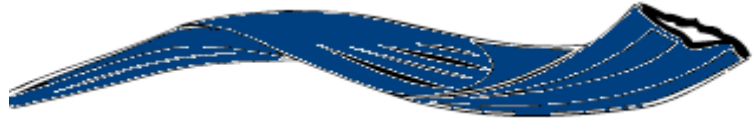


SHOFAR



Monthly Newsletter of the Monterey Peninsula Jewish Community

www.carmelbethisrael.org



Tot Shabbat Returns

All preschoolers and their families are invited to join Rabbi Greenbaum and Cantorial Soloist Suzanne Guinane on zoom **Friday January 15 at 4:30 PM**. On line they will lead a short service filled with songs and a story. This 30-minute event is perfect for our youngest members and their families. Please invite young families who are not yet CBI members to join us online for our Tot Shabbat program. The zoom link will be sent in our weekly CBI eblast. You can also call the CBI office if you cannot find the link.



Tu Bishvat 101

The name of this festival is actually its date: "Tu" is a pronunciation of the Hebrew letters for the number 15, and it falls in the Hebrew month of Shevat.

Traditionally, Tu Bishvat was not a Jewish festival. Rather, it marked an important date for Jewish farmers in ancient times. The Torah states, "When you enter the land [of Israel] and plant any tree for food, you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden for you, not to be eaten" (Leviticus 19:23). The fruit of the fourth year was to be offered to the priests in the Temple as a gift of gratitude for the bounty of the land, and the fifth-

year fruit—and all subsequent fruit—was finally for the farmer. This law, however, raised the question of how

farmers were to mark the "birthday" of a tree. The Rabbis therefore established the 15th of the month of Shevat as a general "birthday" for all trees, regardless of when they were actually planted.

Fruit trees were awarded special status in the Torah because of their importance in sustaining life and as a symbol of God's divine favor. Even during times of war, God warns the Israelites, "When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees... Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city? Only trees that you know do not yield food may be destroyed" (Deuteronomy 20:19-20).

At a later time, the Rabbis of the Talmud established four "new years" throughout the Jewish calendar—Rosh Hashanah, or the Jewish new year for the calendar date; a new year for establishing the reign of kings; a new year for tithing animals of Jewish farmers to be given to the Temple; and finally, Tu Bishvat, the new year for the trees (Mishnah, Rosh Hashanah 1:1). The Rabbis discussed why this date was chosen; saying that Tu Bishvat falls after mid-winter (usually in February), they concluded that the majority of the annual rainfall has usually already fallen by this time

Continued on page 10



From the Rabbi's Desk...

How do we mark the passage of time? While we all recognize the start of this New Year 2021, what might we do to give this New Year significance? Our tradition guides us how to add meaning to our life cycle events. Ceremonies and rituals add to those special moments in time. We even create certificates for baby naming and Bar/Bat Mitzvah services and Weddings that we frame or store as lasting memoirs. Should we do something similar as we leave 2020 behind and begin this New Year? For most of us 2020 is not a year that we want to remember. Unfortunately, we associate this past year with too many negatives; Covid-19, social isolation, and divisiveness. Now is the time to focus on the future as we look towards a healthier, better New Year.

What steps should we take as this New Year begins? For me, resolutions are not the answer. I make those kinds of changes during the Jewish New Year, between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. At that time, I try to make commitments that will guide me to strengthen my commitment to my Jewish identity and my purpose for being. Every Rosh HaShanah through a process of introspection these choices are reviewed, evaluated, and amended as needed. How can I be a better member of my family? What steps might I take to strengthen my relationship with God? Can I make time to study more? Should I add another social justice activity to my busy schedule? Can I find more meaning through additional rituals?

But for the start of this secular New Year, what might we do to help guide us through the changing times? It is more than just remembering to write 2021 on the few checks we use these days. As a child my parents had a growth chart. Annually my siblings and I would lean up against the chart and Dad would mark our new heights. How exciting to notice that I had grown another inch or two! But how do I mark my growth today?

For some, keeping a diary of hopes, dreams and accomplishments serves as a guide. Making a list of tasks to be completed with space to check them off when done might work. May I be so bold to suggest a few items to include on your list.

- Get to know your neighbors better.
- Reconnect with relatives with whom you have drifted apart.
- Make a new friend every month, if not every week.
- Find a new charity to support through volunteering or financially or both.
- Pray or meditate daily.

Of course, this is your list to create for 2021. You might want to add some of those resolutions like losing weight or exercising more or learn a new hobby. Each New Year, in fact each new day is filled with endless opportunities for change and growth. We all know that but rarely take advantage of the possibilities.

