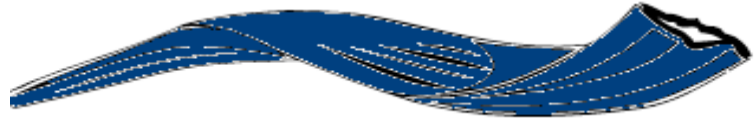


SHOFAR



Monthly Newsletter of the Monterey Peninsula Jewish Community

www.carmelbethisrael.org



Community Chanukah Celebration!

Please join us on **Friday, December 23 at 6:00 PM** as we gather together for our family friendly CBI Chanukah celebration. Once we have gathered in the social hall, we will begin with a community lighting of our Chanukiot (Chanukah Menorahs). Each family is encouraged to bring their own Chanukiah (extra points if it is homemade!). We'll join Cantor Alisa as we chant the Chanukah blessings, basking in the glow of the Chanukah lights as we sing some Chanukah songs. We'll then enjoy a light Chanukah dinner that includes latkes and salad.

Cantor Alisa with our Madrichim will lead our annual dreidel spinning contests which will be broken down by various age groups. Gelt prizes will be distributed!

Around 7:15 PM we will transition into the sanctuary for our Shabbat service, with more Chanukah songs led by our CBI Vocal Ensemble and a special Chanukah story by Susan Newton!

Following services, we will enjoy a potluck dessert Oneg.

Please call or email the CBI office if you plan to join us for our Chanukah celebration so we can provide enough salad and latkes for everyone. Suggested Donation: \$10 for each adult or \$25 per family.



Se'udah Shelishit

A wonderful tradition is to enjoy a third meal (Se'udah Shelishit) on Sabbath afternoon, just before the end of Sabbath. Our immediate past president Dan Nussbaum would like renew this tradition beginning at **4:00 PM on Saturday, December 3**. It will begin with a light nosh and socializing followed by some study (learning!), followed by Havdalah.

We will meet at CBI in person and finish by 5:30. Our tentative schedule is to hold the first session on December 3, and then continue in January on the 7th, 14th and 21st. Each session we will study a business ethics case, each structured to generate shared conversations and opinions. Dan will post the cases prior to each meeting so that those participating can review and prepare for the session.

Please join us for these Shabbat afternoon gatherings in our CBI social hall.



From the Rabbi's Desk...

While I don't always manage to do it, this morning I got up early and went to the gym to work out. I decided after a little light lifting and some crunches to do a 5K on the treadmill. I set the machine for a slight incline and set the pace for a steady jog. After a few minutes on the treadmill, I noticed the young woman running on the treadmill next to me. Her incline was a little steeper than mine and she was running, not jogging. For a moment I thought about picking up my pace. Was I going to let her beat me on the treadmill? Then I came to my senses and continued my steady jog. This was not a competition, and we were not racing. I was not on the treadmill to win. I was there to keep myself healthy.

How often do we feel the need to compete with those around us? Whenever I meet with parents planning their child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah, I remind them to focus on the learning and growth (Mitzvah) and less on the party. Often, I get questions about DJs and party themes and caterers. Some voice concerns about how expensive it can get planning a big party. I remind them that often the best parties include homemade food and maybe some nice discs shared on a DVD player. One does not have to rent out the Aquarium and provide gourmet dining and a live band to celebrate becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Personally, I prefer attending a down to earth gathering in our CBI backyard or social hall. We don't have to keep up with the Golds!

In the Torah (Genesis 6:9) Noah is described as a righteous man in his generation. Why does the Torah add the qualification "in his generation?" Maybe it is because Noah was not competing with Abraham or Moses or anyone else from another time. It was sufficient to know that in his life, Noah was the best he could possibly be. Surrounded by people who were filled with evil intent, Noah rose above all those around him and maintained his sense of right and wrong. Noah lived his life to the best of his abilities and God chose to place him and his family on the ark for that reason.

One of my favorite lessons in the Talmud teaches us that when we die and stand before God, God will not ask us if we were as good as Moses. God will ask me if I was the best Bruce that I could be. Obviously, I will never sing the prayers as beautifully as Cantor Alisa. I will never be the best speaker or the greatest scholar. It is my responsibility to strive to the best of MY ability, to share my understanding of Torah; and to bring compassion to all my interactions; and to fill my classes with growth and learning. Some of my colleagues are greater scholars. Some are better orators. Some are better writers. My goal is not to be better than them. It is to be the best me I can be.

The next time you look in the mirror, ask yourself if you are being the best person you can be. Are we consistently doing what we can to make the world around us a better place? Are we caring for those less fortunate than ourselves? Are we caring for ourselves? What are we doing for our own personal growth? Are we seeking ways to bring justice to those who suffer? Are we being honest with ourselves and those around us?

