memory

Denice and Phil Fogel in memory of Phil's father Frank Fogel

Sandy and Jeffrey LaRue in memory of Sandy's father Charles Lipetz

Tamar and Jeffrey Klein in honor of their daughter Na'ama's Bat Mitzvah

Irina and Arkadiy Belousov in memory of Arkadiy's mother Larisa Belousova

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In Recognition of Margery Verlezza



It is with great pleasure that Congregation B'nai Torah honors Margery Verlezza with the 2019 Mitzvah Hero Award. Margery is the perfect candidate for this award – she is both humble and

yet she is an extraordinary leader. Everyone wants someone like Margery on their team! She is one of those rare people who is both a thinker and a doer; she is a font of creative ideas and is extraordinarily capable in implementing those ideas to perfection. Truly, Margery could be a one woman show! She is a dynamo who never stops and who thinks of and can take care of everything. She is an exceptional team player who understands the power of collaboration and of engaging others, and she brings these strengths and her enthusiasm to all of her endeavors. One member stated: “I would love to have half the energy that Margery has!”

Margery has undertaken a variety of roles for Congregation B'nai Torah. As an active member of the Board of Directors, she has been Director of Adult Education and Programming, Member-at-Large, Secretary, and is currently serving at Co-Vice President for Education. Her creativity and ideas have brought to the synagogue many programs, both enjoyable and educational. She has spearheaded several major fundraiser

events and social programs such as our recent Catskill Comedy Night, curated our movie nights, and organized our Book Club. She continues to be a liaison to the Federation, championing community-wide programming and community engagement, and of course, advocating for Merkaz. When Margery is involved, we know that everything will go off without a hitch – and she will enhance the goodwill in the congregation by including so many volunteers. She is one of the warmest and most welcoming people we know. Her genuine interest in others and her strong people skills enable her to attract a collaborative team to her projects and to keep the momentum going.

Margery is one of the bright lights of Congregation B'nai Torah. She is someone who is admired by all and who serves as a role model to congregants both new and veteran. It is with great pride that we recognize Margery Verlezza for her dedication to Congregation B'nai Torah and to the Jewish community.

Hazak Hazak Margery! May you go from strength to strength!

L-R: Steve Checuti, Penny Volpe, Mara Brosler, Margery Verlezza, Rabbi Colin, Linda Shames, Fred Knopf, Beth Schwartz, Lisa Knopf, Bernice Dietz, Terri Levi and Jeff Levi. Missing from the photo were: Peter Verlezza, Beverly Fein, Joan Watnick, Linda Schulman, Gale & Paul Antell.



GOOD NEWS FROM ISRAEL

Submitted by Paul Antell

Israeli technologies have claimed nine spots on this year's TIME magazine's 100 Best Inventions, which rank those that have made the world "better, smarter and even a little more fun."

The 100 "groundbreaking" inventions challenge "the way we live, work, play and think about what's possible," TIME said. To assemble the 2019 ranking, TIME solicited nominations over a wide variety of categories from editors and correspondents from around the world, as well as through an online application process. The contenders were evaluated "based on key factors, including originality, creativity, influence, ambition and effectiveness."

The developments that were singled out came from the fields of augmented and virtual reality, accessibility, beauty accessories, consumer electronics, design, education, entertainment, food and drink, gaming technologies, healthcare, home gadgets, parenting, social good, productivity, sports, style, sustainability, transportation, and wellness.

Here are the noteworthy Israeli nine:

OrCam's MyEye 2 talking glasses, which tell blind people what they looking at, "could be a gamechanger," said TIME, listing the device in the accessibility category. The artificial intelligence-powered device attaches to the frame of glasses and can identify faces or currency or read a text or other information aloud.

Nerivio is a medical device for the acute treatment of migraine. Developed by Theranica Bioelectronics, the device is worn on the upper arm and uses smartphone-controlled electronic pulses to wirelessly stimulate the body's neural pathway at the onset of a migraine. It is currently available by prescription in the U.S. and will be available in Israel in April, the firm said in a statement on Sunday. Nerivio is Theranica's first FDA authorized medical device.

WaterGen's home appliance Genny, is featured in the TIME "social good" category. The machine, "which looks like an office water cooler, pulls moisture from ambient air to create drinkable water through a patented filtration process, much like a

fancier dehumidifier," TIME said. Using electricity or solar power, the appliance can produce up to seven gallons of water a day, without any plumbing required. Watergen produces water-from-air units in different sizes for a variety of needs.

