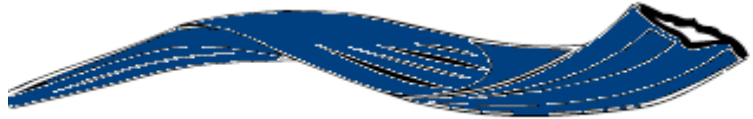


# SHOFAR



Monthly Newsletter of the Monterey Peninsula Jewish Community

[www.carmelbethisrael.org](http://www.carmelbethisrael.org)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**FEB**  
4

**Tu B'Shvat Seder** Page 4

**FEB**  
26

***Only in Theaters, A Special***  
**Film Event** Page 1

**MAR**  
5

**Hesed Academy Purim**  
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18

**CBI Annual Talent**  
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6

**CBI Community Seder**  
Page 10

**APR**  
?

**Yom HaShoah Film &**  
**Speaker** Page 6

**APR**  
30

**Hesed Academy Celebrates**  
**Israeli Independence**



**Purchase your tickets for CBI's  
showing of ONLY IN THEATERS on  
Sunday, February 26!**

On **Sunday, February 26 at 3 pm** at the Lighthouse Cinemas in Pacific Grove, Cong. Beth Israel is proud to present the Monterey Peninsula premiere of **ONLY IN THEATERS**, an intimate and compelling journey taken with the Laemmle family, spanning their challenges, losses, and personal triumphs in the movie theater business over four generations. A documentary about indie films and the legendary Los Angeles Laemmle Theater chain is both a cautionary tale about the possible end of an era and a hopeful reminder that the death of movie theaters may have been greatly exaggerated.

According to The Forward, "this film, not 'The Fabelmans,' was the greatest Jewish film story of 2022." *Continued on page 5*



## From the Rabbi's Desk...

I just returned from the annual Pacific Association of Reform Rabbis (PARR) conference that was held in person this year. It is the first time in three years that we were able to meet in person. I spent hours with my colleagues and friends discussing self-care, exploring various activities including meditation, art, and even improvisation. During the convention, two of my classmates shared with me that they had announced their retirement plans. We talked about the stress of leading congregations while still struggling with the ongoing threat of coronavirus and the need to continue live streaming our programs and services. None of us had ever thought we would be working as rabbis online and dealing with technology. After just a few days at PARR, while I certainly felt rejuvenated, I recognized that the constant stress of the modern rabbinate permeates congregations everywhere.

Serving as a rabbi is tremendously rewarding and demanding. There is always more to do! I never quite get all my "to do list" finished. There are always more phone calls to make, more people to visit, more programs to prepare for, more Shofar articles to complete, more sermons to write, more emails that need a response, and more classes to plan. When does one fit in time for personal study and growth? One of the presenters at PARR who was teaching about personal meditation practices suggested that we try to find just three minutes twice a day to meditate. So far I have added a short meditation to my morning schedule but have not added it to my afternoon or evening. I just get too caught up in day-to-day responsibilities.

Most rabbis do get a Sabbatical, a break in their work to give them a chance to study, travel, and rejuvenate. Sabbaticals take a variety of forms. Some of my colleagues have enjoyed three- or six-month Sabbatical every seven years. It varies based on agreements between the rabbi and the congregation. When CBI renewed my contract almost eight years ago, we added the following, "The purpose of the Sabbatical is for the Rabbi to re-gather his spiritual energy, to study, to be with his family,

and to bring back to the congregation a renewed vigor and enthusiasm. In lieu of the traditional four – six month Sabbatical, the Rabbi may spread the Sabbatical out by taking a one-month period per contract year."

Because of Covid-19 I have not taken that one-month Sabbatical in three years. Starting February 4, after leading the Shabbat morning study, I will begin a month-long Sabbatical. Susan and I will be traveling to Australia. We already have plans for a Friday Shabbat in Sydney and another Friday Shabbat in Hobart (Tasmania).

We hope to visit with the family with whom Shira worked in Melbourne. I am so excited about snorkeling at the Great Barrier Reef, hiking on costal trails, and seeing penguins, koalas, and hopefully some wild kangaroos. Liotte has helped me upload dozens of books onto my Kindle for the plane rides and breaks during our adventure.