In our traditional morning prayers, we find the reminder that every day God returns our souls to our bodies. This spark of God's presence is pure and placed within us to guide and inspire us. Will we listen to that quiet inner voice guiding us? May 2021 find each of us leaving negativity in our dust as we find new ways to lift up our spirits. May we discover new tasks that better ourselves and those in our community. I pray we continue to go from strength to strength. Amen.





From our President *Dan Nussbaum, President Board of Trustees*

A synagogue is the ultimate volunteer organization; almost all its activities, apart from the professional activities of the Rabbi, the Cantorial Soloist, the Director of Education and the front office administration, depend on the goodwill of those who volunteer, giving their time and funds. Without volunteers, Jewish life at CBI would be very limited. So, this is my shout out, my Wertshatzungschrei (I always wanted to use that word!), to you, the volunteers. My appreciation extends to: those on the Board of Trustees (whose names you can see in every Shofar, or on the CBI website); those members who do fundraising, those who lead and participate in CBI's social Action efforts, those who are dedicated to CBI's safety and security, those thinking our way into a post-COVID world (isn't that a nice thought on a Winter's day?), those supporting the religious school, and those who are working diligently to execute the grant we received from the Federal DHS and the California Organization of Emergency Services. I'm sure I have left some people off this list, although not for any venal reasons. Rather, it's just forgetfulness, and I hope you'll send me a forgiving note (dann@carmelbethisrael.org)--and then continue your wonderful volunteer work.

I'd like to continue to build on an idea from my last column, namely the idea of a series of mini-courses within the synagogue. Somebody asked me if we could run a class on Hebrew grammar. Someone else wants there to be Havdalah study session. We have started the Havdalah sessions and we are looking for ideas to continue this Shabbat afternoon program, as well as program leaders. If you have a skill you wish to share I would be glad to make sure that appropriate matches between skills, providers and learners are made.

I was recently reading more about Hanukkah in its historical context and its current echoes to us. After the Maccabee's completely unexpected military victory over the Greeks (well, they were Hellenized

folks from the area now called Syria) in 168 BCE, Jews were again independent in Israel under the Hellenized, but Jewish, Hasmonean dynasty, which lasted only 100 years. It was, by most accounts, a sour, mean, corrupt, and culturally conflicted dynasty. Then the Romans became the local rulers. So, we revolted, (again!) but this time we lost, very badly, to the Roman General Vespasian and his son Titus. Vespasian went on to become the next Roman Empire emperor, and, importantly, it was he who sheltered Josephus Flavius, the Jewish general and historian, who wrote the only history we have of these times other than the biblical account. It's his account of Masada that we learn and know. The Romans memorialized our defeat with the Arch of Titus, which you can still see in Rome, complete with its absolutely clear Jewish symbols. It was a custom among Jews, throughout the centuries, that we would not walk under the Arch of Titus, in deference to our defeated ancestors. Only after Jewish independence was reestablished in 1948 was this general restriction lifted. When you are in Rome, you are welcome to view and be nostalgic, and to reflect on our history while viewing this memorial to our past.

Wishing you and your loved ones are healthy and staying safe, that vaccines will be available to all, and that we will be free to gather again, soon.

Dan Nussbaum
(C) (831) 324-3228





From Our Cantorial Soloist and Director of Education....

Happy Secular New Year and *Chag Tu B'Shvat Sameach!*

I love *Tu B'Shvat*! We welcome it in at sundown on January 27th. It

is known as the New Year for trees and a day we commemorate our connection to the Land of Israel. How do we do this? By eating and singing of course! The 7 specific species of the Land of Israel are wheat, grapes, barley, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates. Fruits native to Israel are avocados, bananas, apples, cherries, plums, nectarines, grapes, dates, strawberries, prickly pear, persimmon, loquat, and pomegranates. Have you eaten any of these? Which are your favorites? Which ones will you eat on *Tu B'Shvat*?

How can we celebrate *Tu B'Shvat* on our peninsula? I'm so glad you asked. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Read the book *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss together and talk about how you can take a stand in ecological matters. How can you help right here on our peninsula?

2. Take a physically distanced walk while wearing your mask in your neighborhood, our beautiful mountains, or beaches. Pay attention to the sights, sounds and smells of the nature around you. Maybe collect some rocks, shells, twigs, driftwood or leaves to make an art piece or a decoration for your desk or family dinner table.

3. Plant parsley seeds in paper cups and turn your windowsill into an eight-week garden experiment. The parsley should be big enough by Passover (*Pesach*) for you to clip and dip in salt water during your *Pesach Seder*.

4. Give a living plant to someone.

5. Plant a tree! Ben Ediden wrote in *Jewish Holidays and Festivals*, "A child who plants a tree with his own

hands unites himself lastingly with the soil upon which it grows."