TytoHome, developed by Tyto Care, is a handheld device for on-demand, remote medical exams. It has attachments that can examine heart, lungs, skin, ears, throat and abdomen, as well as measure body temperature, allowing users to perform comprehensive medical exams and send the captured exam data to one of Tyto Care's healthcare provider partners for diagnosis of acute care situations. Users can connect with a provider 24/7/365, no matter their location, according to the company. The device was selected by TIME in its healthcare category.

Temi, the robot that rolls, was selected by TIME in its home category. The "butler on demand" includes a touchscreen, voice controls and sensors that allow it to autonomously navigate around the house.

ECONcrete is a provider of "high quality, cost effective" concrete products that develops sustainable concrete for building ecologically active infrastructures in coastal and marine environments. These products blend in with their surroundings and thus are less intrusive to marine ecosystems, TIME said, listing the firm in its design category. "Instead of building concrete blocks, ECONcrete uses a technique known as bio-mimicry, relying on the shapes, textures and size of natural systems to dictate how the company builds its products," TIME wrote.

Alice by Eviation Aircraft is mentioned in the sustainability section. The all-electric nine-seater craft seeks to cut planes' greenhouse gas emissions. If successful, the craft, made with lightweight materials, could pave the way for larger electric commercial aircraft, TIME said. It will begin flight testing in 2020.

ElliQ, a robot social companion for the elderly developed by Intuition Robotics, got a special mention by TIME, as it is "trying to address the issue of loneliness and isolation among senior citizens."

Israeli founded Lemonade, an online insurer, also got a special mention, for its "giveback" policy. After insurance claims are paid, the firm pays out the leftover funds to a charity picked by its clients.

Catskills Comedy Cabaret – *Those Were the Days*

Submitted by Margery Verlezza

The empty but beautifully decorated Hersher Hall filled up quickly on



Saturday, November 16 once the doors

opened. Reminiscent of the Friday night crawl up Route 17 everyone all at once flocked into the social hall drowning out the 50's music. Tables filled, glasses clinked, and then the chatter quieted as the delicious appetizers



were served family style. The opening act, Dr. Joyce Saltman, thrilled the crowd with her professionalism and wit. Known as the Guru of Laughter, Joyce had the audience enthralled with her stories peppered with jokes. Joyce's time on the stage flew by, as did the appetizers, followed by desserts imported from Chantilly in Brooklyn and Linda Belt, comedian extraordinaire, imported from West Hartford.

The room shook with laughter! Without a swear word uttered, the adult humor reached each and every person in the room. From her opening line "Margery sent me to the "good" bathroom", to a line



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about kishka I can't repeat, belly laughs escaped no one. The room was shaking! Dozens of raffle tickets were sold, and three winning tickets were drawn by Joyce.

To say a good time was had by all is an understatement. A nostalgic night of fun,

food and friends, made this evening a wonderfully special event. My special thanks go out to all my right hands – Linda Colman, Judy Cooper, Natalie Fried, Roberta Hirsch, Linda Schulman, Beth Schwartz, and their committees in the kitchen, front of the house, decorations, AV, security, publicity, Deno, Carolyn, Robin – job well done! Also, check out



the beautiful board "Those Were the Days" put together by Jill Makaron and Linda Colman.



The Megilla

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The Mensch Initiative

*Submitted by Jeff Zakim, BT Board,
Member at Large / Chief Instigator; The
Mensch Initiative*

Like any worthy hero (super or anti) story, there must be an origin story. This is indeed the case of The Mensch Initiative.

The idea of The Mensch Initiative is to bring together a group of remarkable people; see if they could be something more... See if they can work together to enrich, enlighten, and grow our B'nai Torah community.

Does this read like something Samuel L. Jackson portraying SHIELD Agent, Nicholas J. Fury in any number of MARVEL movies would say? Yes. It is almost verbatim, and it fits very neatly with the intent of The Mensch Initiative.

But back to the Origin Story. As a Member at Large for two years, I was asked if I would take up the challenge of rejuvenating the B'nai Torah Men's Club. I was humbled by this ask, and spent a great deal of time thinking about it. I came back with a definitive 'no.' No, I would not be up for rejuvenating or rehabilitating an entity within our BT community which had become non-existent. Instead, I suggested, I would much rather take a new approach, an all inclusive and fresh approach. This was welcomed and thus the intent for The Mensch Initiative was born.