Our return flight lands in Monterey on March 3, and I look forward to helping celebrate Purim with our entire congregation on Sunday, March 5. That first week back I will teach our Adult Education Hebrew class, enjoy a Lunch with our Clergy, and a K/1/2 Shabbat dinner and service that Friday. The next day we will celebrate together as Jessie Entin becomes a Bat Mitzvah. While I am not as young or energetic as I was when I joined CBI 28 years ago, I am not quite ready to retire. Looking forward to seeing you all in March after Susan and my trip Down Under.





## Message From Cantor Alisa

Dear Congregants,  
Saying a *bracha*- a blessing- is a means of recognizing and acknowledging the good and divine providence that the earth, the universe, the Source of Life provides us. Jewish practice is

devoted to cultivating mindfulness about where our food comes from, and in doing so, helps us remember the Source of Life itself. Our Sages teach that “the whole world belongs to God.” They teach that partaking in God’s creation without consent, eating without first saying a blessing, is likened to stealing. This instills a recognition that our food comes from a source beyond our own. With a few words, our blessing formula is one of thanks, intended to bring us into unity with creation and to instill humility, awe, and gratitude. This holy awareness brings us deeper into relationship with a loving force that presents each one of us with the greatest gift of all, the gift of life.

The beauty, rhythm and wisdom of our Jewish calendar continually offers us opportunities for holy encounters with, the awe and majesty in the world around and within us, in nature and the turning of the seasons. The holiday of Tu B’shevat, the New Year of the Trees, offers such an opportunity. How often do we afford ourselves a chance to ponder where we are in the cycle of a year and, to reflect on the abundance that flows from the earth, particularly the trees, where each bite of food comes from?

I live in the small town of Aromas (North Monterey County) where the persimmon trees hang heavy with their beautiful fruit each fall and early winter, as do the walnut, apple and lemon trees. All year, I drive past rich fields of crops tended to by farm workers that assure their harvest and delivery to our grocery stores and farmers’ markets, and ultimately to our homes and the meals that nourish our families. Holidays like *Tu B’shevat* help us step out of our day-to-day to acknowledge our relationship with mother earth through celebrating the **Tree of Life**- mystical Jewish teachings about how she operates within us as

well as in nature, providing for us both in body and soul.

We hope you will join us for our mystical Tu B’shevat Seder on February 4 at 5pm, guided by Rabbi Jeff Schulman, Rabbi Leah Novick and myself, and prepared by a magical team of volunteers and staff. And, during Hesed Academy on Sunday morning February 5 when we will hold two Seders by age group, prepared by our room parents, instilling in our children the wonder of nature through this meaningful Jewish holiday.

There is much to look forward to at CBI. We rejoice as Shifra Rayzel Lyons becomes Bat Mitzvah and all our B’nai Mitzvah students bloom and grow before our eyes. Throughout February, while Rabbi Greenbaum is on Sabbatical, we will have a variety of wonderful teachers share their words of Torah with us on Friday nights. Rabbi Debbie Israel, Morgan Hill’s Congregation Emeth Rabbi Emeritus, joins us on February 10, treating our congregation to her wisdom and love for Jewish prayer. The following weeks we can look forward to our very own Dr. Beryl Levinger on February 17, Dr. Dan Nussbaum on February 24, and Dr. Seth Pollack on March 3, all brilliant teachers and pillars of our community.

Our congregation is blessed with many Torah-filled hearts. Another name for Torah is *Eitz Chayim*- **Tree of Life**. From Proverbs we learn that “*She is a Tree of Life to all that are strengthened by her; all who grasp this are blessed. Her journey is a way of pleasantness and all her paths lead to wholeness and peace.*”

May this be so. With Gratitude, Cantor Alisa







## Hesed Academy

Cantor Alisa Fineman and I have some exciting events planned for our Hesed Academy program. We start off the first Sunday of February with a celebration of Tu B'Shevat. Although I will

be away on my Sabbatical, Cantor Alisa will lead two Seders as we celebrate the New Year for the trees and the vegetation all around us. Parents will be asked to help provide various fruits and nuts for the school Seders.

On the second Sunday in February our specialist Ilana Entin will share another art project with the students. I hope everyone celebrates with their family as we take a break on February 19 to observe President's weekend. Finally, on February 26 Susan Newton returns as our fabulous storyteller.