The story is told of the great Rav Abraham Kook, who was deep in thought as he walked outside with a student. When the student casually plucked a leaf from a branch as they passed, Rav Kook stopped, visibly shaken. Turning, he said gently, "Believe me when I tell you I never simply pluck a leaf or a blade of grass or any living thing, unless I have to. By way of explanation, he continued, "Every part of the vegetable world is singing a song and breathing forth a secret of the divine mystery of the Creation."

Can you hear the songs of nature? The rain, the trees, the breeze, the ocean, the birds, the horses? What is their song? What is your song?

One of my favorite *Tu B'Shvat* songs is by our beloved Debbie Friedman, z"l. The chorus goes:

Trees are blowin' in the wind they're blowin. Trees are blowin' in the wind. WHOOSH!

Trees are blowin' in the wind they're blowin. Trees are blowin' in the wind. WHOOSH!

How many of you sang along with me and did the motions?! Yes, I was smiling as I typed that question.

Just as we imagine the sap beginning to rise within the trees, we can imagine and visualize the renewing energy rising within each of us and every living thing around us. Can you hear their song?





Lunch with the Rabbi

Join Rabbi Greenbaum this month on **Thursday, January 7 at noon** on line as he leads a virtual gathering discussion on "Vaccination: A Jewish Response." Does our tradition speak out about whether or not we should get vaccinated? Are we going to accept the vaccine when it is our turn? Let's enjoy learning and sharing while we enjoy our own lunch that we prepared for ourselves. No RSVP is needed. Just look for the link to this meeting which will be in the CBI Weekly eblast. Click on the link and join our zoom discussion.



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 CBI President

Dan Nussbaum will continue exploring that custom for our community. While traditionally this was a light meal shared at the synagogue before evening services, our approach is to join together for a little shared learning before ending the Sabbath with a Havdalah service. Please join us on our service Zoom link **January 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30 at 4:30 PM**. The first 3 sessions focused on teachings by Rabbi Jonathan Sachs of blessed memory. See Dan's letter on page 3 for ideas on subjects going forward.

Each gathering will end with a celebration of Havdalah. Not required but recommended, have a little nosh to enjoy during the learning session. We hope you will join us.



Building Bridges Understanding Zen Buddhism

In an effort to do our part in healing divisions and building bridges of connection and understanding in our world, Congregation Beth Israel is offering a Zoom presentation on Zen Buddhism on **Tuesday, January 12, at 7 p.m.** Patricia Wolff, a longtime Zen practitioner who was given lay Dharma Transmission authorizing her to teach in 2010 at the Monterey Bay Zen Center, will give a talk on Zen Buddhism, lead a meditation then answer any questions.

If there is an affirmative response to this offering, CBI will present a series of programs exploring other religions.

To register and receive a link, please contact Abby at the CBI office, 831-624-2015.



Summer Camp is Back!

Although the COVID-19 pandemic put summer camp on hold during 2020, the URJ looks forward to safely reopening their camps in summer 2021. If you're new to the Reform summer camp experience and want to learn more about what it offers, here is a link:

<https://reformjudaism.org/reform-jewish-life/youth-family-community/jewish-camp>.

Many CBI families have enjoyed URJ camps and we have scholarships available.



UJC Donations

Dr. Alex & Galena Bordetsky
Malina Breaux in honor of David and Anna for all they do
Bee Epstein-Shepherd
Robert L. Fenton & Debra A. Givner
Ellyn Gelson
Richard Gerber & Laurie Kleinman
Rabbi Bruce & Susan Greenbaum
Norman & Diana B. Jacobson
Michael & Constance Kean
Kenneth & Shelley Kroopf
Rosemary Lande
Barbara Lipman
Samuel & Gabriela Lipsky
Daniel & Beverly Nussbaum
Donald & Marcia Pompan
Stephen L. & Wendie A. Ryter:
David Sabih & Anna Swartley: in honor of Ethiopian Allyah
David Sabih & Anna Swartley: in memory of Richard Rosen
David Sabih & Anna Swartley: in memory of Sadok Masliyah
Charlotte Salomon & Scott Fetherston
Jim & Natalie Sammet
Martin & Karen Wiskoff

General Endowment

Rabbi Bruce & Susan Greenbaum

Cantorial Restricted

Suzanne Guinane: in honor of Rabbi Bruce & Susan Greenbaum & in memory of David Seidman, father of Jill Martin and grandfather of Ava & Sara
Michael & Debora Waxer: in memory of Uncle Ben Free

College Scholarship

Ilana & Ari Entin: in honor of Mindy Maschmeyer
Bee Epstein-Shepherd: in memory of Sadok Masliyah