Competition has its place and time. But life is not a competition. If you have a desperate need to win, then become the person everyone else would like to be. Be a person whose acts are filled with compassion. Be the person whose every interaction brings joy or comfort to others. Then truly, when you look in the mirror, you will see yourself as a winner.





Message From Cantor Alisa

Dear Congregants,

As we continue to face deep concerns globally and here at home, there is so much to be grateful for, not the least of which is feeling the

warmth and connection of community that CBI provides. Our amazing teens in CBI's Aleynu program, have been exploring what it means to be Jewish. The words "Jew"—*Yehudi* in Hebrew, and "Judaism"—*Yahadut*, come from the name *Judah*, or *Yehuda* as it is pronounced in Hebrew. The word *Yehuda* comes from the Hebrew word *l'hodot*, which means "to thank". Indeed, upon his birth, Leah, *Yehuda's* mother, exclaimed, *hapa'am odeh et Hashem*, "this time I thank God." Feelings of gratitude characterized *Yehuda's* birth. Words you might recognize— *today*, meaning "thank you," and *modah* or *modeh*, meaning "I am grateful" or "I acknowledge", stem from the same root.

Acknowledging the blessings in our lives is the Jewish way. We are taught to say 100 blessings a day. Our first prayer of the day begins, *modeh ani* – the first words we utter upon waking. And when we chant the phrase *Baruch Atah Adonai*, it's all about waking up to, and acknowledging, the many blessings that shower and surround us each day. *Baruch Atah Adonai*—for creating the fruit of the vine; for bringing forth bread from the earth, for bringing rain in the right season, for restoring and sustaining life, for kindling the light... And the list goes on!

One of my teachers Rabbi Jonathan Slater says this makes us the "Thanksgiving People"—the people who give thanks! Saying "thank you", acknowledging the source of existence, helps reconnect us to our inherent gratitude for the many blessings in our lives, and the gift of life itself. It helps us avoid taking life for granted. Gratitude restores well-being. We know that grateful people are happier people.

Here is a collective prayer of gratitude written by our Aleynu teens who continue to fill me with wonder and joy. As we move into this season of miracles, of light and darkness and hope, *Baruch Atah Adonai* for the many blessings I receive from serving our CBI community and walking this path of blessing with all of you—may it sweeten our lives.

Modim Anachnu—We Are Grateful by 2022 Aleynu Teens

I am grateful for the chance to live in such a supportive and welcoming community.

I am grateful for being healthy and being able to live my life without worry.

I am grateful for the people in my life.

I am grateful* for new opportunities.

I am grateful for my mom and dad, my dog, my friends, the place we live, that I have an able body, that I am surrounded by good people and role models.

I am grateful that I have a life filled with amazing people and have been blessed by great experiences that have made me the person I am.

**misspelling intended!*

With Blessings, Cantor Alisa





Hesed Academy

Our students continue to learn and grow in our amazing Hesed Academy. Highlights in November included our 6th and 7th Grade Shabbat dinner and service, the Aleynu

students and their families helping prepare meals for our IHELP guests, lot of music with Cantor Fineman, and a special art project led by Ilana Entin. Even our parents enjoyed getting to know each other better during a meeting complete with donuts and fresh coffee.

This month on December 2 our 5th Graders will enjoy their Shabbat dinner and help lead services and two days later assist with the IHELP meals for our unsheltered friends. In December our specialists will include more storytelling with Susan Newton, more singing with Cantor Alisa, and latke cooking with Larry Solow!

All Hesed families are also encouraged to participate in this year's community Chanukah celebration on December 23. A great family project is building your own Chanukah menorah (or Chanukiah). For the youngest children, an easy project is painting a small piece of wood and then gluing 9 bolts onto it. Find bolts the right size that will hold candles! Of course for the more adventurous, molding a Chanukiah from clay, or creating one from other objects is always a fun challenge. One year a family used 4 Barbie dolls and 1 Ken doll to create their Chanukiah. Cantor Fineman will even have prizes for the most creative homemade Chnukiot.

If you have any questions about what your child is learning this year in class, please call me. Remember that we start every Sunday at 9:30, except for December 25 when we are not holding classes. Please try to have your children here on time. It is disruptive to the class and challenging for the teacher when students arrive late or must leave class in the middle of a lesson.

Parents who want to visit classrooms or remain in the building while Hesed Academy is in session are

welcome to do so. Each week volunteer parents pick up our bagels and help with a variety of tasks. If you would like to volunteer, please let me know. Also, Sam Helfont continues to plan activities with our school parents. Please get involved. Enjoy this upcoming winter holiday season. Rabbi Bruce Greenbaum

Thank You and Welcome Home, Charles and Kerry Beren

This past summer, after more than twenty years in Florida, Charles and Kerry Beren returned to the Monterey Peninsula and Congregation Beth Israel. The Berens first joined our Congregation back in the 1970s; both Charles and Kerry served on our Board of Trustees, and, in fact, Charles was our synagogue president when Rabbi Greenbaum was first hired in 1994.