A quick reminder to please have your students arrive a little before 9:30 am so that they can be in their classrooms when we start our program. As always, parents are encouraged to join us in the synagogue. During the first 30 minutes each Sunday, our youngest students enjoy a service in the sanctuary, usually led by Cantor Alisa. Parents are welcome to join those services, or, if you want help out, please join in preparing our weekly snack, smearing cream cheese on bagels and pouring apple juice.

As I write this, our former gift shop is being transformed into our new membership lounge. With a new window, fresh paint, and better lighting, this room will be the perfect place for parents to visit together, enjoy a cup of coffee or tea, and relax. I truly hope you take advantage of this lounge that has been created in memory of my mother Diana Greenbaum.

A quick reminder that the Sabbath Service on the first Friday of every month begins at 6:00 pm. These services are family friendly and Moshe the Monkey always helps me tell a story. Those with birthdays get a special blessing and a chocolate gift. This month our Third and Fourth grade students will help lead this service as well.

As always, I welcome your calls. Let me know if you have any concerns or questions about what is happening in our classrooms. I am in the office Tuesday-Friday and happy to meet with you in person or talk over the phone. I hope everyone continues to remain healthy during the winter season when colds and flu seems to spread easily. Please keep your students home if they are not feeling well on Sunday mornings.

Thank you for supporting all that we do at Hesed Academy.

Rabbi Bruce Greenbaum  
Hesed Academy Director



## TU B'SHVAT SEDER, FOLLOWED BY HAVDALAH!

On **Saturday, February 4, at 5 pm**, please join us for a fun and meaningful Tu B'Shvat Seder. Modeled on the Passover Seder (though less

complex), this special Seder was created by Jewish kabbalists in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries to celebrate God's presence in the natural world.

Tu B'Shvat or the "New Year of the Trees" is like a Jewish Arbor Day, observed on the 15th (tu) of the Hebrew month of Shevat (Tu B'Shvat has taken on new relevance and resonance today as we grapple with climate change and environmental loss.

In ancient times, Tu B'Shvat was an agricultural festival, marking the emergence of spring. The kabbalists spiritually linked Tu B'Shvat to the "tree of life"-- a theme prevalent in Jewish teaching--and to the concept that humans are like trees with divine energy flowing through us. Recently, we have reclaimed this ritual seder to celebrate the wonders of nature.

The Tu B'Shvat Seder is highly symbolic and is often divided into four sections that represent the four seasons (and the four mystical "spheres" that represent the relationship between humans and the earth). Come and enjoy four cups of wine (or grape juice) in varying colors to represent the four seasons!

And we will enjoy three different types of fruits and nuts: fully edible (think figs and grapes), edible with an inedible pit (think peaches, avocados, olives), and edible with inedible coverings (think bananas, melons, nuts), all while exploring the meaning behind each food.

We will explore the mystical dimensions that are an essential part of Kabbalistic teachings (including *atzilut*, God's emanating energy, the transience of the passing seasons, *beriah*, or creation, and the spark of God within each person) in an accessible and enjoyable way. No prior knowledge of Kabbalah required! Our Tu B'Shvat Seder will be promptly followed by Havdalah—we hope to see all of you on February 4! (Tu B'Shvat info courtesy of MyJewishLearning.com and ReformJudaism.org.)

## ONLY IN THEATERS *continued from page 1*

'Only in Theaters' is a funny, heartbreaking and moving story about the power of movies." Cong. Beth Israel is very excited to share this film and a follow-up Q&A directly with Greg Laemmle with the entire CBI community—tickets are \$10 and can be purchased thru the CBI website or directly at: <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/5699919>.

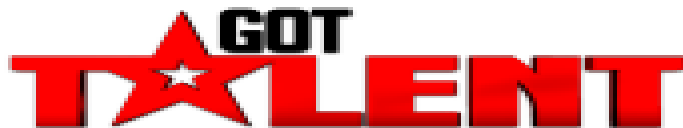


## The East Bay Jewish Film Festival Will Be Streaming in Monterey County!

Starting March 11, the 2023 East Bay Jewish Virtual Film Festival will offer Monterey County residents the opportunity to stream almost all its offerings, including *Cinema Sabaya*, Israel's must-see submission to this year's Oscars, and excluding only the documentary *Only in Theaters*, which Cong. Beth Israel will be screening on February 26 (see page 1 of the Shofar). The EBJFF Virtual Film Festival will also stream three new titles plus six shorts.

Virtual Festival passes cost \$195 and go on sale February 5. Individual virtual tickets cost \$12.50 and go on sale February 10.