Matthew Schuss & Charlene Webber-Schuss: in memory of Sadok Masliyah
Charles & Judith Therrien: in memory of Sadok Masliyah

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Barry R. Harrow
In memory of our man Richy who fought for justice-
With love the Biker Boys
Matthew Schuss & Charlene Webber-Schuss: in honor of Rabbi Bruce Greenbaum and JCM United

Fundraising

Rich & Carol Ader
Dr. David Awerbuck & Dr. Astrid Holberg
Marshal & Angelica Blatt
Marshal & Angelica Blatt
Malina Breaux honor of Bobby & David Ehrenpreis
Amanda Curtis
Michael Dicus & Catherine Winter
Bee Epstein-Shepherd
Len & Nancy Foster
Richard Gerber & Laurie Kleinman
Diana Greenbaum
Rabbi Bruce & Susan Greenbaum
Jim Gumberg & Nina Patane
Kenneth & Shelley Kroopf:
Clark Miller & Cara Lieb:
Cele Passin
Alan & Lyn A. Rosen
Wendy Rosenthal
Wendy & Andrew Schmidt
Rabbi Jeffrey Schulman & Susan Alnes
Matthew Schuss & Charlene Webber-Schuss
Marvin Silverman
Peter & Deborah Stern

General Donations

Malina Breaux: in honor of Ken & Shelly Kroopf, Mike & Lisa Vitello, & Yvonne Ascher & Leonard Laub
Ellyn Gelson: in honor of December birthdays & anniversaries
Nick & Aline Harris: in memory of Olga & Harry Kite
Rosemary Lande: in memory of Bob Lande and Esther Garfield
Laela Leavy: in memory of Joseph Frank, Marianne Schneider, & Zadok H. Leavy
Suellen S. Rubin: in memory of Fannie Safir

Jim & Natalie Sammet: in memory of Richard Rosen
 Rabbi Jeffrey Schulman & Susan Alnes: in
 memory of Clyde Schuster
 Rabbi Jeffrey Schulman & Susan Alnes: in
 memory of Fay Schuster Schulman
 Matthew Schuss & Charlene Webber-Schuss: in
 loving memory of Elinor H. Schuss
 Lester Tockerman: in gratitude for CBI
 Lester Tockerman: in memory of Richard Rosen
 Bari Tolliver: in memory of Richard Rosen

HHD Donation

Imogene Speiser: in beloved memory of husband
 Zane Speiser & daughter Tegan Speiser

Social Action

Arlene Krebs
 Rabbi Jeffrey Schulman & Susan Alnes
 Many donations from friends and family towards
 I-Help holiday gifts

Donations-Religious School

Matthew Schuss & Charlene Webber-Schuss: in
 memory of Richard Rosen
 Rosemary Lande



Family Shabbat Services

Beginning in February, the first Friday night service of the month is going to be designated Family Shabbat and have more children friendly songs and a story instead of a sermon. While we will still begin at 7:30 we hope more young families will join us. In the past many of our older members have found this to be their favorite service. We hope everyone will join us the first Friday each month for our uplifting Family Shabbat services.



CBI Interest Free Loan

Because of the generosity of an anonymous donor CBI is now offering interest free loans up to \$500 for CBI members. Please contact either Abby King or Rabbi Greenbaum at 831-624-2015 and ask for the simple one page loan application. Loans will be made for both personal and professional needs. All request will be kept confidential. Our congregation is here to support those in need during this challenging financial times.

Welcome to 2021 5781-5782

Jan 27-28	Tu Bishvat
Feb 25-26	Purim
Mar 27-Apr 3	Passover
Apr 7-8	Yom Hashoah
Apr 14-15	Yom HaZikaron
Apr 15	Yom HaAtzma'ut
Apr 29-30	Lag BaOmer
May 16-17	Shavuot
Jul 17-18	Tish'a B'Av
Sep 6-8	Rosh HaShana
Sep 15-16	Yom Kippur
Sep 20-27	Sukkot
Sep 28	Shmini Atzeret
Nov 28-Dec 6	Chanukah

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Smile

A simple way to support our synagogue and it doesn't cost a thing!