A gender-based club, or any club intended for a segment of our B'nai Torah community felt like it missed the big picture, and the greater long-term goals for The Mensch Initiative are nothing short of big picture! B'nai Torah is a beacon of hope, spirituality, peace, family, Judaism and so much more to its members. The Mensch Initiative strives

to enhance these qualities for us all, and by us all.

So why not just call it a Men's Club? There is a reason for this, and like other aspects of this endeavor, a great deal of thought went into it. First, it is a mouthful and requires thought and care to say aloud. Second, the term MENSCH lives well beyond being a Jewish phrase. It is a pop-culture term. It is referenced in books, movies, TV shows, by authors, comedians, and late night talk show hosts. There is even a line of plush toys - "Mensch on a Bench" (as seen on the program, Shark Tank). The term mensch derives 163,000,000 Google results and is fun to say. There are points three through at least eleven, but we'll just go with: The Mensch Initiative.

So, just what exactly is The Mensch Initiative? What has it done, who is it for, and what will it provide to BT? The Mensch Initiative is everything and anything we want it to be. The confines of a 'club' or a 'group' need not apply. As we approach 2020 with fun, exciting, innovative, community-driven and inclusive plans for B'nai Torah; The Mensch Initiative can be a key component. Thus far, The Mensch Initiative has put up and taken down our Sukkah, developed a social media community, changed views on what a traditional faith-based club looks like, and most recently spearheaded beautification projects at B'nai Torah.

While this may seem like a fun, loose and 'on the fly' thing, a set of guidelines is in place. These and all guidelines are intended to be living and ever-evolving. Some of the guidelines are:

- Thoughtful and sincere participation
- Inclusion, equality, tolerance, acceptance

●Exploration and discussion of the collective Jewish and B'nai Torah life experience

●Respect of self and all others

●Open doors, hearts, and minds to and for all

●Willing to teach, learn, lead, follow, speak, listen, think, agree, disagree, laugh and cry

●Avodah (service and prayer), Kehillah (community participation), Tzedakah (charity)

The Mensch Initiative does not have a Chairperson, Vice President, or a committee. The idea is to be able to grow at a fluid and flexible pace. There is no membership fee (for the moment). There is no gender or membership requirement and with the exception of the suggested age of Bar/ Bat Mitzvah, most events and programming will be open to all ages. What will The Mensch Initiative do, offer or provide to B'nai Torah, its members and the wider Fairfield County Jewish community? The answer corresponds directly with "What Is The Mensch Initiative?" We can do anything and everything...

“Watch your step, the walls were just painted”

Submitted by: Jeff Zakim, BT Board, Member at Large / Chief Instigator, The Mensch Initiative

“Watch your step.” “Be careful the walls were just painted.” “Pardon the mess, we are painting.” These are some of the phrases you may have heard regarding our recent beautification at B'nai Torah over the past several weeks.



Menschies who built our Sukkah

As a fun aside, as per Wikipedia:

Mensch (Origin: Hebrew, Yiddish):

A person of integrity and honor. A good person. A person with the qualities one would hope for in a friend or trusted colleague. A mensch is someone to admire and emulate, someone of noble character. The term is used as a high compliment.

For inquiries, ideas, questions, thoughts, hopes and schemes for The Mensch Initiative, please contact Jeff Zakim by email at jeffzakim@gmail.com

Starting the week of Thanksgiving, the interior of B'nai Torah has been going through a substantial change. Plaques, memorial boards, picture frames and even the light





Some members of the Mensch painting crew



switches have been taken off the walls. Ladders and tools have been set up, painting supplies have taken up hallway and office space, and we even removed an entire wall by hand.

It would not even be possible to count the amount of hours, people and resources which have gone into this. Planning, financing, moving, cleaning, fixing, storing, scraping, sanding and of course the painting. The painting (and soon to come new carpeting – a separate story on that coming soon) has been a full B’nai Torah community effort. The BT staff, students, congregants, Board members and even visitors have played a role.

By the end of 2019, the two major BT hallways: Education/ office and Pre-K/ Sanctuary will have a new fresh coat of paint. Gone will be our faded pale white, red doors, and blue hallway. Our halls, walls, ceilings and offices will have been made anew with fresh paint, some new electrical and some repositioning of furniture, plaques and fixtures.