Go to <https://www.eastbayjewishfilm.org> for more information, the virtual film schedule, and ticket purchases.



Mark your calendars! CBI's Annual Talent Show returns on Saturday evening, March 18 for a terrific evening of entertainment, food, and fun for the entire family!

Calling all current and aspiring singers, dancers, comics, musicians, and performers of all stripes--let us know if you will join us on CBI's stage--all ages and talents welcome.

And, this year, for the first time, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, & 3<sup>rd</sup> place performances will each receive a \$100 Target Gift Card and all participants will be recognized for their participation

For more info and to sign up, contact Bob Fenton at [lawbobman@aol.com](mailto:lawbobman@aol.com) or 818- 645-3972 or Charlotte Salomon, Dir. of Membership Development & Engagement, at [charlotte@carmelbethisrael.org](mailto:charlotte@carmelbethisrael.org) or 925-519-4477.



## Join Us For Community Shabbat Dinner!

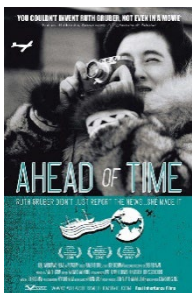
Join us for our monthly tradition of community Shabbat dinners, prepared by Malina Breaux and her entourage of assistants. Savor a sense of community and food worthy of celebration at **6:15 pm on Friday, February 24.**

Join us as we offer blessings for the bread and wine and sing traditional music to begin our gatherings. **For now, dinner will be limited to 40 guests, all fully vaccinated.** Evening services follow at 7:30 pm, if you wish to attend. Call or email the office for reservations Cost is \$18 for adults and \$10 for children.



## BEST YEARS Lunch Out!

Join us on **Thursday, February 2 at noon** as we enjoy what is clearly one of the most popular Best Years events, enjoying a nice lunch at a local restaurant. This month let's try a Swiss lunch. Interested in some fondue or schnitzel? We will meet at Lugano's Swiss Bistro in the Barnyard. If it is easier for you, call the synagogue to carpool with the Rabbi. This free lunch, paid for by the CBI Senior Endowment Fund is always a fun gathering. Please bring ideas for future Best Years events. Do you have a suggestion for a movie, a speaker, or a program? Enjoy visiting with other members and feasting on delicious foods. Drinks are included as well! To RSVP for this program call or email the CBI office at 831- 624-2015. Please let us know if you need a ride for this event.



## Yom HaShoah Film & Speaker

In observance of Yom HaShoah CBI will present "Ahead of Time," an award-winning documentary about the life and times of Ruth Gruber.

Zeva Oelbaum, founder of Reel

Inheritance Films and producer of this film, will join us by Zoom for Q&A after the film. Date to be confirmed.

For seven decades, foreign correspondent and photojournalist Ruth Gruber didn't just report the news...she made it! Born in 1911 to Russian Jewish immigrants, Gruber reported from the Soviet Arctic, escorted Holocaust refugees on a secret wartime mission, and changed the world with dispatches from the Palestine-bound ship Exodus in 1947. Through her own words and images, the film follows Ruth Gruber's incredible journey as a student, a reporter, an activist leader and a prolific author. The film captures the drama of her life as she lent her camera lens – and her heart – to refugees of war.



## Lunch with Our Clergy

Join us for Lunch with our Clergy, **Wednesday, February 22, 12 pm** at Baja Cantina.

Cantor Alisa shares teachings about *Rosh Chodesh* (New Moon/Month) and *Parashat Terumah* (gift, offering).

Call or email the CBI office at 831- 624-2015 to RSVP. We will order off their regular menu so expect lunch to cost approximately \$20.



## "Finding a Spiritual Path" guided by Rabbi Jeff Schulman

The last of three classes on "Finding a Spiritual Path" will be held on **February 1 from 7 to 8:15 pm** with schmooze time afterward.

We'll be guided by what we hold within, what we believe, by our sacred texts and the modern commentaries of our lives. We'll bring our fullest selves, Torah and midrash, music, and silence into our conversations. No Hebrew knowledge is required.

Please join us on this journey.