- In your internet browser enter **amazonsmile.com**
- Select CBI as your selected recipient
- Every purchase you make sends dollars to CBI

Chadeish Yameinu Jewish Renewal, Temple Beth El,
Congregation Beth Israel & Congregation Beth Shalom present:

HOLY HEROINES



Celebrating the contributions of women to Jewish tradition
with Rabbi Leah Novick

~~~~~  
Remembering mystics and healers, writers and activists who emerged  
in many cultures and time periods long before 20th century feminism.

Each week we will consider the legacy of women whose gifts to Jewish culture  
merit a place in our literature, our art and our spiritual life.

**Four Mondays in February, 7:00 - 8:30 pm**

February 1st: Dona Gracia Nasi - 16th century Portugese Visionary and Philanthropist  
February 8th: Malka of Belz - 18th-19th century Eastern European Healer and miracle worker  
February 15th: Penina Moise - early 19th century American Poet and educator  
February 22nd: Bertha Pappenheim - Founder, Judische Freunbunde 1920's Germany



~~~~~  
Ordained in 1987, by Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, **Rabbi Leah Novick** is
author of "On the Wings of Shekhinah: Re-Discovering Judaism's Divine
Feminine" and creator of a CD of guided meditations with music by Desert Wind.

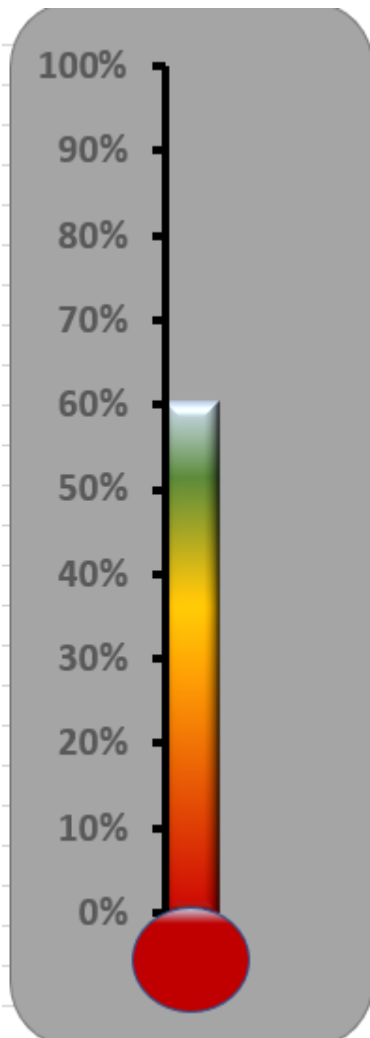
A student of Zohar, Rabbi Leah connects mystical insights to biographical data,
adding music and meditation to the portrayal of each heroine: www.rabbileah.com

Please rsvp for the entire series to: adulted@CYSantaCruz.com. A zoom invitation will be sent to you.
We welcome donations to honor Rabbi Leah's years of teaching and wisdom. Please send to:
Chadeish Yameinu, PO Box 3578, Santa Cruz, CA 95060, or go to www.CYSantaCruz.com.
Remember to notate that your donation is for this series.



CBI FUNDRAISING

You in a Pew Fundraiser



**Help us
reach our
fundraising
goal**



Want to join Barbra Streisand, Albert Einstein, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and your CBI friends, at our Erev Shabbat Services? Here's your opportunity! You can keep Rabbi Bruce and Suzanne company in the sanctuary with this fun-raiser!

For a minimum of \$36 per photo and \$18 for kids, (your celebrity guest is free and all donations are welcome) you can have a photo of your face placed in the pews, along with some famous folks, like those mentioned above. Just send us a headshot and we'll do the rest. Who would want to miss the opportunity to rub elbows with the likes of Steven Spielberg, Golda Meir, and Sandy Koufax?

The pews will be shown during Erev Shabbat services, and of course, Rabbi and Suzanne will be looking into all your smiling faces getting support and good vibes throughout each evening.

We miss seeing your face around CBI! It's been an unprecedented year, so let's stay connected in this unconventional and fun way. Want to sit with a certain celeb? Let us know. Honoring your parents and grandparents? Send us their photos. Please send donations and photos of you, your loved ones, or anyone else that you would like to spend time with to shalomcbi@aol.com.

This time of year there are many demands on your generosity. This year especially CBI is working hard to both nurture our Jewish Community and maintain the financial health of our synagogue. To that end, our tireless fundraising committee has a number of creative ways for you to give.



Tu Bishvat 101 Continued

from page 1

in the land of Israel, thus yielding a healthy, water-logged soil in which to plant new trees (Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 14a).

In medieval times, kabbalists (Jewish mystics) gave Tu Bishvat greater spiritual significance. Seeing in Tu Bishvat a vehicle for mystical ideas, the kabbalists imbued Tu Bishvat with new religious significance as well as created elaborate new symbolic rituals. According to Lurianic Kabbalah (which is a form of mysticism studied by the students of Isaac Luria), all physical forms—including human beings—hide within them a spark of the Divine Presence. This is similar to some kinds of fruits or nuts, which hide within them seeds of new life and potential growth. In Jewish mysticism, human actions can release these sparks and help increase God's presence in the world. On Tu Bishvat, the kabbalists would eat certain fruits associated with the land of Israel as a symbolic way of releasing these divine sparks.