This beautification process (painting and carpeting) has been long in the works, and has been done with a great deal of thought and planning. While this has absolutely been a communal effort, much gratitude goes out to Fred Knopf (1 of our 3 Board Presidents),

Alan Frankel (VP of House) and Deno for always being able to provide a ladder, screwdriver, chair, towel and pretty much anything needed. The Mensch Initiative has been instrumental in rallying our community to come out to paint- whether for a day or an hour or two.

BBYO at B'nai Torah

Submitted by Nathan Zakim,

President of Gottlieb AZA #2196

Hello my fellow congregants! I am Nathan Zakim and I am a junior at Fairfield Warde High School, and I have been a member of this congregation since I was born! I love Congregation B'nai Torah, from its Talmud Torah classes, to Saturday morning services, to Monday night bingo! The only thing I may possibly love more than B'nai Torah is Connecticut Valley Region BBYO! As I am sure you may know, BT has recently partnered with the Fairfield County AZA and BBG chapters to form a closer bond with Jewish youth group activities for teens in the greater Trumbull region.

With so many wonderful extracurricular Jewish activities, such as Merkaz, USY, and NFTY, BBYO is special in that it is completely run and organized by teens! Each BBYO chapter has an elected board of teens who work together to plan and create events which engage teenagers in fun programs, Jewish activities, community service, and much more. I myself just so happen to be the President of Gottlieb AZA #2196, and am very excited to see where our partnership with Congregation B'nai Torah will go in the future! Gottlieb AZA, and our sister chapter Adirah BBG, have begun to have our weekly meetings here in the synagogue and are looking forward to seeing more BT faces at our meetings.

Soon it will no longer be “Be careful, the doors were just painted.” and we will shift to “Wow! What a Difference!” or “This carpeting is so clean.” and “Wow does B'nai Torah look and feel even more welcoming and home-like.”

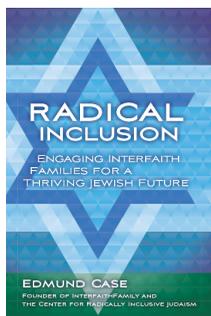
I can honestly say that BBYO has provided the most incredible and unique experiences I have ever had. From our bi-weekly chapter meetings, to our weekend conventions, and our otherwise casual hangouts. I am very excited at the opportunity and the prospect of further integrating our chapters into the BT community, with the hope that it will lead to more Jewish teen involvement in Fairfield County. So, you might be wondering: how can my teen or my family get involved in BBYO? Well firstly I would encourage you to get more information on our organization at <http://bbyo.org> to find out more about this international program, and the programming within the Connecticut Valley Region. Secondly, I would like to extend an invitation for Gottlieb and, or Adirah to you and your family for our upcoming events - which include a Global Shabbat celebration, a Hanukkah Party, Member-in-Training programs, and much more.

We look forward to seeing you and your teen(s) at our upcoming events, and encourage you to bring friends or family that you think would like to share a BBYO experience! If you have any questions, please feel free to email me directly: nathanzakim@gmail.com or you can speak to Rabbi Colin about getting involved!

Education and Community programs

Submitted by Margery Verlezza

It was a cold, dark, stormy night, but that didn't stop the dedicated souls who came out to have an intimate conversation with Rabbi Rick Eisenberg. Rabbi Eisenberg spoke about his book *Judaism: Addiction and Recovery, A spiritual and faith based approach*. Everyone in the audience participated in the discussion which became very frank, intimate, and informative. Rabbi Colin has a few copies of the book if anyone would like to purchase one.



Mah Jongg fever has hit B'nai Torah! More than three tables of learners showed up for the first class

in early November, taught by Natalie Fried. Mah Jongg becomes addictive both for the stimulation of one's mind, and also for the camaraderie of the people playing around the table. It's not too late to learn. Beginner lessons will be continuing on Sunday mornings. *Get ready!* BT will be hosting a Mah Jongg tournament in the spring.

In observance of Veteran's Day, B'nai Torah had a screening of the 2017 film *GI Jews: Jewish Americans in WWII*. The documentary is the story of the 550,000 Jewish men and women who served as active participants in the fight against Hitler, bigotry and intolerance. We honored Dr. Harold Batt, Anita Rosnick's father, who has the distinction of being the "oldest new



member in the history of B'nai Torah", and who also served in the Navy during WWII.