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## Hebrew Union College Presents its Spring 2023 Lecture Series

From February 15 through March 10, the Klau Library of the Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion presents five online lectures on a variety of topics through its Spring 2023 Library Lecture Series, featuring HUC-JIR faculty and guest lecturers. All the lectures are free; go to the following website for more information and to register for the Series: <http://huc.edu/libraryseries/spring>



## Thank You to Our Oneg Hosts for the Month of January

**January 6 – Rosemary Lande, In loving memory of Bob Lande**

**January 13 – CBI**

**January 20 – Abby King - In gratitude**

**January 27 – Jessie Entin & Family in honor of her Bat Mitzvah Project**

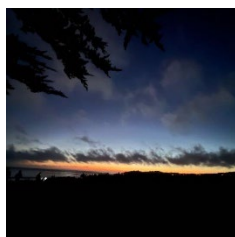
**These dates are available to host:**

**February 17**

**March, 3, 17, 24, 31**

Please help us continue this wonderful tradition as a part of our Erev Shabbat Services. Sign up to host! 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 it's very much appreciated. Call the CBI office to schedule your Oneg at 831-624-2015. or call Lois Epel at 831-277-0083.

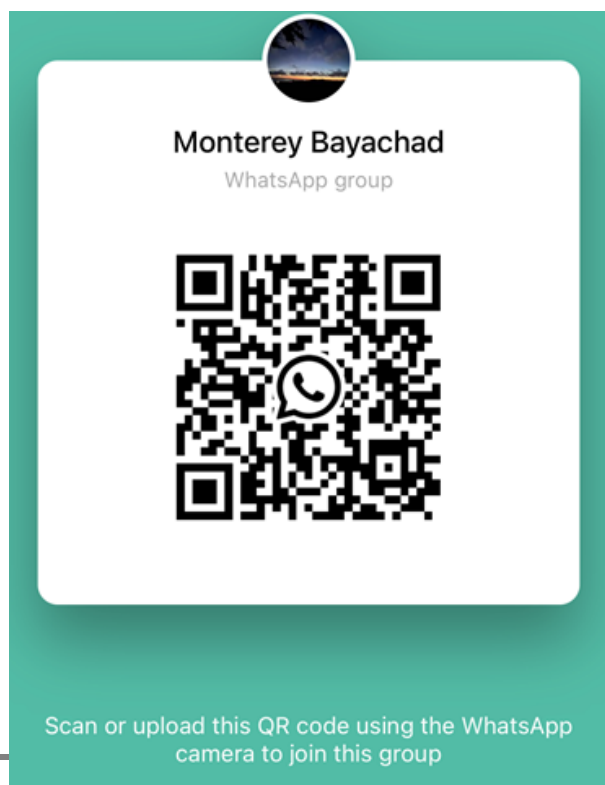
**Please Note Our  
New CBI Office Hours**  
Tuesday – Friday  
9 AM – 5 PM  
and by appointment



## Have You Joined Bayachad?

This fall, new CBI members Danny Bernstein and Leslie Steinway started Monterey Bayachad to help our Jewish community connect virtually in real-time, across the Monterey County. They chose WhatsApp because it helps bridge iOS and Android users and is a fully encrypted service. Bayachad is a play on the Hebrew word B'Yachad which means together. The group already has 40+ participants, including Rabbi Bruce, Cantor Alisa, Binie from Chabad, and many CBI congregants. The group has helped coordinate event participation, rugelach baking and delivery, locating round challah for Rosh Hashanah, lulav and etrog orders, and more. It's been called a "lifeline" for last-minute requests and problem solving.

We encourage you to scan the QR code with your phone camera or follow this link, <https://chat.whatsapp.com/J924M70NjAkBM5aQFM7wft> and join the group. If you already have WhatsApp on your phone, joining the group is very simple. If you do not, you will be prompted to download the app and can use your phone number to log in. The goal is 100+ members in 2023!





## Meet Sam & Tally Helfont

We both grew up on the East Coast. Tally was born in 1981 and comes from an Israeli family. Her parents moved to Philadelphia (where she was born) temporarily so that her father could complete a PhD. Their plan was to return to Israel, but her father took a job in Wilmington, Delaware with a pharmaceutical company and her mother continued to pursue graphic design. A few years turned into a few decades, and they are still here in the USA. Sam was born in 1980, and grew up in New Jersey. We both attended Conservative synagogues, with Hebrew school three days a week, Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, and lots of Jewish friends.