In modern times, Tu Bishvat has become a symbol of both Zionist attachment to the land of Israel as well as an example of Jewish sensitivity to the environment. Early Zionist settlers to Israel began planting new trees not only to restore the ecology of ancient Israel, but as a symbol of renewed growth of the Jewish people returning to their ancestral homeland. While relatively few Jews continue to observe the kabbalistic Tu Bishvat seder, many American and European Jews observe Tu Bishvat by contributing money to the Jewish National Fund, an organization devoted to reforesting Israel.

For environmentalists, Tu Bishvat is an ancient and authentic Jewish "Earth Day" that educates Jews about the Jewish tradition's advocacy of responsible stewardship of God's creation as manifested in ecological activism. Among them, contemporary versions of the Tu Bishvat seder, emphasizing environmentalist concerns, are gaining popularity.



Tu BiShvat Fruit and Nut Cups

This dish pays homage to the Seven Species, which we eat on Tu BiShvat.

Preparation/Cook Time

30 minutes

Serving Size

24 servings

INGREDIENTS

1/3 cup walnuts

1/3 cup almonds

1/3 cup pecans

1 cup dates

1 cup apricots (or your choice of dried fruit, such as apples, cranberries, etc.)

1 cup raisins

1/3 cup sugar

2 extra large eggs

DIRECTIONS

1. In a food processor, chop the nuts, dates, and apricots with quick on/off pulses until the fruits and nuts are coarsely chopped.
2. Place the chopped fruit and nuts in a bowl and blend in the sugar and raisins.
3. Beat the eggs and add to the fruits and nuts. Mix well.
4. Thoroughly grease a mini-cupcake tin.
5. Fill the muffin tins level with the pan. Do not overfill or the fruit may burn.
6. Bake in a 350°F oven for approximately 20 minutes.
7. Let cool and carefully remove the fruit and nut cups. You will need to loosen them by running a small sharp knife around the edges.

Note: This recipe will fill two mini-cupcake tins, to yield 24 fruit and nut cups.



A New Year & New Expectations

Nearly every Chanukah and Season's Greetings cards I've received mention something along the lines of "Here's to a better 2021... Nothing could be worse than 2020.... Anything positive would be a huge improvement." I imagine these messages are similar to ones that you've received.

Yes, we begin 2021 with new hopes and dreams, especially those for access to quality healthcare, the end of the pandemic, and to economic and social justice for all people in our nation and worldwide. Right here in Monterey County, there are dozens of organizations and thousands of people committed to these goals. At CBI we are doing our own "small part" as best we can, despite SIP and Covid mandates, while we continue contributing to the betterment of the human condition.

Food, Gifts & Generosity for I-HELP!

One consistent initiative has been our work with I-HELP, as the men (now 8) and the women (now 4) Shelter in Place at local churches. Our congregation members have donated funds and food. Special thanks to Suzanne Guinane, Rena Feuerstein, the 3rd-5th grade religious school children and parents—especially Jillian Heisman and Asher who delivered breakfast items directly to the church and met some of the men. Thank you all for making our December 6th Men's I-HELP so special.

Each year, our Social Action Committee and CBI members provide holiday gifts. This year, thanks to Cara Lieb, Charlotte Salomon, and Deborah Stern, the women received leggings, sweaters, and underwear.

The men requested shoes, shirts, pants, and warm jackets. How could we afford all these items for 8 men?

So I turned to our local Jewish Renewal Community, Kavanat HaLev (Way of the Heart) in which Rabbis Leah Novick, Jeff Schulman and I participate. I also wrote an email to my east coast family. In these appeals, I explained CBI's work with I-HELP and listed what I received from the men's I-HELP monitor—each man's first name and his sizes for each item.



Generosity. That's what was so overwhelming. Within 24 hours, I received pledges amounting to over \$1500! And donations too! Hedi's in the

Barnyard provided top of the line shoes at a huge discount! And donated 2 pairs. Beth Cort donated Dan's new down jackets! So, I set out shopping for the other items during Black Friday and Cyber Week "deals".

I keep this experience in my heart. The goodness of people—quickly responding to the needs of others. That's a message I hold dearly for the New Year.



I send you wishes for a fulfilling and healthy 2021....And may you and yours experience the joys of giving.