The Berens have been financially successful over the years and have now chosen to actively support Congregation Beth Israel. In addition to making a generous and critically important legacy gift, the Berens have donated \$100,000 to establish **The Charles and Kerry Beren Youth Education Foundation**, which will create special programs to strengthen our children's connection to their Jewish roots, including Jewish education-focused experiences, Jewish guest speakers and scholars to teach our children, and educational tools to enhance CBI's religious school.

Charles and Kerry have set a wonderful example for our community; in addition to their Foundation, the Berens have expressed their desire to give additional financial support for the renovation and repair of our aging building, addressing the critical needs identified by our current president, Malina Breaux. If you are inspired by the Berens' generosity and dedication to Congregation Beth Israel and Jewish continuity in Monterey County, we welcome additional donations and legacy gifts to The Charles and Kerry Beren Youth Education Foundation and our Building & Grounds Capital Improvement Fund.

Thank you again, Charles and Kerry, for your generous, ongoing, and vital support for Congregation Beth Israel. May you go from strength to strength and continue to serve as an inspiration to us all.



Fifth Grade Shabbat

On **Friday, December 2** our 5th grade families will enjoy a potluck dinner in our CBI social hall starting

at 6:15 PM. Then at 7:30 PM the students will join Rabbi Greenbaum and Cantor Fineman as they participate in our Family Shabbat services. As the first Friday of the month, these services will include birthday blessings for all those with November and December birthdays. Moshe the Monkey will then help Rabbi Greenbaum share a story in place of a sermon. We look forward to the students and their families celebrating their Shabbat dinner, and everyone joining together in our Sanctuary for an uplifting Shabbat service.



Adult Biblical Hebrew Class

If you have not yet joined us, you are missing a fun hour of learning on Wednesday afternoons from **4:00-5:00 PM**. Each week we read and translate the book of Genesis. We are not yet halfway through the first chapter, but we are learning a lot about the challenges of translating Hebrew. So far, we are doing one or two verses a session. Call Rabbi Greenbaum to join this ongoing class. It is never too late to start learning! This month we will only be meeting on **December 7 and 28**.



Lunch with Our Clergy

This month join Cantor Alisa when she leads the discussion on **Wednesday, December 7 at noon** at Baja Cantina, located about a mile east of CBI. This month the discussion will focus on "Chanukah and the Heliotropic Effect." What message does the light of the Chanukah menorah have for us about the light of the human soul? Come prepared to offer your thoughts. Call or email the CBI office to RSVP. We will order off their regular menu so expect lunch to cost approximately \$15-\$20.



Remembering Diana Greenbaum

Rabbi Bruce and Susan Greenbaum are holding a celebration of life honoring his mother

Diana Greenbaum on Sunday afternoon, **December 11 starting at 3 PM** in CBI's social hall. All are welcome.

Donations to CBI in memory of Diana will be used to help create a members' lounge where the gift shop used to be."



BEST YEARS

Best Years Lunch Party and Gift Exchange

A special invitation to all those who want to help us celebrate the end of 2022 with a nice lunch. We will meet at **noon on Wednesday, December 28**, at China Delight in the Crossroads and enjoy a tasty Chinese lunch together. After the meal let's have fun with a white elephant gift exchange (no gifts worth more than \$25 allowed). If you want to participate in the gift exchange, bring a wrapped white elephant gift. Please RSVP for this party by calling or emailing the CBI office by December 26th. Remember, **lunch is free**. Also, let us know if you need a ride to this event.

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- Select CBI as your selected recipient
- Every purchase you make sends dollars to CBI



CBI Book Club

Dear Jewish Book Clubbers,

IMPORTANT: You must be fully vaccinated and boosted against Covid-19 in order to attend Book Club.

Here are our next four dates and book selections:

December 13, 1:30 PM, home of Karen Wiskoff. Book -- THE WORLD THAT WE KNEW by Alice Hoffman.

Karen lives at Carmel Valley Manor (email wiskoff@aol.com for driving directions). She has room for only TWO cars on her parking pad, so please arrange to carpool.

January 10, 1:30 PM, home of Suellen Rubin. Book -- PEOPLE LOVE DEAD JEWS by Dara Horn

February 14, 1:30 PM, home of Laela Leavy. Book -- MORE THAN I LOVE MY LIFE by David Grossman

March 14, 1:30 PM, home TO BE DETERMINED. Book -- ONE TWO THREE by Laurie Frankel

Thank you once again to Suellen for hosting in November.