Our Jewish identities were always important to us. In 2005, we moved to Israel to study at Tel Aviv University. Tally had completed an undergraduate degree at George Washington University and worked for a counterterrorism think tank following 9-11. Sam was a graduate of the University of Maryland. He served in the US Navy and is an Iraq War veteran. Although we both lived inside the Washington DC beltway and hung around the same places, we only met in Tel Aviv. After finishing our masters' degrees in Middle Eastern history at Tel Aviv University, we moved to northern Israel for an intensive Arabic program at a peace center called Givat Haviva.

We returned to the United States engaged but went back to Israel for the wedding in 2009. Tally began what became a ten-year stint at the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia, where she eventually founded and directed its Middle East Program. Sam spent 2008 on the staff of Barack Obama's presidential campaign, and then began a PhD in Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University. We moved to Princeton in 2009, where we lived until Sam graduated in 2015. We traveled a great deal, including three months in Amman Jordan during the 2011 Arab Spring. Our first son, Edden, was born there in 2012, and we have dragged him all over the world with us. Throughout this time, Sam also continued to serve as an intelligence officer in the Navy Reserve, including an eight-month deployment to the Middle East in 2014.

In 2015, we moved to Center City Philadelphia. Tally continued working at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, and Sam began a three-year post-doc at the University of Pennsylvania. Our second son, Nadav, was born in 2016 and completed our family of four.

In 2018, Sam took a job at the Naval Postgraduate School, and we moved to Pacific Grove. Tally soon found a position at the Institute for Security Governance, which is a Department of Defense think tank on NPS's campus. Coming from large and more traditional Jewish communities on the East Coast, we were unsure what to expect in Monterey. At CBI, we have been delighted to find a group of Jewish families and a gaggle of other kids the same age as Edden and Nadav. Everyone has made us feel at home, and we look forward to seeing the community become even more vibrant in the years to come!

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





# Congregation Beth Israel

## February 2023

### Shevat - Adar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1  4:00 pm Adult Ed. Biblical Hebrew  7:00 pm <i>"Finding a Spiritual Path"</i> Class & Discussion with Rabbi Schulman	2  Noon Best Years' Lunch out at Lugano's at the Barnyard	3  5:15pm 3 <sup>rd</sup> /4 <sup>th</sup> grade Shabbat Dinner  6:00 pm Erev Family Shabbat Services with Birthday Blessings	4 10:30 am Shabbat Torah Study also on  5:00 pm Tu B'shvat Seder & Havdalah
5 9:30 am Religious School  12:30 am Aleynu  4:00 pm I-Help Men	6	7	8	9	10  <b>Traditions</b>  7:30 pm Erev Shabbat Services also on	11 10:30 am Shabbat Torah Study Also on
12 9:30 am Religious School	13	14  6:30 pm CBI Executive Committee Meets	15	16	17  7:30 pm Erev Shabbat Services also on	18 10:30 am Shabbat Torah Study Also on
19 No Religious School	20 <b>Presidents Day</b>	21  7:00 pm Board of Trustees Meet	22  Noon Lunch with Our Clergy Cantor Alisa Fineman at Baja Cantina	23	24  6:15 pm Shabbat Dinner 7:30 pm Erev Shabbat Services also on	25 10:30 am Shabbat Torah Study Also on
26 9:30 am Religious School 12:30 pm. Aleynu  3:00 pm "Only in Theaters" Lighthouse Cinema in Pacific Grove	27	28	1 <b>March</b>	2	3  6:00 pm Family Shabbat Services with Birthday blessings also on	4 10:30 am Shabbat Torah Study Also on



## 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:

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

Grossman. Laela lives at Carmel Valley Manor (email: [laelaleavy@me.com](mailto:laelaleavy@me.com) for driving directions), where guest parking is very sparse. Please **REPLY ALL** to this email to let us know that you are coming and to make it easier to arrange car pools.

March 14, 1:30 pm, home of Suellen Rubin. Book -  
- **ONE TWO THREE** by Laurie Frankel



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## SAVE the DATE

# CBI's Community Passover Seder is Back!

## Thursday, April 6

Menu, Price, and Sign-up Information Coming Soon

Bat Mitzvah \*13 Shevat 5783

# Sierra Rose

## שפרה רזאל

### Virtual Havdalah

I become a Bat Mitzvah on February 4, 2023.