We also learned about our member Donna Barkon's father, Gilbert Reiter, who served as an Army private machine gunner. As a 27 year-old he was in the first wave of American soldiers to enter the Dachau Concentration Camp. He met four Yiddish speaking girls from the camp, who led him to a nearby Christian cemetery to meet the German caretaker. He was then taken to the loft in the caretaker's cottage. Floorboards were lifted to reveal dozens of prayer books, prayer shawls and Torahs. Outside in the yard, they dug up two caskets to reveal more Judaica items. Reiter's commander authorized the company chaplain to return to the cemetery with Reiter and they arranged to have the Torahs and other items shipped to his home in Bridgeport.

On his return home, Reiter contacted a local synagogue and the items were donated there. In keeping with the caretaker's request, he kept two books for himself; a German/Hebrew siddur dated 1885, as well as a Haggadah. After the war, Reiter became a manufacturing engineer and eventually retired from the former Avco-Lycoming in Stratford. Reiter passed away May 27, 2014 at the age of 96.

Tallit Class. Have you always wanted to wrap



yourself in a beautiful tallit, but never got around to buying one? Do you have a tallit, but would love a different type, one for the winter, one for the summer, one to give to a loved one? Your timing is perfect! Michelle Scinto will be leading a tallit class beginning January 2, 7 p.m. Bring your ideas, a shawl or fabric you want





to use, to begin this loving process. Fee for the class is \$40 and includes the cost of the Tzizit. The entire project will take four to six sessions. Please let us know if you're interested.

SAVE THESE FUTURE EVENT DATES:

Sunday, January 5, Ariel Fein, (our almost *in-house* art historian) will be leading a B'nai Torah group through the Cloisters current exhibit *The Colmar Treasure: A Medieval Jewish Legacy*. Watch for more info on this trip.

Sunday, March 1, 4 p.m., *Radical Inclusion: Engaging Interfaith Families for a Thriving*

Jewish Future. A Judaism 2020 event in partnership with FJP held at B'nai Torah.

In the Community:

The community read is Nathan Englander's book *Kaddish.com*. He will be at Fairfield U on **Thursday March 5, 2020**, and two community book group discussions will be held prior to his appearance.

Many additional programs are in the works for the Federation's **Judaism: A 2020 Vision**. There is a listing in the current Kaleidoscope magazine, and additional information is available on <https://www.jewishphilanthropyct.org/judaism2020>



Register now to save your child's spot at
 B'nai Torah Nursery School
 for the 2020-2021 school year.

Programs available for
 1, 2, 3 and 4 year-olds

Full Day and Extended Hours Available

Contact:
 Joan Watnick, Director
 203-268-0227



Thank you

With thanks to many generous donors, please stop by soon and enjoy our beautifications.

Donations

Cornerstone Building Development Fund

To Mark and Juliette Zuckerman, congratulations on the birth of your granddaughter, from Jeffrey and Charlotte Denenberg

To Ed and Elaine Bader in honor of the marriage of Libbie and Barak Bader, from Sy and Roberta Hirsch

To Bill Berkowitz in memory of your sister Adele Gordon, from Jeffrey and Charlotte Denenberg

Yizkor donation in memory of Mary and Joel Levenson, from Gayle and Richard Frohwith

Yizkor donation for Yom Kippur, from Charlotte and Jeffrey Denenberg

Yizkor donation, from Leah Ferszt

To Bobbi and Steven Cohen in memory of Florence Hochhauser, from Eleanor Cohen, Debbie and Lanny Boles, Lawrence A. Sax, Luise Mann

To Beverly and Irwin Peck and Judy and Harvey Hevenstone in memory of Charlotte Bazer, from Anita and Hal Rappoport, Margery and Peter Verlezza

Donation from Emily and David Shufrin

Kiddush Fund

Yahrzeit of brother, Donald, from Sandra Wiener

Yahrzeit of Solomon Hendin, from Mary and Joseph Steinfeld

Yahrzeit donation, from Roger and Ellen Klinger

Yahrzeit of Salomon Landau, from Irma Wigder

Yahrzeit donation, from Al and Lillian Schlager

Yahrzeit of mother, Gussie Wiener, from Sandra Wiener

Yahrzeit of Alan Freedman, from Stanley Silverstein and Jane Smiley

Yahrzeit of Frances Cohen, from Gail and Manny Cohen

Yahrzeit of Molly Goldman, from Sally Melzer

Yahrzeit of Ann Morgenstein and Tserna Yaffe, from Mary and Joseph Steinfeld

In memory of Bobbi Cohen's mother Florence Hochhauser, from Debbie and Robert Velthuizen

