Kol K.I.

learn. inspire. grow. together.

February 2019 | Shevat-Adar 5779

Knesset Israel
כנסת ישראל

16 Colt Road | Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201 | 413.445.4872 | knessetisrael.org • Rabbi David Weiner | Jonathan Denmark, President

Pizmon in the Berkshires

Concerts, workshops, joy! February 1-3

Save the first weekend in February for a wonderful uplift to the mid-winter blues! Knesset Israel, Anshe Amunim, Hevreh, the Jewish community of Williams College, Congregation Ahvath Sholom, The Berkshire Minyan Hadassah, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, and the Grinspoon Foundation are sponsoring a wonder-full weekend designed to bring smiles: music to sing with, music to swing with, and music to simply sit back and enjoy! Here's solid proof that there are Jewish college students who are inspired by and can inspire others to love Jewish music! From February 1-3rd, The Jewish Berkshires will be hosting Pizmon.

What is Pizmon? Pizmon is the co-ed, pluralistic Jewish a cappella group of Columbia University, Barnard College, and The Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Since its inception in 1987, Pizmon has traveled to hundreds of communities in the United States and around the world to share their love of Jewish music and culture. Their repertoire ranges from classical liturgy to Israeli rock to children's favorites to Yiddish and Ladino classics, and they are very responsive to their audiences.

Why is this a cappella group different? Pizmon is the first collegiate Jewish a cappella group in the United States. They are a Jewish outreach group whose mission is to bring ruach (spirit) and Jewish music to communities around the globe. As a Jewish pluralistic group, they have members originating from nearly every Jewish background.

The Jewish a`cappella ensemble, Pizmon will perform throughout Berkshire County. For a schedule of events see page 6. Meet individual members on pages 6 and 7.

Every year, Pizmon takes a spring break trip as their "Music Outreach Initiative." They visit communities that they are not able to reach during the school year. Fortunately for us, the Berkshires are a mere weekend roundtrip train-ride on the Metro-North Harlem line. During our Pizmon weekend,

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Member Mitzvahs & Mazel Tovs

■ **Myra & Larry Promisel** would like to share the news of their grandson Reed Spencer Promisel's Bar Mitzvah that took place on November 3, 2018. The proud parents are Aimee & Brett Promisel. Services took place at Temple Sharey Tefilo-Israel in South Orange, New Jersey.

■ **Audrey Salzman** would like send her thanks to all her Knesset Israel family for the generosity and kindness they have shared in loving memory of Rabbi Harold. On behalf of herself and her children, Ariel and Josh, she thanks all of her dear friends and family for their show of honor paid in loving memory of Rabbi Harold Salzman.

■ A baby boy was born Thursday, December 27, 2018, at Mt. Sinai Hospital, NYC to **Rebecca Frommer and Ben Antelis**. All, including grandparents **Ruthie Frommer and Ken Amron**, are doing very well and are extremely proud.

Birthdays

■ **John Frankenthaler**..... February 3
■ **Kaetah Klein**..... February 3
■ **Pam Wax**..... February 3
■ **Leslie Fishbein**..... February 4
■ **Herman Rotenberg** ..... February 4
■ **Gabriel Dahari** ..... February 5
■ **Beth Radsken**..... February 5
■ **Barbara Mandler** ..... February 6
■ **Elaine Shindler**..... February 8
■ **Nan Bookless** ..... February 9
■ **Eugene Leibowitz** .....February 10
■ **Joseph Weinberg**.....February 10
■ **Susan Abramowitz** .....February 11
■ **Richard Hyken**.....February 11
■ **Ashley Todd**.....February 11
■ **Everett Lamm** .....February 12
■ **Alexandra Hochfelder**.....February 14
■ **Adam Lehrer** .....February 14
■ **Deborah Caine** .....February 16
■ **Ronney Rosenberg**.....February 16
■ **Carole Siegel** .....February 17
■ **Don Sugarman**.....February 17
■ **Jerome Socolof** .....February 18
■ **Matthew Herzberg** .....February 20
■ **Laura Stoskin** .....February 22
■ **Arthur Wasser**.....February 22
■ **Ronald Rettner**.....February 24
■ **Saul Cohen**.....February 26
■ **Ronald Rettner**.....February 24
■ **Myra Promisel**.....February 26
■ **Evan Bellmore** .....February 28
■ **Diana Geller**.....February 28
■ **Estelle Leibowitz** .....February 28

Anniversaries

■ **Ellie & Michael Geller**..... February 7
■ **Laura & Sig Tobias**.....February 13
■ **Barbara & Michael Ende**....February 23

A Special Year for K.I.—Benefit items Needed...

This year marks the 125th anniversary of K.I. (Read about our history on page 8). We'd like to make our summer benefit gala/auction exceptional this year, and we need your help. If you have connections with any restaurants, hotels, businesses, vacation homes, etc., that could donate goods or services, please contact Marcia Mandel at 442-7088 or juliaspal@gmail.com. Let's work together to make this the best year ever!!