Thank You to Our Oneg Hosts for the Month of November

Thank you to our Oneg Hosts for the Month of November:



November 4th – Sixth & Seventh Grade Students and Families

November 11th – Richard & Susan Platt in memory of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

November 18th – The Blatt Family in loving memory of Hilda Blatt

Please consider hosting an Oneg. You may host in honor or memory of someone special to you or in gratitude or honor of a special occasion or life cycle event. It's easy, it's fun and very much appreciated. Call the CBI office to schedule your Oneg at 831-624-2015. Or call Lois Epel at 831-277-0083

December dates available: December 9th, 16th, & 30th

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Meet Herb Stern, Lifetime CBI Trustee

Born 1927 in Chicago, moved to Los Angeles in 1942. Completed High School in '44 and volunteered for Army service. I was assigned to Alaska Communications Command in Seattle. While awaiting discharge, I was approached by a local scrap dealer to see if I would aid in the purchase of US surplus communication equipment for an unnamed organization. Almost immediately I began purchasing from the War Assets Administration and from West Coast surplus dealers. Funds to buy materials were forwarded and equipment shipped to a New York address

In January 1947, the organization was named "Jewish Agency for Palestine" and Golda Meir (Meyerson) was brought from Palestine to the USA for personal appearances in Chicago and New York, where she personally raised \$50 million in three weeks. In December 1947 the US and the UK placed an embargo not to sell all military equipment and arms to the Middle East, for both Arabs and Jews.

In spite of the embargo, we continued the purchasing of aircraft, cargo ships, munitions, and other materials

and devised methods to make delivery to Israel of these essential parts and equipment until May 1948.

Upon completing my commitment for service to Israel, I returned home to Los Angeles, married in November 1948, and established an electronics business. For personal reasons, I liquidated my company and retired in 1980.

The following years were spent in volunteering with various Jewish organizations and serving as a trustee for the Federal Court in Los Angeles,

My wife Esther and I made the big move to Carmel in June, 1992. Probably my best move ever. Part of this "best move" is our membership to CBI and the good friends we have met through the years.

I recall some of the CBI social and fund-raising events for which I had accepted responsibility. The original Chanukah second night dinners, the festive Chanukah dinner dances, Las Vegas Nights and, most of all, the Jewish Food Festival. All of these events and many more, including the welcoming of the Jewish military community, have helped establish a solid Jewish community in Monterey County. I even recall the fund-raising Sephardic/Greek dinners that Esther presented at our Carmel home.

Although our two sons and three grandchildren were all born in Los Angeles, their collective memories are of their good times and of the occasional attendance at CBI events. Our Granddaughters are now the family source for the wonderful cooking and baking of their Sephardic grandmother.

As health problems make it difficult for me to attend CBI services and social events, I follow those available on Zoom, the internet, and the Shofar. They are all part of my Carmel life.

Herb Stern
sterncarmel@sbcglobal.net



Teaching, Learning & Social Action

The Alenyu Teens and their parents participated in an afternoon of Social Action in which they learned about homelessness in our county, the groups and organizations working to assist those who are unsheltered, and how the teens (and we) can help to alleviate the struggles of homeless men, women, children, and youth. Cantor Alisa and

I planned the day's "lesson", which integrated facts & stats with religious

teachings that concern what the Torah teaches concerning care for those who are hungry, living in poverty, and experiencing homelessness. We asked the teens what they consider the major causes of homelessness in our region, and they correctly identified major factors, such as the high cost of housing, loss of employment, and addictions.

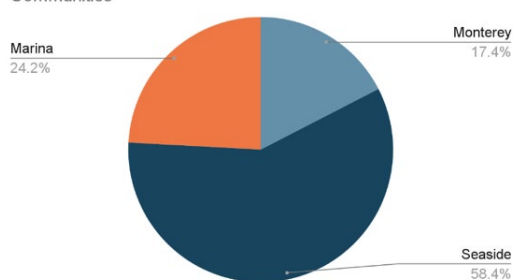
I handed out background materials, which includes some shocking statistics. Over 10,000 students in Monterey County qualified as homeless for the 2020-2021 school year, according to the Monterey County Office of Education. Of those students, 324 lived in shelters, 192 lived in hotels or motels and 474 were unsheltered. I asked the children where they imagined those 474 children were: "on the streets or in cars," they replied. There are more places, including children living in parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or migratory children who qualify as homeless since they have no permanent housing. Those families that live in one room in a multi-family house are also counted as unsheltered.

By the Numbers: Percent of MPUSD Students Experiencing Homelessness

There are nearly 2,100 unsheltered children in grades K-12 on the Peninsula, according to the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District/MPUSD.