Yahrzeit of Walter Weiss and Anna Weiss, from Stan Silverstein and Jane Smiley

Yahrzeit of Sadie Kleban, from Dorothy Goldstein

Yahrzeits of Lillian Benvenisti and Arthur Chaiklin, from Charlotte and Fred Zeitz

Yahrzeit of Florence Bernstein, from Martin Bernstein

Yahrzeit of Elissa Farber, from Nancy Wilkins

Yahrzeit donation, from Lawrence and Linda Lax

Nursery Enrichment Fund

Donation, from Emily and David Shufrin

In memory of Charlotte Bazer, from Joan and Rich Watnick

To Beverly and Irwin Peck and Judy and Harvey Hevenstone in memory of Charlotte Bazer, from Gale and Paul Antell,

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Donation for the simcha of the naming of their granddaughter Meirav Grossman, from J. Victor and Edna Stern

In honor of the engagement of Idalia Friedson and Lindsey Sacco, from Robin and Russ Friedson

Donation, from Susan and David Elkosdi

Donation to the Robert and Sophia Mitchell Memorial Fund

Ritual Fund

To Bill Berkowitz in memory of your sister Adele Gordon, from Sy and Roberta Hirsch

To Mark and Juliette Zuckerman, congratulations on the birth of your granddaughter, from Sy and Roberta Hirsch

Security

To Ed and Elaine Bader in honor of the marriage of Libbie and Barak Bader, from Joan and Rich Watnick

Donation from Matthew Lisi

Donation from David and Alexa Cohen

Donation from Romona Tassone

Donation from Nancy Ortiz

Donation from Michael Rosnick

Talmud Torah Fund

To Ed and Elaine Bader in honor of the marriage of Libbie and Barak Bader, from Nancy Wilkins, Jeffrey and Charlotte Denenberg, Jon and Linda Schulman

Donation, from Emily and David Shufrin

If you would like to make a donation to one of our funds for a
Simcha or Memorial, please send it to
Congregation B'nai Torah, 5700 Main Street, Trumbull, CT 06611,
Attention: Donations *Please include a note with the fund and reason.*

Congregation
B'nai Torah

5700 Main Street
Trumbull, CT 06611
203-268-6940

Postage

Calendar of Events

Friday, January 31, 7:00 p.m.
Grade 6-7 family service

Saturday, February 1, 7-9 p.m.
Federation Taste of Torah, location
TBD

Friday, February 7, 6:00 p.m.
PJ Library Shabbat Hop:It's Tu
B'Shevat (regular services are still at
7:30 p.m.)

Sunday, February 9, 11:30 a.m.
Talmud Torah Pre-School

Friday, February 21, 7 p.m.
Grade 5 service

Friday, February 28
Shabbat Across America

Friday, March 6, 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 7, 9:15 a.m.
Bat Mitzvah of Mara Ashby

Sunday, March 8, 12-2 p.m.
Purim Carnival

Monday, March 9, 7:30 p.m.
Erev Purim service

Wednesday, March 18
Movie night

Friday, March 20, 7 p.m.
National Refugee Shabbat
Grade 3-4 service

Saturday, March 21, 9:30 a.m.
National Refugee Shabbat

Sunday, April 5
Talmud Torah Model Seder

Wednesday, April 8
Fast of the First Born, 7:30 a.m.
Family Pesach Seder, 6 p.m.

Thursday, April 9, 9:30 a.m.
Pesach service

Friday, April 10, 9:30 a.m.
Pesach service

Wednesday, April 15, 7:30
Pesach service at the home of Rabbis
Colin and Amanda

Thursday, April 16, 9:30 a.m.
Pesach day service
Yizkor approximately 11 a.m.

Monday, April 20, 7-9 p.m.
Federation Yom HaShoah program
Location TBD

Wednesday, April 22, 8 p.m.
General Membership Meeting

Friday, April 24, 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, April 25, 9:15 a.m.
Bat Mitzvah of Emilia Hevenstone

Sunday, April 26, 11:30 a.m.
Talmud Torah Pre-School

Tuesday, April 28, 7-9 p.m.
Community Yom HaZikaron/Yom
Ha'atzmaut program at B'nai Israel

No Talmud Torah

Tuesdays:
March 10
April 14

Sundays:
January 19
February 16
April 12, 19