From the Rabbi

The Pittsfield Emergency Recovery Committee

You can help survivors when fire destroys everything

Rabbi David Weiner

Community can be an incredible support at a time of loss. Jewish wisdom affirms that through the way it approaches grief and mourning, but bereavement is not the only kind of loss. I will never forget how the people of Knesset Israel led our neighbors in responding lovingly after fire destroyed our family home. Friends, congregants and sometimes strangers accompanied us on our journey of grief, healing and rebuilding. Overwhelmed with gratitude, I swore at the time that I would be paying that kindness forward for the rest of my life. So I found opportunities to counsel several people after the destruction of their home or offer some no-strings-attached financial support. But especially after the Red Cross closed its Pittsfield office, there seemed to be no way to get traction for a broader, more impactful project.

Fast-forward five years to the fall of 2017. The White Terrace fire that September displaced over a dozen households near Berkshire Medical Center. Some of the survivors received the requisite voucher from the Red Cross…in this case, two nights in a hotel in Allendale. Most needed more help than that, and when they went to City Hall, they were advised to "call the Christian Center," an ambitious and resourceful social service agency on Pittsfield's West Side. Staff and volunteers there scrambled and helped as much as they could. But when the dust settled, the organization realized it could not handle a similar crisis again without community support. Its director, Ellen Merritt, reached out to area elected officials, agencies, congregations and not-for-profits to build a coalition to research what the gap actually was and ways we might respond differently.

> ...all of this happens during a time of acute grief [and trauma]. No survivor is at his or her best... after the destruction of a home.

The group that Ellen convened was diverse and effective: Staff from the offices of State Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier and Mayor Linda Tyer, City Council member Helen Moon; Pittsfield Fire Chief Czerwinski; local representatives from city agencies including Ad-Lib, Berkshire Housing, the health department, the state emergency response phone service, the Salvation Army, the district attorney's office and the Brien Center. Some people participated as potential volunteers, others as resources for planning and training. I joined in on behalf of the Pittsfield Area Council of Congregations, Knesset Israel, and the broader Jewish community.

Together we learned that residential fires and floods are a reality of life in Pittsfield. In a city full of older, inconsistently maintained housing stock, it is only a matter of time before the next appliance shorts out, pipe bursts or accident causes a devastating chain reaction. Lightning and accidents can strike anywhere—however the risks are greater in poorer neighborhoods. Several of us knew firsthand the daunting tasks that a survivor must accomplish quickly: securing the damaged property; replacing identity documents; restoring what can be salvaged; dealing with insurance; finding new housing, perhaps several times; replacing medication; shopping for everything. And all this happens during a time of acute grief—denial, anger, tears, loss—accompanied perhaps by symptoms of trauma that develop and change in overwhelming and frightening ways. No survivor is at his or her best in the weeks after the destruction of a home. And the only concrete help available to a survivor is a Red Cross voucher for two nights in a local hotel. After that, survivors are left to their own devices or, perhaps, to "call the Christian Center." If they were not

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KOL K.I. Publication Notes

Editor: Susan Miller • Production: Liz DeMarco • Photo Editor: Nan Bookless • Printer: Aldam Press

DEADLINE: THE FIRST OF EVERY MONTH

We welcome submissions. Publication will be at the discretion of the editoral staff, and may be subject to editing for clarity, facts, and length.

Bulletin material and photographs will be accepted **VIA EMAIL** and sent to:
Susan Miller at **sunpath2@gmail.com**

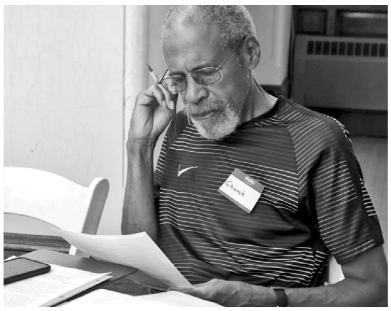
Together We Can Make Meaningful Change

Berkshire Interfaith Organizings' Annual Meeting to be held at Knesset Israel

As founding members of BIO (Berkshire Interfaith Organizing), Knesset Israel has been an integral part of improving the quality of life and making justice real for all residents of the Berkshires.

BIO is an organization with which members of K.I. have become increasingly familiar over the past two years, especially since members Ellen Masters and Don Sugarman have been honored at the annual Micah events. These annual festive celebrations honor extraordinary, modest people who voluntarily and humbly do all sorts of mitzvot. What one can't help noticing on these occasions is the broad cross-section of people from varied religions, races, livelihoods, and towns gathering to share gratitude for those who respect and care for others. It is uplifting and inspiring. But this is only one annual activity—only one of the community-enriching agendas of BIO.

Photography: Dondei Dean



Top: Myrna Hammerling with Tora Huntington (South Congregational Church),
Left: Churchill Cotton (Second Congregational Church),
Right: Charlene DiCicco (St. Stephen's Episcopal Church) and unidentified BIO member.

Listening Campaign at Knesset Israel

Another of BIO's big get-togethers—the Annual Meeting/Listening Campaign—will be held at Knesset Israel on Sunday, February 24, from 3:30-5:00 p.m. There is no fee for attending. While the Micah event is a vital fundraiser, the Annual Meeting focuses on BIO's core functions and actions.. This is the time we identify community issues on which to focus and act. B.I.O.'s first four years of effort have impacted food insecurity, public transportation to accommodate people's work shifts and professional appointments, and undocumented immigrants needing professional advice and shelter.

Identifiying the issues

It all begins with the "Listening Campaign" at the Annual Meeting mentioned above. People from all parts of the county attend to tell their stories. BIO provides this open forum for listening to the challenges of those directly in need—the true stakeholders. All those present weigh the stories and vote on the areas of greatest concern. These become new goals for BIO to research and tackle. While new issues may be added, the previous year's, if not resolved, are still being conscientiously worked.