MPUSD Students: 22% (2,087 students out of 9,600 student population)

Communities



Shelters	5%
Unsheltered	1%
Hotel/Motel	4%
Double/Tripled Up	90%

This sobering discussion also included homeless youth and Safe Place, located in downtown Monterey, that offers them shelter, food and clothing. Safe Place can use backpacks, clothes, and even stuffed animals for the youth to hug.

We then turned to the history and role of I-HELP and CBI's 30-year

participation and how each of us can assist. I handed out I-HELP's monthly schedule so that the teens and parents could see how more than 60 congregations and groups participate in providing meals and shelter for the men and women. CBI hosts the men the first Sunday of every month, and the women on Monday nights in months that have 5 Mondays (generally 4-5 annually).

The Mitzvah that our Congregation performs offers consistent reliability to the I-HELP men and women. The Alenyu parents, under the leadership of Julie Schnitzer, provided an abundance of dinner foods and breakfast items. They and the teens prepared the dinner and the breakfast and lunch bags, with teens schmearing cream cheese on bagels, and others making sandwiches, while others were busy packing the bags, setting the tables, the desserts, and drinks, and more!

Then the I-HELP men arrived. All the teens and parents, bless them all, remained to welcome the men in our greeting circle. Everyone introduced themselves before a festive dinner. What is significant for me, personally, is helping to "break through" the stereotyping of who are homeless, the causes of homelessness, and how we can assist. Next Up! The 5th grade children and parents are helping with our I-HELP hosting on December 4th.

How You Can Help

For the past few years, we have been purchasing clothing, jackets, and shoes for the men. Each man writes what he needs, and then we shop! This year there are 10 men who requested items. We generally spend \$700-\$1,000 depending on the number of men and the pants, shirts, underwear, shoes and jackets that they require.

Donations to our Social Action Fund will help us with these costs. As well, we can provide what the Safe Place youth may need. Thank you for your considerations and generosity. And blessings on our Congregation, especially the Religious School children as we continue this Mitzvah.

Arlene Krebs, Social Action Trustee <arlenekrebs123@gmail.com>



Mindful Tax Advice for End-of-Year Giving

Matthew A. Kaliff | SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Article reprinted from [Cleveland Jewish News](#)

The year-end rush applies to many things: closing deals, shopping, travel and charitable giving. In fact, 30% of all donations each year are made in December. Don't let the busy season keep you from being thoughtful about charitable contributions. Making tax-smart choices about how you donate can help make the most out of your contributions and other year-end planning.

Donate appreciated stocks. Contributing appreciated stocks owned more than one year has two tax advantages: it generates a charitable deduction for the value of the gift and saves capital gains tax on the value of the appreciation. This is far more tax-efficient than selling the asset and donating the proceeds. Capital gains tax savings is available even if you do not itemize deductions. Charitable organizations require extra time to evaluate and process contributions of closely held stock, partnership interests, real estate and other non-cash assets – act now if you intend to complete such gifts by Dec. 31.

Use the IRA qualified charitable distribution. If you are over 70½ years old, you may make direct transfers of up to \$100,000 annually from a traditional IRA custodial account to qualified charities. The qualified charitable distribution amount is not included in your taxable income. If you are over age 72, the distribution

may fulfill part or all of the required minimum distribution. Donor advised funds, private foundations and supporting organizations are not eligible for the qualified charitable distribution. Contact your IRA custodian about making a qualified charitable distribution.

Note upcoming changes to tax brackets and standard deductions. The IRS recently announced inflation-adjusted tax brackets and standard deductions for 2023. Generally, the tax brackets increased by about 7%. The higher thresholds could result in reduced tax bills for taxpayers who fall into lower tax brackets due to the changes. For married couples filing jointly, the 2023 standard deduction will increase to \$27,700 from \$25,900 in the current tax year. For single taxpayers and married individuals filing separately, the 2023 standard deduction will increase to \$13,850 from \$12,950.

Look into Inflation Reduction Act tax credits. The Inflation Reduction Act includes extended green energy incentives, such as tax credits for rooftop solar panels, insulation, electric vehicle purchases, and energy-efficient home improvements. Each of these incentives has complex rules, and some do not go into effect until 2023, so careful research is required.

Matthew A. Kaliff is senior director of endowment development and supporting foundations at the Jewish Federation of Cleveland in Beachwood. This is not legal, tax or financial advice and you should consult with a professional adviser before taking any action.



Please consider Congregation Beth Israel in your year-end giving plans. Your support allows us to maintain and grow a vibrant Jewish Community in our area.