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

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Charlie Case	1	Leta McCarty Messinger	16
Emma Case	1	Cheryl Crose	17
Nancy Kessler	1	Adrianna Kosmont	19
Ellie Sorkin	2	Jonathan Nissim	19
David Benjamin	3	Penelope Wasserman	20
Susan Greenbaum	3	Theodore Gold	21
Todd Waldman	3	Rabbi Leah Novick	21
Sofia Western	3	Andrew Dicus	22
David Kleinman	4	Sandra Kahn	22
David Rosenberg	4	Catherine Winter	22
Maezy Browning	5	Steven Packer	25
Julianne Leavy	6	Eileen Schneider	26
Peter Stern	7	Stanley Semmel	27
Mike Vitiello	7	Alden Adolph	28
Illia Thompson	8	Jonathan Annis	28
Edward Zander	12	Rena Feuerstein	30
Debra Kassels	16	Steven River Gurtin	30
Jaclyn Marcus	16	Richard Harrit	30

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Aaron & Maureen Rosenblatt	January 2, 2021
Donald & Marcia Pompan	January 8, 2021
Cindy Brodsky & Terrence Gargiulo	January 14, 2021
Andrew B. & Cynthia T. Lipsig	January 15, 2021
Leonard & Sheri Chodosh	January 20, 2021
Norman & Diana B. Jacobson	January 29, 2021
Jennifer & Steven Prager	January 30, 2021
Steven & Jennifer Prager	January 30, 2021

FAMILY NEWS

We are saddened by the loss of Marjorie Leary, sister of Dennis Bates.









May her memory be a blessing to us all.



Congregation Beth Israel

January 2021

Tevet ~ Shevet 5781

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27 December No Religious School All CBI services, programs, & classes accessible online or by phone. Look for links in the weekly edition of CBI this Week via email. Links for Religious School and Hebrew School provided by Teachers. 	28	29	30 No Hebrew School	31	1 January  7:30 PM Erev Shabbat Services with Birthday Blessings Via Zoom	2 10:30 AM Shabbat Torah Study Via Zoom 4:30 PM Se'udah Shelishit & Havdalah with Dan Nussbaum via Zoom
3 Religious School on Zoom 5:00 PM I-Help Men Off site – Sponsored by the 3/ 4 Grade Students and Families	4	5	6 4:30 PM Hebrew School - Zoom	7 12:00 PM Lunch with Rabbi via 	8  7:30 PM Erev Shabbat Services via Zoom	9 10:30 AM Shabbat Service & Study with 6 th /7 th grades joining us. Via Zoom 4:30 PM Se'udah Shelishit & Havdalah with Dan Nussbaum via Zoom
10 Religious School on Zoom 	11	12 7:00 PM Adult Education – Understanding Buddhism-Zoom via Zoom	13 4:30 Hebrew School -Zoom 6:00 PM Aleynu Zoom 7:30 PM Worship Committee- Zoom	14	15  4:30 PM Tot Shabbat via Zoom 7:30 p.m. Erev Shabbat Services via Zoom	16 10:30 AM Shabbat Torah Study via Zoom 4:30 PM Se'udah Shelishit & Havdalah with Dan Nussbaum via Zoom
17 No Religious School	18 Martin Luther King Jr. Day 	19 7:00 PM CBI Executive Committee	20 4:30 PM Hebrew School - Zoom	21	22 7:30 PM Erev Shabbat Services Via Zoom	23 10:30 AM Shabbat Torah Study via Zoom 4:30 PM Se'udah Shelishit & Havdalah with Dan Nussbaum via Zoom
24 Religious School on Zoom	25	26 7:00 PM Board of Trustees Meeting	27 4:30 Hebrew School -Zoom	28 Tu B' Shevat 	29 7:30 PM Erev Shabbat Services with Anniversary Blessings Via Zoom	30 10:30 AM Torah Study via Zoom 4:30 PM Se'udah Shelishit & Havdalah via Zoom 31 9:30 AM Religious School on Zoom Tu B' Shevat Seder



Torah Connections:

Vol. 152 January 2021, 5781

By Michael L. Waxer

Why, why, why..?

Many of us get stuck, when studying Torah, to figure out why did certain things happen the way they did? For example, **what is the purpose of the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt?** In fact, why is there the concept of **slavery** to start with?

Why did the Jews, the group that is commanded to be 'a light unto the nations', why did it need to be enslaved for hundreds of years? And then there is this powerful verse:

"And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed..." (Genesis [Beresheet] 22:18)

First, we should all understand that it is good, in our tradition, to ask questions, particularly tough questions like these. To struggle to find answers, well, that is in our name: **Yisrael**, wrestling with God. **A logical way to explore possible answers is to remember why we are here:**

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." (Genesis [Beresheet] 1:26)

Humans, the only creation that has two components, our physical bodies which is similar to all the other created things, and our non-physical soul, or '**neshama**', which is in the likeness of God, **HaShem**. Our **physical self** exists in the physical universe, which is governed by the laws of physics, such as gravity.