How do we make change?

Working together, stakeholders and BIO volunteers research the system; they plan effective strategies for change and tactics to engage the existing power structure. For example, last year a newly added issue was the opioid epidemic. Some of you may know the retired physician, Dr. Larry Pellish (who represents Temple Anshe Amunimon the BIO executive committee). Dr. Pellish has volunteered to spearhead the research and direction for BIO as we determine how to impact this pervasive Berkshire County issue.

Suppose the state budget in Boston cuts back on food subsidies for the substantial food insecure population of the Berkshires. Suppose, the closing of a supermarket leaves many elderly and poor people too far from supermarkets to be able to buy and carry food. Suppose the bus routes do not go past remaining food markets. Suppose there are many voices of folks who have experienced injustices but do not know how to be heard and how to change their situations.

To meet these needs, BIO members have organized in state government offices in Boston and helped restore millions of dollars to food subsidies;

they have influenced the restoration of funds for homeless beds. The organozation has lobbied developers to include food markets in several new developments coming to Berkshire towns, thus considering residents with limited transportation. BIO has also influenced bus routes to be re-routed to stop at food markets after a major grocery store closed.

Calling all active, involved citizens

If you want to make a difference, you are very likely to find a BIO project that needs your unique abilities. At the Annual Meeting, you will witness people sharing their challenging stories with community leaders—people in positions to make changes. These people are either elected or appointed individuals—the Berkshires' movers and shakers—and regularly attend community meetings and gatherings to assess support for the change being requested. Their professions often include shaping policy decsions, crafting change, and making decisions.

On February 24, we want to fill the Knesset Israel sanctuary seats with active, involved citizens so that those in charge can visibly see that there is genuine, grassroots support for improvement and change!

There will be people sharing their stories and people in powerful positions listening. Your presence will be seen and felt. Come, be counted and consider joining one of the committees working on a particular issue together with other committed people determined to help make this a better community, county, and state.

Please put this date, time, and location on your calendar:

Sunday, February 24
3:30 pm • FREE • Knesset Israel
16 Colt Road • Pitttsfield, Mass.
The agenda will specifically address actions regarding immigrant justice, racial justice and transportation.

The Pittsfield Emergency Recovery Committee

From the Rabbi continued from page 3

well-connected here before the event, survivors of the destruction of a home often simply leave town.

Ultimately the group that gathered decided to figure out how to share responsibility for helping a local household recover from a residential-scale disaster - with real information, basic supplies and compassionate support. Constituting ourselves as a subsidiary of the Christian Center, we began to develop an action plan:

■ We compiled a packet, **"Now That the Fire is Out, What Should I Do?"** that the fire department began distributing to fire survivors as needed in December. This handbook contains essential information about how to proceed and available resources.

■ We will encourage churches, civic organizations and businesses to collect kits —for kitchens, linens and basic household supplies—that can be brought to a survivor's new home.

■ We aim to collect funds to support our operations as a project of the Christian Center.

■ And we will train volunteer navigators to accompany and guide survivors as they grieve, heal, and rebuild. Training is scheduled for two Tuesday afternoons in the spring—May 7 & 14. (Because most of the volunteer role requires weekday, daytime availability, the training is scheduled for weekday afternoons.)

Informational meeting

Pittsfield Emergency Recovery Committee

• meet the people involved
• explore how you can help

Tuesday, February 12 • 1pm
Berkshire Athenaeum*

On behalf of The Pittsfield Emergency Recovery Committee, let me be the first to invite anyone who is curious about this project to an information session on Tuesday, February 12, at 1 p.m. (likely the Berkshire Athenaeum, but more information will follow). There you will have a chance to meet the people who are involved in the project and explore how to become involved. As the project gains momentum, we hope to share it as a model for emergency recovery for towns and cities across the region and beyond.

Let's work together to make sure that our neighbors are not abandoned at their time of greatest need but rather supported and embraced. We weave the fabric of our community one relationship at a time.

Your community wants to share in your good news! Send KOL K.I. editor, Susan Miller the details about births, awards & honors, graduations, milestones, anniversaries, accomplishments...any happy news we can celebrate with you! High resolution photos are welcome! Susan Miller: sunpath2@gmail.com

Pizmon *continued from page 1*

as is their mission, the group will aim to heighten the Jewish experience of the community, engage in community service oriented work, and spread their love of Jewish music to Hebrew schools, day schools, congregations, senior facilities, and hospitals.

In the past, the group has traveled overseas to countries including the Netherlands, Poland, Costa Rica, Panama, England, Wales, France, Ukraine, Canada, Israel, and Brazil, and domestically to New Mexico, Arizona, Washington, California, Alabama, Florida, and Georgia. They have also performed in such venues as the White House and Lincoln Center.

Through their varied backgrounds and identities as Jews—coupled with their love of music—Pizmon and its members strive to be role models for Jewish youth and enhance the religious experiences of all Jewish communities and denominations.

Schedule of Pizmon Events

Workshops provide some of the most memorable moments of Pizmon's visits. They will be meeing with Williams College students, an intergenerational group on Shabbat, and the teens, tweens, and children at Sunday Hebrew Schools. Pizmon members will split up into groups, work with the students and participants, and have them performing for each other in no time.