**Questions about stock or IRA donations?
Please be in touch with Julie Chase
(juliec@carmelbethisrael.org)**

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Peggy Harmatz	1
Kenneth Kroopf	2
David Goldberg	4
Sara Rubin	4
Anita Artstein-Dunsay	5
Gabrielle Kaatz	8
Robert Conner	10
Howard Messinger	10
Bonni Weinstein	13
Lois Epel	15
Larisa Modorsky	16
Daniel Nussbaum	16
Rosemary Lande	17
Wendy Schmidt	17
Seth Pollack	20
Samuel Levinger	21
Wendie Ryter	21
Barry Cohen	22
Julie Schnitzer	22
Sarah Kaatz	24
Reese Felthoven	28
Susan Galvin	28
Paige Weisskirch	30
Joseph Mironov	31
David Sabih	31

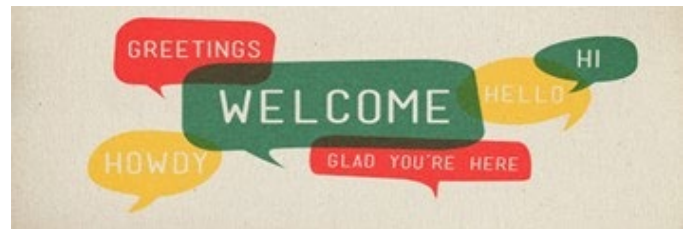
HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Gary & Judy Simon	4
Scott & Shel Lyons	7
Gadi & Marlene Maier	12
Richard & Barbara Kreitman	13
Jim & Natalie Sammet	16
Dennis & Gail Bates	17
David & Lois Epel	18
Michael Leavy & Susan Galvin	19
Elaine Gallup Conner & Robert Conner	22
Melvin & Susan Gorelick	23
Victor & Sylvia Krimsley	24
Mike & Leslie Vitiello	27
Marshal & Angelica Blatt	28
Ben & Sarah Kaatz	29



Family News

We mourn the passing of Diana Greenbaum and Adrienne Herman. May their memories be for a blessing.



Welcome New CBI Member

Paul Laub

Jeffrey & Marian Sosnick



Congregation Beth Israel

December 2022

Kislev ~ Tevet

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2  Traditions 6:15 5 th Grade Shabbat Dinner 7:30 Erev Shabbat Service with Birthday Blessings	3 10:30 Shabbat Torah Study Also on  4:00 Se'udah Shelishit
4 9:30 AM Religious School 12:30 PM Aleynu	5	6	 7 12:00 PM Lunch with Clergy @ Baja Cantina 4:00 PM Adult Ed. Biblical Hebrew	8	9 7:30 PM Erev Shabbat Services also on 	10 10:30 Shabbat Torah Study Also on 
11 9:30 AM Religious School Faculty Lunch 3:00 Celebration of Life honoring Diana Greenbaum	12	13 6:30 PM CBI Executive Committee Meets	14	15	16 7:30 PM Erev Shabbat Services led by Cantor Alisa joined by Rabbi Jeff Schulman also on 	17 10:30 Shabbat Torah Study Also on 
18 Erev Chanukah 9:30 AM Religious School 12:30 PM Aleynu 	19 Chanukah	20 Chanukah	21 Chanukah	22 Chanukah 	23 Chanukah 6:00 PM Chanukah Celebration 7:15 PM Erev Shabbat Services also on 	24 Chanukah 10:30 Shabbat Torah Study Also on 
25 Chanukah No Religious School	26 Chanukah 	27	28 12:00 PM Best Years Chanukah Lunch at China Delight 4:00 PM Adult Ed. Biblical Hebrew	29	30 7:30 PM Erev Shabbat Services with Anniversary blessings also on 	31 10:30 Shabbat Torah Study Also on 

TODAH RABBAH!

Thank you to those who have recently given generously to
Congregation Beth Israel

UJC Donations

Rich & Carol Ader: for Ukraine relief

General Endowment

Andrea Freedman

Building & Grounds Fund

Bill Pardue & Barbara Mitchell

Cantorial Restricted Fund

Bill Pardue & Barbara Mitchell: in honor of
Alisa Fineman

Rachael Sammet Cantorial Music Fund

Dr. Alex & Galena Bordetsky: in honor of
Cantor Alisa

LeRoy Kohn Adult Ed.