You are invited! Please join me in a virtual Havdalah at 6:30 PM. The formal invitation is at:

<http://pp.events/aaz79Bkj>

### Mitzvah Project: Carmel Cares

In the Jewish tradition of Tikkun Olam, repair of the World, I choose to volunteer with Carmel Cares, a local non-profit that helps keep our city clean, safe, & welcoming to all who enter. Support

[www.carmelcares.org](http://www.carmelcares.org)

### Parsha: Exodus 13:17-17:16

Parsha B'shalach, is the 16th portion in the yearly cycle. Pharaoh frees the Israelites and then changes his mind, chasing them with his army & trapping them at the Sea of Reeds. This parsha is notable for the Song of the Sea, which is chanted using a different melody & written by the scribe using a distinctive brick-like pattern in the Scroll. This Sabbath is known as Shabbat Shirah, since the Song of the Sea is known as the Shirah (song).

### Dedication

In August, two of my classmates passed away in a car accident with their younger brother & mother. I honor the memory of Leigh & Lucy Biakanja.



### About the Bat Mitzvah

Shifra is the third oldest of four children. She attends Carmel Middle School in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. She plays clarinet, violin, & saxophone with the school music programs. After school and on weekends, she volunteers with Carmel Cares as a part of the Pick-Up Posse. She loves club volleyball, writing stories, & reading novels. She dreams of studying the deep sea as a marine biologist in San Diego.

### Aharah v. Todah

A special todah raba to Cantor Alisa Fineman for tutoring & encouraging me this past year. Thank you to Rabbi Bruce Greenbaum and CBI teachers & staff for preparing me to become a bat mitzvah. I appreciate our community's support.



# HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Neil Cantor	1/8
Alan Lefkof	2
Monica Browning	3
Hugo Gerstl	3
Shifra Lyons	4
Michael Marshall	5
Robert Moskowitz	5
Bob Newman	5
Nathaniel Carlyle	6
Andrea Carter	7
Sheri Chodosh	7
Michael Kean	7
Stella Meiggs	8
Robert Weisskirch	8
Clark Miller	9
Jim Gumberg	10
Susan Platt	10
Nathaniel Rosenblatt	11
Ronald Kroll	12
Lewis Leader	12
Gail Bates	13
Hudson Donald Jacobson	13
Isabella Ann Jacobson	13
Thomas Krause	13
Leonard Laub	13
Deborah Stern	15
Constance Kean	16
Justine Geisler	18
Larry Rubenstein	18
Michael Croudo	19
Creedence Stiebel	19
Malina Breaux	20
Catherine Goode	20
Marjory Kaplan	21
Samuel Goldberg	22
Joe Mello	22
Nina Patane	22
Patricia Poile`	23
Ann Gordon	24
Suellen Rubin	24
Leslie Vitiello	24
Cantor Margaret Bruner	25
Chloe Weil	26
Melvin Gorelick	27
Sharon Neumann-Solow	28

# HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Daniel & Beverly Nussbaum	6
Glen J. Grossman & Marce Humphrey-Grossman	14
Charles & Deborah Kosmont	15
Megan & Robert Felthoven	19



## Family News

We mourn the passing of long-time member Charles Seibel and of Ann Kaufman, mother of Louise Riddle-Kaufman. May their memories be for a blessing.

*Our Congregation strives to offer love and support to fellow congregants in times of joy and celebration, as well as in times of trouble and sorrow. One of the ways we do this is to let the congregation know your news. Please let us know if there is a simcha you wish to share (or know someone else's that they are willing to share), or a wish of encouragement or condolence that can be shared. You can send this information to [shalomcbi@aol.com](mailto:shalomcbi@aol.com) to be included in the Shofar.*



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## **Torah Connections:**

**Vol. 177 February 2023, 5783**

By Michael L. Waxer

### **Fighting the Angel**

Within Torah there are many 'traps', which can serve to impede one's progress in making sense of what the text is saying. The best approach to resolving these impasses is to keep trying. In fact, one reason we are instructed to re-read the full Torah each year is to give us exactly this opportunity. As we get older, and hopefully a little wiser, we can see the text with new eyes.

One such impasse for me was in the portion 'Vayishlach', where Jacob is getting ready to confront his brother Esau. The scene is that Jacob is very afraid that his brother will kill him, that Esau is still bearing a grudge from their youth when, through trickery, Jacob acquired Isaac's blessing (which Esau easily gave up).

Jacob's mother, Rebecca, helped him to run away to her brother, Laban, and he labored there, met his wives and started his family. But, after many years Jacob ran away from Laban as well. We can see a pattern emerging, where Jacob runs away from a tough situation.