Friday February 1 • 5:45-6:45 p.m. • Kabbalat Shabbat • Knesset Israel— Following the service, Pizmon will join K.I.'s 7th-12th grade students for a Shabbat dinner. After dinner and zmirot, Rabbi David Weiner will lead a challenging discussion encouraging all present to participate: "Is Lying Ethical?"

Saturday, February 2 • 5:45 pm: At Temple Anshe Emunim, Hevreh's 8-12th grade senior youth group will join Anshe Amunim youth group. A program for 6-12th grade participants will include dinner, a mitzvah project/social program prior to the community wide Havdalah service and concert.

Saturday, February 2 • 7:15 pm—Havdalah & Concert • Temple Anshe Amunim. FREE • All are welcome! A Williams College a cappella group will open the evening and warm up the audience., followed by the main attraction: Pizmon! Pizmon t-shirts and CD's will be for sale after the concert. DON'T MISS THIS ONE! Great family fare and you can't beat the price!!!

In case you wondered

Pizmon (HEBREW, pl. pizmonim), a term transferred to Hebrew from Greek by way of Aramaic, meaning "adoration and praise," i.e., a poem praising God. In modern Israel the word is used to mean a popular song.

Pizmonim (Hebrew (singular pizmon) are traditional Jewish songs and melodies sung with the intention of praising God as well as learning certain aspects of traditional religious teachings.

In Spain the one who sang or read the pizmon before the congregation was called **pizmanana**.

Introducing Pizmon

Aliza Amselle (Alto, On-Campus Coordinator) is a Junior studying Neuroscience and behavior at Barnard. Right before Aliza goes to bed at night, she likes to read the dictionary with a cup of peppermint tea in order to develop her phenomenal pun game.

Ezra Felder (Bass) is a junior in the School of General Studies. Ezra is interested in many things, but is still unsure of his major. On another note, he is deeply passionate about social justice and talks frequently about his not-so-recent trip to India in which he volunteered in the slums.

Sara Friedman (Alto) is a sophomore at Barnard College majoring in Biology. She can lick her elbow!

Pizmon

Eliana Gayle-Schneider (Soprano, Music Outreach Initiative Coordinator) is a sophomore at Barnard studying English. She knows every country of the world and owns multiple sets of NPR pajamas.

Judah Hoffman (**Tenor**) is a sophomore at List College studying neuroscience, pre-med at Columbia, and Talmud at JTS. Judah is an avid stand-up paddleboarder.

Michael Kirschner (Bass, Music Director) is a Junior in Columbia Engineering studying Biomedical Engineering. When he is not singing or arranging music, Michael can be found climbing up a mountain, running along the Hudson, or eating chocolate covered pretzels while watching old seasons of reality TV shows.

"From their top-notch musicality, to their ease at interacting with every segment of the congregation, to their contagious enthusiasm about Judaism and music, the members of Pizmon gave our congregation a Shabbat to remember."

— Rabbi Rob Scheinberg, (quoted on the pizmon.org website)

Emily Herman (Soprano) is a sophomore at Barnard studying Biology. In addition to her studies, Emily is on the equestrian team and does ballet.

Jonathan Kapilian (Business Director, Tenor) is a junior in Columbia's School of Engineering where he studies Biomedical Engineering. He loves jazz and plans to be a doctor and an astronaut.

Gil Levitan (Bass) is a sophomore in the Joint Program studying Political Science and Modern Jewish Studies at Columbia and the Jewish Theological Seminary, respectfully. He is exceptional at catching grapes in his mouth.

Avidan Halivni (Tenor, Executive Director) is a senior in Columbia College majoring in Religion. He once bargained down the price of a little goat from five zuzim to two.

Rachel (Raykay) Kastner (Alto) is a Barnard senior. She studies Political Science and Film, and is a filmmaker. On top of that, Rachel is an actress, speaks 3.5 languages, and loves her dog, Pepsi, very much!

Yaffa Muhlbaum (Tenor, Director of Internal Affairs) is in a joint program studying The Hebrew Bible at the Jewish Theological Seminary and archaeology at Columbia University. Though her foci of study are each rather archaic, her puppy, Carlton, keeps her current.

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From the President

125 Years of Community

From the "Gathering of Israel" to Knesset Israel

Richard Simons

125 years ago, Grover Cleveland was sworn in as the 24th President of the United States; Katharine Lee Bates wrote "American The Beautiful"; and a group of Jews in Pittsfield established the "Gathering of Israel", later to be known as "Knesset Israel." There have been tremendous changes in the American Jewish landscape over the past 125 years and many of those changes are reflected here in our shul community. What remains constant however, is the overall purpose of a shul to be a place where we gather for prayer, educate our children, support each other in times of joy and grief, and allow ourselves to grow as Jews and citizens of the world.

Milestone celebrations, like the 125th anniversary of K.I.'s founding, provide us with an opportunity to pause and reflect on how grateful we are for the commitment of our founders and how fortunate we are to be here to reap the benefits of such a vibrant community. I imagine it was not easy to establish a synagogue in 1894 in the heart of the Berkshires. Pittsfield was not a community of tremendous wealth. What it had however, was a small group of Jews that understood the importance of community. Our founders saw that in order to sustain the local Jewish community, it needed a place that embraced modernity while nurturing Jewish learning and ritual. Over the years, buildings were purchased, land was acquired to establish a cemetery and Rabbis were hired. Congregants were active in establishing all facets of synagogue life including chevreh kadisha, governance bodies, religious schools, sisterhood, and youth programs. K.I. was indeed a "Gathering of Israel".