Each of us has a soul, a '**neshama**', that exists within us as well as in a universe we will call the '**spiritual universe**'. In this co-existing reality different 'laws' apply. For example, instead of gravity, there is '**holiness**'. Instead of electromagnetism there are '**blessings**'. Instead of the strong and weak atomic forces there is '**morality**' and '**ethics**'. As we have shown in prior articles, the Torah lays all of this out, but in a manner that gives us this information in both personal and symbolic stories; ways that can be understood in every generation.

Imagine that each of us has a pure and **eternal soul**, which comes to dwell in a temporal and frail body, located in a material world that is filled both with wonder and with danger. We might ask, **does our physical existence have any purpose?** As we discussed recently, the method of learning in this material world is by trial and error, so it is filled with **falling down** and **getting back up**.

How we 'get back up' after falling helps to develop our character in the physical world. The story of Cain slaying Abel is an example of this, since Cain took God's criticism with anger, whereas he could have taken the criticism constructively, as a reason to improve and change. In the Spiritual world this same process helps our **neshama** develop.

Part of our dual existence is to develop these spiritual 'muscles'. One purpose is to learn this inner strength, the ability to keep pushing after failure, to get up after falling.

Another reason HaShem gave us this physical existence is so we can experience **joy and happiness**. Did you know that one of the positive commandments is to enjoy eating? How great is

that? It sounds like a strange commandment, but if it wasn't made clear, we could imagine how humans might think that the more we suffer in this life, the more we will rejoice in the next. Our sages tell us that we are each asked a few questions when our physical body expires, and one of them is '**Did you partake in all the permitted pleasures?**'

Now we can see that the descent to Egypt could be symbolic of our soul deciding to descend into a physical body. 'Egypt', **mitzrayim**, means '**a narrow place**'. This choice of confinement could be seen as problematic, for a pristine Godly soul. Why would an eternal soul choose to be restricted in a physical body, a body that can experience joy, but also pain? So, what happened while the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt? The seventy people of Jacob's (Israel's) family **turned into a nation**.

While our soul is enslaved in our body it is bombarded by temptations and desires, symbolically similar to what happened to us in Egypt. We suffered terribly, but we transformed from a family to a nation. There is something about this physical world that can enhance the ability of the soul to receive. Metaphorically we can think of **the physical world as an amplifier**.

The children of Israel, now the Israelite nation, are taken out of Egypt, out of their enslavement, and go into the wilderness. This redemption then includes receiving the Torah, which is the guidebook on how to elevate ordinary physical actions to 'holiness'. Remember, '**holiness**' is one of the fundamental laws that operate in the **Spiritual universe**.

Part of our purpose here is to first understand that we have this other half, the **neshama**, and that we want to balance the soul and the body. Surprisingly, almost all of us allow ourselves (often unknowingly) to be ruled by our body, and we rationalize why it is okay to follow our physical inclinations such as power, money, status, materialism, etc. **We choose to be slaves to our physical desires.**

True freedom is when we develop the ability for our soul to rule our body, where we no longer feel enslaved by our physical desires. This channeling of the physical is part of the dynamic in the Torah, and many of the mitzvot are designed for specifically that purpose. It is indeed ironic that many who are not practicing see those who are as being enslaved. Yet, **by channeling these lower instincts the soul is able to reach more of its potential.**

So, our bondage in Egypt and the Exodus could also be seen as our own personal story, where our eternal neshama starts off wanting to do great things, but our neshama becomes enslaved by our physical needs and desires. At some point in our physical life we will, hopefully, recognize opportunities to be elevated, freeing us from this physical bondage of desires **and feel the strength of our neshama, so we may more easily access spiritual energy.**

Torah is the instruction manual that can lead us from slavery to freedom.

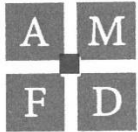
This Torah Connection was inspired by writings of Rabbi Avraham Ariel Trugman in 'Orchard of Delights', but is the sole responsibility of the author and specifically does NOT necessarily reflect those of the Board mlwaxer@sbcbglobal.net.

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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

January 2, Vayechi

T: Genesis 47:28-50:26

H: I Kings 2:1-12

January 9, Shemot

T: Exodus 1:1-6:1

H: Isaiah 27:6-28:13

January 16, Va'era

T: Exodus 6:2-9:35

H: Jeremiah 46:13-28

January 23, Bo

T: Exodus 10:1-13:16

H: Ezekiel 28:25-29:21

January 30, Beshalach

T: Exodus 13:17-17:16

H: Judges 4:4-5:31