As Jacob is preparing to meet Esau, we might wonder if Jacob is thinking about running away one more time. He strategizes and divides his people into two groups, fearing the worst and trying to minimize possible damages. Jacob sends a tribute ahead to his brother, Esau, but then *Jacob does something very strange*, and this is what we are going to explore.

**"Left alone was Jacob by himself, and a man wrestled with him until the rise of the dawn."** (Genesis [Beresheet] 32: 25).

The *commentary* on this odd verse is that Jacob had forgotten small earthenware pitchers and returned to fetch them (according to Rashi). However, what if Jacob was actually becoming overwhelmed with fear. ***What if Jacob was starting to run away, to again fall victim to this character flaw of his?***

We know that Jacob went back, *for some reason*, and *he was by himself*. Then, a man wrestled with him all night long. Here is how the text continues:

***"When he saw that he could not overcome him (Jacob), he struck the socket of his hip; so, dislocated was the socket of Jacob's hip as he wrestled with him. Then (the man) said, Send me, for risen has the dawn. And (Jacob) said, I will not send you except if you bless me. He said to him, 'What is your name?' He replied, 'Jacob". He said, Not 'Jacob' shall be said anymore to be your name, but rather 'Israel', for you have struggled with the Divine and with men and you have overcome. Then Jacob asked, and he said, 'Tell, now, your***

***name. And he said, 'Why is it you ask for my name? And he blessed him (Jacob) there."*** (Genesis [Beresheet] 32: 26-30).

Our Sages have suggested that this 'man', who is also referred to as **'the Divine'**, i.e., a 'messenger', a.k.a. an **'angel of God'**, was **Esau's guardian angel**. It may be appropriate to pause for a moment to mention that in Judaism there is the concept that each person has some type of direct Godly protection, i.e. a **'guardian angel'**. The famous Torah commentator Rashi says that "...This blessing by the guardian angel of Esau was an acknowledgment that Jacob was entitled to Isaac's blessing." In other words, Rashi suggests it was Esau's angel to tie it back to rectifying the earlier incident of his youth, wherein Jacob got Isaac's blessing.

However, a slightly radical interpretation of this encounter differs from Rashi. Consider the possibility that Jacob was starting to run away, that he succumbed to the fear, and **that it was Jacob's guardian angel who confronted him**. Not Esau's. That the purpose of the encounter established one of the fundamental concepts in Judaism.

Yis-ra-el, ***to wrestle with God***, is axiomatic with being Jewish. Each of us has character flaws, **each of us is created by God with flaws, on purpose**. Our journey thru this physical life is designed to rectify our character flaws, and to see if we can learn to overcome them. Jacob clearly had a character flaw. At this critical time of his life, where he is once again facing possible death, he considers running away, yet again.

But perhaps it is **Jacob's angel** that steps in, and it is his very own angel that wrestles with him. This angel challenges Jacob, perhaps helping him to muster the fortitude to overcome this character flaw, and to make the spiritual leap that ultimately is necessary for his spiritual growth. By struggling all night with his own angel, he becomes the master of his prior weakness. He overcomes his fear. To add a bit more weight to it, consider that this angel dislocates Jacob's thigh socket, which physically inhibits his ability to run. One more piece of evidence that the new Jacob, Israel, ***no longer needs to run away***.

This interpretation, for me, explains this formerly troubling passage. What Jacob does, facing his deepest fears and overcoming, is not only the story of the Jewish people: This is the story of each of us, as well as what we hope for our children and our leaders... ***to overcome fear*** so we can improve our character, which allows us to spiritually advance. This is the key to what God wants of each of us, and part of the reason each of us are here today.

**May we each be blessed in our personal journey, from who we are at this moment, to Yisrael, wrestling and developing our personal relationship with HaShem.**

*This Torah Connection 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](mailto:mlwaxer@sbcglobal.net)*



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## **Parshiot**

**February 4, Beshalach**

**T: Exodus 13:17-17:16**

**H: Judges 4:4-5:31**

**February 11, Yitro**

**T: Exodus 18:1-20:26**

**H: Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:5-6**

**February 18, Mishpatim**

**T: Exodus 21:1-24:18**

**H: Jeremiah 34:8-22;**

**33:25-26**

**February 25, Terumah**

**T: Exodus 25:11-27:19**

**H: I Kings 5:26-6:13**