While much has changed in 125 years, we still are a group of individuals with great spirit and ingenuity. We have the same commitment as our predecessors to insure that K.I .remains a place where Jews living in or visiting the Berkshires, can learn, grow, and enhance their spirit. Our long range planning committee headed by Vice President of Long Range Planning, Everett Lamm, is beginning the process of looking forward to the next 25 years to insure KI's future for our successors.

May we all go from strength to strength and Happy 125th!

Knesset Israel
celebrating 125 years

We have adapted our K.I. logo so that we can "brand" our 125th Anniversary Year! Contact Nan Bookless at nandesign2.0@gmail.com if you need the logo on any materials you produce this year.

Introducing Pizmon

cont. from page 7

Lexi Orlinsky (Alto, Music Outreach Initiative Coordinator) is a sophomore studying Biomedical Engineering at Columbia University. Lexi is allergic to sesame, shellfish, watermelon, cats, dogs, gerbils, horses, pollen, dust, grass and non-Jewish music.

Margeaux Wolberg (Soprano) is in her first-year at the Joint Program between Columbia and the Jewish Theological Seminary, where she is studying Psychology and Jewish Gender and Women's Studies, respectively. Margeaux taught herself to read Braille, and is considering changing her middle name to "Pluralism."

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February Calendar

CANDLE LIGHTING

Friday .....February 1 .....4:49 PM
Friday .....Februar 8 .....4:58 PM
Friday .....February 15 .....5:07 PM
Friday .....February 22 .....5:16 PM

Shalom!

FALL/WINTER SERVICE SCHEDULE

Sunday.....8:45 AM & 7:00 PM
Tuesday.....7:00 PM
Friday, May 18.....5:45 PM
Shirei Shabbat begins.....5:30 PM
Saturday.....9:30 AM
18-33 minutes before sunset

CLASSES

Torah Portion of the Week (Library)..... Tues., February 5, 12, 19, 26 .....10:00–11:30 AM
Enhanced Prayer Study.....Wed., February 6, 13, 20, 27 ..... 10:00–11:30 AM
CHAI Community School (Knesset Israel).....
..... Wed., February 6, 13, 27 .....4:00–6:00 PM
Walking with Justice..... Thurs., February 7, 14, 21, 28 ....10:45–12:00 PM
The Ethical Life (8-12 grade students).. Sat., February 2, 9 ..... 10:45–Noon
Hebrew School..... Sat., February 2, 9 .....9:00 AM–12:00 PM
Haggadah Insights..... Sat., February 2, 9, 16, 23..... Times vary with sundown

EVENTS & MEETINGS

Pizmon services & events .....February 1-3 ..... see page 6
Shirei Shabbat .....Fri., February 1 .....5:30 PM
Cemetery Committee Meeting .....Tues., February 5 .....7:30 PM
Mussar with Rabbi Pamela Wax.....Sun., February 10.....7:30 PM
Rosh Chodesh (Lisa Green's home).....Sun., Feb 17 .....2:00 PM
K.I. Board Meeting.....Wed., February 20.....7:30 PM

In compliance with United Conservative Synagogue guidelines, please refrain from conducting synagogue business via email and/or phone calls on Shabbat.
Thank you!

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cemetery@knessetisrael.org

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YOUTH
Amy Abramovich.....413-499-6388

Emergency Contacts

PASTORAL CARE.
If you are in need of emergency pastoral care for any reason, please contact Rabbi Weiner, 413-445-4872, ext. 10.

FUNERALS.
Knesset Israel's funeral arrangements are handled with Flynn-Dagnoli funeral home. Please call 413-663-6523 or 413-442-1733. You can also email flynndagnoli@albany.twcbc.com.

CARE COMMITTEE.
If you or another K.I. member you know is experiencing serious illness requiring support, please contact the Care Committee by calling the main office of Knesset Israel, 413-445-4872, ext. 10 and we will be in touch with you.

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Musical Musings

The year in review

by Phil Coleman,
Chairman K.I. Music Committee

Hello all, it has been another great year at K.I. for music and performance, as usua,l and I thought I would just review the year's events while the memories are still strong.

We started off the year with a terrific **Purim retrospective**, celebrating the highlights of ten years of "musical costumes" by the K.I. Band. From the Beatles to Bob Dylan to Michael Jackson, the hall rocked with what many believe was the best concert ever put on by the band. The Rolling Stones never sounded so good!

In May, **Andy Kelly and his All Stars** graced the social hall with a fine tribute to Jews in Jazz. From Al Jolson to Burt Bacharach we were treated to a wonderful evening portraying the history of jazz and the role of Jews in it. Andy did a tremendous amount of work to document that history and was very well prepared with background information, as well as leading his quartet in some fabulous music. Hats off to Andy and his group!

Who can forget the incredible performance of the **Bintel Brief** program this summer? This staged reading harking back to the days of old when Jews lived in the Lower East Side of New York was expertly performed by members of the synagogue not once but twice! A wonderful time was had by all!