Dr. Penny Bard

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

William & Myrna Brandwein: in memory of
Myrna's father, Joe Kessler
Scott Rogel: in memory of Diana Greenbaum
Bill Pardue & Barbara Mitchell: in memory of
Diana Greenbaum
Mitchel & Deborah Winick: in memory of
Diana Greenbaum

General Donations

Nancy Callahan: in honor of Robert Taylor
Fletcher III
Arthur Coren: in loving memory of Ben and
Chesna Coren
Ellyn Gelson: in honor of October birthdays &
anniversaries
Ellyn Gelson: in honor of November birthdays
& anniversaries
Aline Harris: in memory of Miriam Harris
Elizabeth Heff: In honor of Debra & Bob
Fenton,
and Bev & Dan Nussbaum
Charlotte Salomon & Scott Fetherston: in
memory of Diana Greenbaum
Matthew Schuss & Charlene Webber-Schuss: in
honor of Charlotte Salomon

Stanley Semmel: in memory of Bari Tolliver
Gary & Judy Simon: in loving memory of Diana
Greenbaum
Jill & Jim Sleeper: in loving memory of Jill's
mother, Mylle Perkins
Jill & Jim Sleeper: in memory of Diana
Greenbaum

High Holy Days - Israel Bonds

Rich & Carol Ader
Jill Firestone

High Holy Days Donations

Malina Breaux
Gerald Padawer
Mark & Ruth Gordon

I-Help

Bill Pardue & Barbara Mitchell: in memory of
Rae Mitchell

Thinking about honoring a
loved one or a special occasion?

Consider a plaque at CBI

A leaf on the Tree of Life \$180

A Yahrzeit Plaque in our sanctuary \$360



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9 Things You Didn't Know About Chanukah

BY MY JEWISH LEARNING

Chanukah is one of the most widely celebrated Jewish holidays in the United States. But that doesn't mean there is nothing new to learn about this eight-day festival.



Gelt as we know it is a relatively new tradition — and no one knows who invented it.

While coins — “gelt” is Yiddish for coins, or money — have been

part of Chanukah observance for centuries, chocolate gelt is considerably younger. In her book *On the Chocolate Trail*, Rabbi Deborah Prinz writes that “opinions differ” concerning the origins of chocolate gelt: some credit America’s Loft candy company with creating it in the 1920s, while others suggest there were European versions earlier that inspired Israel’s Elite candy company. Prinz notes, as well, that chocolate gelt resembles a European Christmas tradition of exchanging gold-covered chocolate coins “commemorating the miracles of St. Nicholas.”



The next “Thanksgivukkah” (sort of), is only 51 years away.

In 2013, the convergence of Thanksgiving and Chanukah on Nov. 28

inspired everything from turkey-shaped menorahs to a giant dreidel float in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Parade. While experts say a full day of Chanukah won’t coincide with the fourth Thursday in November for thousands of years, the first night of Chanukah will fall in time for Thanksgiving dinner (assuming you have the meal at dinnertime rather than in the afternoon) on Nov. 27, 2070.

The first Chanukah celebration was actually a delayed Sukkot observance.

The second book of Maccabees quotes from a letter sent circa 125 BCE from the Hasmoneans to the leaders of Egyptian Jewry, describing the holiday as “the festival of Sukkot celebrated in the month of Kislev rather than Tishrei.” Since the Jews were still in caves fighting as guerrillas on Tishrei, 164 BCE, they had been unable to honor the eight-day holiday of Sukkot, which required visiting the Jerusalem Temple; hence it was postponed until after the recapture of Jerusalem and the rededication of the Temple. Many scholars believe it is this connection to Sukkot — and not the Talmudic account of the cruse of oil that lasted eight days — that explains why Chanukah is eight days long.



The books of Maccabees, which tell the story of Chanukah, weren’t included in the Hebrew Bible — but they are in the Catholic Bible.

There are different theories explaining why the first-

century rabbis who canonized the scriptures omitted the Maccabees, ranging from the text’s relative newness at the time to fears of alienating the Roman leadership in control of Jerusalem at the time.

Oily food, (Think latkes and sufganiyot) isn’t Chanukah’s only culinary tradition.

Traditionally, Chanukah has included foods with cheese in recognition of Judith, whose liberal use of the salty treat facilitated a victory for the Maccabees. To combine the two unhealthy but delicious traditions, try a recipe for cheese latkes.



The largest menorah in the world, is 32 feet high and weighs 4,000 pounds.

The Shulchan Aruch stipulates that a menorah should be no taller than about 31 feet. Incidentally,

Guinness lists at least three other Chanukah-related records: most dreidels spinning simultaneously for at least 10 seconds (820), most valuable dreidel (\$14,000) most people simultaneously lighting menorahs (834) and largest display of lit menorahs (1,000)..



Torah Connections:

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By Michael L. Waxer

The Two Universes

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis [Beresheet]1:1)

This very first line of the Bible, of the Torah, can be understood in many ways. Of course, there is the literal, with our current sense of what **'the heavens'** and **'the earth'** mean. But are there other ways to interpret this verse?

'The heavens' could be seen as God's creation of the **'Spiritual Universe'**, while **'the earth'** could be understood as God creating the **'physical universe'**. This second universe is where our bodies are at home, and where the laws of physics apply. (Remember, though, that the Torah describes many 'miracles', occurrences which seem to defy our understanding of science. God chooses whether he wants to perform a miracle using physics, or defying physics. The parting of the sea in Exodus is an example of God using a strong wind.)

The Spiritual Universe has *completely different* rules that apply to it. It is the place where our soul, our **neshamah**, is most at home. Another clue to this is:

"And God said 'Let us make man in our image'...." (Genesis [Beresheet] 1:26)

This verse helps us understand that God wanted humans (and only humans) to have existence in each universe. God's **image**, so to speak, is the **Spiritual Universe** (possibly with angelic beings), and God desired humans to have the human soul, the **neshamah**. This **'neshamah'** allows each person to connect to HaShem in a way that is unique, as no other creation had this **neshamah**, according to our Sages.

Rav Jeff Shulman had shared an insight, that the grammatical item **'et'**, which is spelled with the first letter, **Aleph**, and then the last letter, **Tav**, precedes each of the nouns in that verse. Instead of interpreting this word grammatically, since it is composed of the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, it could be interpreted as **'A to Z'**. In other words, **the 'complete' thing**.

Now we can read this same first verse as:

"In the beginning, God created the complete Spiritual universe, and the complete Physical universe."

So, what are the properties of this Spiritual Universe? As you might expect, the Torah gives us insight here as well. A concept that is repeated many times in Torah is:

I am HaShem, your God, ... who visits the sin of fathers upon children, upon the third and upon the fourth

generation for My enemies, but who acts with kindness for thousands of generations to those who love me and to those who observe my commandments." (Deuteronomy [Devarim] 5: 8-10).

We may have all sensed that this does not seem to be literally true. When there is a seeming contradiction in Torah the impetus is on us to wrestle with the text to have it make sense. The word **'Israel'** literally means **'to wrestle with God'**. One way this concept can make sense is that it is referring to the **Spiritual** part of us, and not necessarily our physical world.

In this context we might find ourselves **extremely happy**, since many of our ancestors might be responsible for much of the kindness and blessings we enjoy. Further, 'thousands of generations' should be understood as 'all'. However, even if taken literally as, say, a thousand generations, according to the Jewish calendar we are somewhere in roughly generation 180 since creation, *far below* a thousand. Consider, for example, just one of our ancestors, Abraham, and God states:

"And I will make you into a nation that is great; I will bless you, and make great your name, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and they will be blessed by you, all the families of the earth." (Genesis [Beresheet] 12: 2-3)

Again, this does not seem to be true literally when confining our thinking to our Physical universe, as we are all too aware of the many terrible evils that have been committed against the Jewish people. However, when we apply it to the Spiritual universe, these **'blessings'** may be a tremendous force, with a persistence of almost forever. Meanwhile evil, or sin, has a very short 'half-life', and completely dissipates by the 3rd or 4th generation. You can think of it as evil affects the evildoer and echoes to the next generation, which is its half-life. Remnants can echo for one or two more generations.

One can visualize this by skipping stones on a still lake. Evil deeds are like a heavy stone, that might skip a couple of times before it sinks. Good deeds are like that perfect skipping stone, that keeps skipping on top of the water... defying all physical laws.

So, **'good deeds'** in the Spiritual universe is not unlike **gravity** in our physical world. With this understanding, this well-known Torah verse now makes sense, as it is now true, but in the reality where our **neshamah** is at home. Perhaps a key purpose for God having created the weekly Shabbat is to create **'holy time'**, giving each of us an opportunity **to develop spiritually**.

This Torah Connection recognizes is the sole responsibility of the author and specifically does NOT necessarily reflect those of the Board of Trustees of CBI, CBI, its membership, Reform Judaism, or Judaism. Please send any comments to the author at: mlwaxer@sbcglobal.net.

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Chartered in 1954 as the Jewish Community of the Monterey Peninsula, Congregation Beth Israel today serves the spiritual, educational, and social needs of Jews on the Peninsula. We derive programming and administrative strength from our affiliation with the Union for Reform Judaism and offer traditional programming to meet the needs of most Jews on the Monterey Peninsula. The Congregation sponsors weekly worship services on Shabbat evening and Shabbat morning; observances of all holidays and festivals; and formal educational programs from toddler through adult. We operate our own school on weekend mornings and midweek afternoons, and we also maintain a Judaic library.

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Parshiot

December 3, Vayetze
T: Genesis 28:10-32:3
H: Hosea 12:13-14:10

December 10, Vayishlach
T: Genesis 32:4-36:43
H: Hosea 11:7-12:12

December 17, Vayeshev
T: Genesis 37:1-40:23
H: Amos 2:6-3:8

December 24 , Miketz
T: Genesis 41:1-44:17
H: I Kings 3:15-4:1

December 31, Vayigash
T: Genesis 44:18-47:27
H: Ezekiel 37:15-28