Performances by the **Berkshire Jewish Musicians Collective** also highlighted our summer and fall. This organization comprised primarily of K.I. members rose to the occasion and played to packed houses twice this year.

The Four Freedoms concert in Pittsfield was a fantastic maiden voyage, while the year was capped by performing at the recent vigil, in the wake of the Pittsburgh shootings, that drew over 500 people to K.I.

Shirei Shabbat was a huge success as always. Nine services were conducted with a myriad of musicians including our young people for a terrific Hanukkah performance. Instruments included guitars, keyboard, bass, flute, clarinet, drums, and of course the wonderful voices of our highly trained vocalists. Always a happy occasion, Shirei Shabbat is eagerly looked forward to by the congregation, drawing upwards of 150 people for a celebratory experience and a delicious dinner afterwards.

Finally, this October we were treated to a marvelous evening of **live klezmer music** to accompany our joyous Simchat Torah service. Congregation members Paul Green, Jonathan Denmark, Colin Ovitsky, and Colby Lederman were joined by journeyman Brian Bender for a memorable evening of live klezmer music which accompanied the members as the parade of Torahs circled the synagogue and social hall. What a great evening for all!

K.I. is alive and well with music. Come out in 2019 and enjoy all that we have to offer!

Spotlight On...Yonaton Kaufman

This month I have the opportunity to interview one of our synagogue and community's fine young gentlemen, and a terrific musician by the way—Yonatan Kaufman. Let me start by asking you what kind of musical training you have had—your teachers and what you've studied?

Yonatan: Hey Phil, thanks for having me! I took guitar lessons from age seven to around 16 and also was in a few jazz bands through middle and high school, but my most influential teacher was definitely Andy Kelly. He really helped me with my improvising through jazz and opening up my knowledge of music theory. I also went to Rock On Summer camp at BCC for five years. We would form a band for only a week and learn two to three which we would perform by the end of the week. It was a really intense dive into all aspects of music from learning songs to performing, and even songwriting.

continued page 14

Yonaton Kaufman

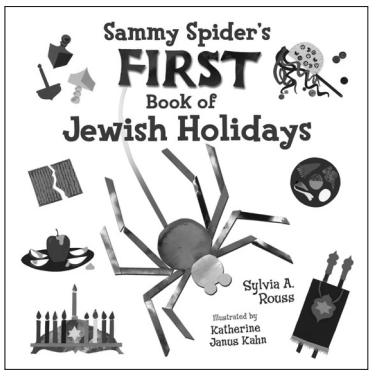
Notes from Hebrew School

Keeping up with the younger generation…

We have had a wonderful first semester of our Hebrew School. Below are some short vignettes from our teachers highlighting our students' achievements.

Pre-school

This year the preschool class has enjoyed learning about the Jewish holidays with *The Sammy Spider* book series. Our extended class schedule has allowed more time for crafts, games, songs and movement. New this year is our weekly snack time with the kindergarten and first grade as well as guided, purposeful play. *~Dana Siegel*



Kindergarten-1

This year's K-1 class has been learning Hebrew letters, prayers and holidays. They know the letters in Shabbat and can sing the Shema. We have been learning stories from the Bible and using them to talk about big questions like how do you treat others. We have also been exploring our big ideas through guided, purposeful play. *~ Mr Weisbuch*

Grades 2-3

After a busy fall semester filled the Jewish holidays, the Shabbat morning second and third grade classes have been studying the Parashah of the week before joining Junior Congregation, a new experience for the students.

Second and third grade Hebrew school: Levi Denmark, Jacob Herzberg, and Asher Cook-Dubin

We are learning about various Mitzvah heroes and their impact on making this a better world. Last class we met Mitzvah Dog, Ziva, and her partner Merle Ferber upstairs at KI. It was a truly "hands on" experience!

We are reading Jewish fairy tales from the book *Elijah's Violin and Other Jewish Fairy Tales* by Howard Schwartz. These are 5th century Babylon, Morocco, and Egypt, from, the oral tradition. Next semester we will explore other interesting stories from the various countries where Jewish communities have been for hundreds of generations. *~Ellen Masters*

Grades 2-3 Hebrew

Our students have been reviewing and growing their Hebrew letter combinations and reading. We have just about finished our first book! I am in awe of the students' abilities to read accurately and fluently. They are also learning some basic vocabulary and grammar. *~Judith Weiner*

Grades 5-7

The past few weeks have been busy ones for students in the History through Maps course. After the dissolution of Alexander the Great's empire, we transitioned to the rule of the Seleucids and the Hasmoneans. We explored how the Romans came to occupy the land of Israel, and considered whether Herod the Great was really all that great for the Jews. After a brief foray into the world of the Essenes and the Dead Sea Scrolls, we are continuing on with our look at the Roman occupation of Judea. *~Jilly*

Grade 6

Exploring Modern Jewish History through Social Issues.

At the beginning of the school year, the students prioritized social issues that were meaningful to them. The first issue we explored was "protecting the environment." Our connection to Jewish history had its foundation in a discussion about Bal Taschit and moved up to Israel's continuing efforts in conservation and preservation (planting trees, etc.). We discussed several peripheral issues such as leadership (looking at Israeli leaders) and "building walls" (in the figurative and literal sense). Our latest efforts have been in discussing gender roles in traditional and modern Jewish families

Artists Gabe Henner, Parker Wright, and Morrie Fried

which we will continue for the next few weeks. *~David Dahari*

Grade 4-6 Hebrew

Our Hebrew curriculum is focused on reading skills. Our students have made much progress in their reading fluency this semester. They show great enthusiasm in all their hard work. *~Jenny Gitlitz and Judith Weiner.*

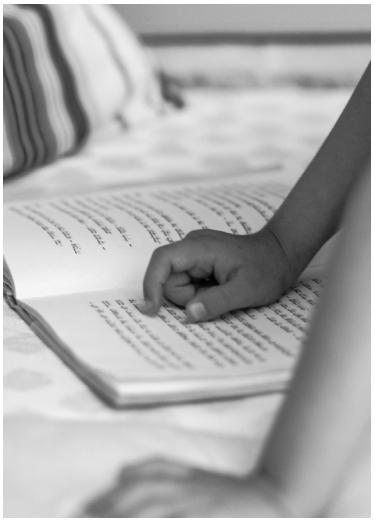


Photo by Lavi Perchik on Unsplash

Soul

This year's Soul class for 4-6th graders is off to an impressive start. The students are practicing Hebrew reading in the siddur and grappling with prayer meaning—literal translations as well as the idea/concept of prayer. Our very own Talmudic discourse is coming alive in the classroom as we have begun our journey into segments of Talmud that discuss prayer. Soul has met 3 times this semester, and I look forward to 5 more exciting sessions with these students next semester. *~Ben Strauss*

From left to right: Leora Cook-Dubin, Ellie Caine, Joe Weiner, Robert Ferren and Eliot Stern

Bar Mitzvah

This year's B'nai Mitzvah class consists of five incredible students all full of musical ability and great interest in what we are learning in class. We are experimenting with melodies and harmonies for certain prayers as they master many of our weekly Shabbat prayers and get ready to lead them for the congregation.

During the months of November and December, each student had the opportunity to lead a Torah service for the congregation and they all did a wonderful job. As we head into the Holiday Vacation week, all five students are ready to move on from their Torah readings and we will begin learning Haftorah trope in the new year. They are also all ready to polish the Pseukei D'Zimra part of the service and we will be beginning to focus on Shacharit towards the end of January.

This class is moving quickly and will be ready to impress the congregation in the late spring and early fall when all of their simchas will happen. Keep your eyes and ears open for this talented class! *~Elisa Snowise*

"The world exists only because of the innocent breath of schoolchildren." ~~ Talmud

Musical Musings *continued from page 11*

Who did you listen to growing up? You must have some influential bands and performers who inspired you.

Yonatan: The music I listened to growing up was pretty sporadic. I had a big punk phase and the biggest influence out of that was Green Day. As I grew up I gravitated to classic rock and of course took interest in guitar players, especially Carlos Santana and Jimmy Page. They both had such a unique style that was immediately recognizable. I also have to include the Beatles because they are just beyond compare. Their songwriting was so simple but effective and they really were pioneers in many facets of music recording.

What are you listening to and playing these days?

Yonatan: Lately I've been listening to the new Anderson Paak album, Mac Miller, and any new hip hop that incorporates jazzy/funky beats. I also still have a bunch of classic rock and funk songs on heavy rotation. My favorite band these days though has to be Exmag—they are a really cool trio out of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania who fall under a genre called future soul.

At K.I., we really honor music as central to what the synagogue has to offer. Do you have any memories of singing and participating in some of the services or classes?

Yonatan: I did participate in the Shirei Sabbat band a handful of times which was a blast. Back when I was in high school I would also play guitar accompaniment with the Junior Congregation on Saturday mornings. It was nice to connect with the kids and help put a little more pep into the service. It seemed like it made a service that may have been a little monotonous to a 10 year-old a little more exciting and meaningful. I enjoyed making connections with the kids and giving back my time to the community.

Obviously you have a day job. We all do. Hopefully you will get out there and play for many years to come. What does the future hold for you musically?

Yonatan: For the past five years I have been learning and experimenting with music production and recording. I'm interested in everything from electronic music and sound synthesis to live band studio recording. I have produced a few songs with local rappers and even produced my own songs on occasion. I really enjoy collaborating and working with vocalists which is something I hope to do a lot more of in the future. I'd like to continue working with other musicians to help bring the songs they envision to fruition. I will also continue to write my own songs and you may even see some releases from me in the future!

Yahrzeits • February 2019 • Shevat/Adar 5779

"Those who live no more, whom we loved, echo still within our thoughts, our words, our hearts. And what they did and who they were becomes a part of all we are, forever."

2/1 - 26 SHEVAT

Estelle A. Landes
Ruth Cushing Fishman
Sylvia Klarik Kahn Hillson
William Lipton

2/2/ - 27 SHEVAT

Delia Capriles Levi Maduro
Fanny Berkwitz
Helen Weiss
Louis Lebowitz
Martin Friedland
Robert Meirowitz
Ronald Haft
Ruth Schwartz

2/3 - 28 SHEVAT

Bessie Silver
Dina Minsky
Dr. Harry Minsky
Harry Lefkowitz
Margaret Fleet

2/4 - 29 SHEVAT

Abram J. Berkwitz
Harry Palefsky
Morris Reder
William Bashevkin

2/5 - 30 SHEVAT

Ben Zion Cohen
David Sacks
Herman B. Perlman
Isidor Rabinovitz
Martin Gelber
Sidney Solomon

2/6/ - 1 ADAR

Geneveive Goldblum Barnett
Isodore Goodman
Jack Widitor
Nellie Hiller
Sarah Wildman
Solomon Genn

2/7 - 2 ADAR

Morduch Kirshteyn
Rabbi Morris Fuhrman
Rebecca Chesney
Sara Cohen

2/8 - 3 ADAR

Abraham Goodman
Etta Cusick
Joel Ziegler
Rebecca Borke Leavitt
Sofie Servos
William Levin

2/9 - 4 ADAR

Harriet Rivlin Schwartz
Joel Mintz

2/10- 5 ADAR

Sally Galler

2/11 - 6 ADAR

Hyman Silver
Melvin Schwartz
Pauline Brecher
Rebekka Kirshteyn
Stanley R. Weiss

2/12 - 7 ADAR

Emma Mainker Graubard
Myron Marvin

2/13 - 8 ADAR

Matthew Rich

2/14 - 9 ADAR

Esther Markowitz
Gertrude Budnick
Jennie Udel
Sam Shusterman

2/15 - 10 ADAR

Hinda Katz
Itshak Berman

2/16 - 11 ADAR

Robert Staskin

2/19 - 14 ADAR

Anna Lebowitz
Morris Goldstein

2/20 - 15 ADAR

Samuel Widitor
Sol Gallant

2/21 - 16 ADAR

Beatrice Cohen Kobritz
Jacob Aronstein
Phyllis Gilner
Rose Zuckerman
Samuel Tauber

2/229 - 17 ADAR

Lillian Cohen

2/23 - 18 ADAR

Eva Metropole

2/24 - 19 ADAR

Peter Marvin
Zipora Bril

2/25 - 20 ADAR

Benjamin Novick
Bessie F. Lippman

2/26 - 21 ADAR

Samuel Lebovitz
Samuel Mones

2/27/ - 22 ADAR

Beth Anne Zocchi
Esther Minnie Maislen
Rebecca Levine

2/28- 23 ADAR

Abraham Adelson
Harry Shenker
Philip Bass

Tips from the K.I. Cemetery Committee

Plan ahead to make things easier

When you are in need of Knesset Israel's cemetery, please note the following to make the business end of a funeral and/or burial go smoothly:

■ Keeping your membership in good standing will avoid issues with member burial rates.

■ Members with military service should have their discharge papers in a safe place and easily accessible. The discharge papers are required for ordering a military marker.

■ If you anticipate or have complicated circumstances or may need special arrangements, document your wishes legally, or meet with our funeral director, Reno Dagnoli, Flynn & Dagnoli Funeral Home, to document your intentions.

Questions? Contact the Cemetery Committee at cemetery@knessetisrael.org or Diana Macfarlane, in the KI office, 413-445-4872.

2019 Headstone Cleaning

The Cemetery Committee announces our third group discounted headstone cleaning. The cost per monument is $65. Sign up now, and you will be billed when we have a minimum of 25 headstones. We're hoping for a spring cleaning! Questions can be addressed to Don Sugarman at cemetery@knessetisrael.org. • Please e-mail or call Diana with the name(s) on the monument(s) you would like to have cleaned. 413-445-4872 or office@knessetisrael.org

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Thank you to my wonderful friends, Amy Abramovich, Margo Golis, Margie Metzger, and Ellen Rosenblatt who helped me when I was sick in November. I feel so lucky to be a part of the Knesset Israel family.
Judy Seaman

In memory of Stella Schecter
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In memory of Seymour Baer, an incomparable friend, mentor, and mensch. Zikhrono livrakhah.
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continued next page

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Hamentashen time!

It takes a village to make **the thousands of hamentashen** that roll out of Knesset Israel's kitchen every winter.

This year the combined forces of Knesset Israel's bakers, the late Joe Madison's friends from the Monday Morning Mountain Boys (a men's hiking group), Federation volunteers, and K.I.'s Hebrew School students, will meet **every Sunday 9:30am-noon** and **every Thursday 5:30pm-8:00pm starting January 20th—February 28th.** They will fill Knesset Israel with the warmth of volunteering and the wonderful aroma of just baked cookies.

Volunteers needed! From the dough makers cracking **hundreds of eggs** to the preschoolers **decorating bags for senior citizens**, to baggers putting together **Mishloat Manot bags**, this project needs a lot of volunteers:

- If you are a baker, want to learn to bake, can help clean up and pack baked cookies, or just want to volunteer so you can **get first dibs on warm cookies**, please contact Cindy Helitzer at chelitzer2012@gmail.com or call 413-499-1202.
- If you would like to **volunteer helping the kids decorating bags** (now until March 1); or **packing mishloach manot bags** and **delivering** them to homebound Jewish seniors* (mid-March), please contact Susan Frisch Lehrer at slehrer@jewishberkshires.org or 413-442-4360 X 14.

New Pick up Locations!—North and South County drop off/ pick up locations for prepaid orders - **In North County — Congregation Beth Israel, Monday, March 18 and Tuesday, March 19, 10am-2pm.** - **In South County—Hevreh on Monday, March 18 and Tuesday, March 19 from noon to 4pm.**

** The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires' Joe's Project was begun by the late Joe Madison, who first organized the baking and delivering of hamenstashen and Challot bags to homebound seniors).*