

The Voice of Beth El

124 Litchfield St
Torrington, CT 06790
860-482-8263, fax: Call the office
E-mail besynagogue@snet.net
Web site: angelfire.com/ct/bethel
March/-April-May 2008/
Adar I-Adar II-Nisan-Iyar 5768
Rabbi Richard Eisenberg 860-626-0181

Services are held the second Friday of the month at 7:00, and every Saturday morning at 9:30. Everyone counts, so please try to attend.



From the Rabbi's Desk Rabbi Richard Eisenberg

In last month's *From the Presidents' Desk*, you read about our decision to change the synagogue kitchen to dairy/parve. Because the kitchen has been used throughout the years for both dairy and meat, many of the utensils have gotten mixed, and there is no way of knowing whether they are still fit for kosher use. It is increasingly difficult to oversee the kashrut of the kitchen as long as meat products are prepared inside; therefore, it makes the most sense to over to dairy/parve. We will no longer have to worry about keeping track of separate meat and dairy utensils.

In order to effect this change, we are undergoing a thorough re-kashering program. I will be teaching our Hebrew School children about the laws of Kashrut. In March, they will help us clear out any utensils that cannot be kashered. These include anything containing wood or plastic, because porous materials cannot be made kosher. Once this is accomplished, we will be devoting time on March 2, 5, and 9 to clean the kitchen, boil water in pots, immerse utensils in the boiling water, blow-torch any vessels that can't be boiled, pour boiling water over the sinks and countertops, and more. Kashering is usually done through the application of heat – the heat purges the vessels of any residual food particles so that they may be used again for kosher purposes. So this whole process should be fun and educational, and I hope you will stop in and join us, or at least be there to cheer us on. The other committee members are Joyce Peck, Marvin Peyser, Judy Hayward, and Donna Perreault

But, you may be asking, why go through all this hassle? What's this kosher business all about anyway? Many books and articles have been written about kashrut, and many Jewish theologians and philosophers have offered their own interpretations. Admittedly, I have little to add. Suffice it to say that keeping kosher is one of the hallmarks of our Jewish culture and religion. Though its many rules and regulations may seem arcane and difficult to maintain, kashrut is our way of preserving our uniqueness as a people and drawing closer to G-d. Just as our western culture has a series of customs and etiquette, like how we eat, set the table, and so on, Jewish culture sees kashrut as a way of upholding our cultural integrity. Equally important, applying religious law to our eating habits reminds us that we are beholding to G-d for our food and that

being selective about the food we put in our mouths is our way of sanctifying the everyday, bringing a holy dimension to our creaturely acts.

So when you see us doing some of these unconventional things in the Beth El kitchen in March, you'll know that this is how we affirm our tradition and strengthen our bonds with our Jewish past and future. What a perfect way to spend the month preceding Passover!

And – while we're on the subject of Jewish holy days – please remember that Purim is just around the corner. I hope to see you in costume for our Purim celebration on Thursday evening, March 20 at 6:30!

**OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES OF BETH EL SYNAGOGUE
2007-2008**

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Rabbi Richard Eisenberg	non-voting member	626-0181



**DVAR TORAH
Hardening The Heart
Marvin Peyser, Ritual Chair**

An intriguing element of the Exodus story is the interplay between G-d and Pharaoh. They are major players in the story, with Moses as the intermediary, running back and forth relaying messages and prophecies. The odds are stacked against Pharaoh, however, who has no idea with whom he is sparring.

The ultimate manipulation is where G-d controls Pharaoh's heart. This of course raises an often-asked question. Mankind is given free will (a cornerstone of Jewish belief), therefore how can Pharaoh be punished if he has no control over the situation?

The Sages provided numerous answers to this question. A commonly accepted response is that for the first five plagues (Blood, Frogs, Lice, Swarms of flies, Cattle disease) the Torah relates that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. For example, Exodus 8:11, dealing with the plague of flies, says, "But when Pharaoh saw there was no respite, he hardened his heart and listened no more to them....)" The language is similar in the other four plagues. But when we get to the next four plagues the language shifts. Exodus 9:12, for example, referring to boils, says "And

***Purim Celebration
Megillah Reading
Thursday, March 20, 6:30 PM
Come in costume!***

the L-rd hardened the heart of Pharaoh and he listened not to them....”)

In one explanation of the above, the hardening of the heart (Pharaoh’s loss of free will) is itself a punishment of Pharaoh for not acceding to Moses’ request. But this is insufficient for the Exodus story. In a more commonly accepted explanation, the punishment was for the mistreatment, the harsh years of slavery, of the Israelite people.

Was the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart voluntary or involuntary? Perhaps we can get a clue from the prophet Samuel (1Sam6:6), admonishing the people. *“Wherefore then do you harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts?”* This throws the burden of responsibility directly on Pharaoh.

But this raises other questions. The Exodus is at the very core of Jewish belief.. It is so essential to our history that it seems it had to happen the way it did. Did G-d plan it this way to impress the Israelite people, therefore making it necessary for G-d to harden Pharaoh’s heart so that he would not relent until the proper moment? There is another clue to consider here. In Deut2:30, Moses tells the people that when the Israelites requested permission from the Amorite king, Sihon, to peacefully pass through his land,. Sihon refused, because *“G-d hardened his spirit and made his heart stubborn, in order to give him into your hand.”* Here it seems, it was also necessary for G-d to harden someone’s heart in order that the Divine plan be fulfilled.

Pesach
April 19 (First Seder) to
April 26



Library Corner

The Library Committee is very happy with its progress with regard to the newly entered and color-coded books. We are three-quarters finished! Please look for the sign in/sign out book located near the children’s area. We still have some work to do and need your help. Please let us know if you are willing to volunteer some time to input books in our Judaic catalog system. We would also like your recommendations as to titles of books, DVDs, literary materials, events and activities you feel would benefit our synagogue. Please email your suggestions to Joel at moresales2@aol.com or call him at 860-567-3400.

Education Committee

Stanley Mand, Education Chair

On Sunday, May 4, 2008, at 10:00 A.M. there will be a “Lox and Lecture” program. The subject is “Jews in Sports” and the speaker is Marv Schneider.

As a young boy, trading baseball cards with my friends, I asked if there were any Jewish baseball players in addition to Hank Greenberg, the original Hammerin' Hank.. Then I remember, when I was a young man, how proud I was when Sandy Koufax refused to play on Yom Kippur. Now I know that there is a Jewish Sports Hall of Fame and that someone is talking about Jewish baseball cards. Yes, Virginia, there are Jewish athletes.

The Adult Education committee has invited Marv Schneider to speak on the subject. Mr. Schneider was an Associated Press sportswriter, broadcaster, and editor for more than 40 years. After his retirement he remained a sports correspondent for AP Radio and his reports from New York are heard nationally. Anecdotes are the core of Schneider’s conversational-style talks, and they are based on decades of his ex-

periences and interviews on the ball fields, training camps, and locker rooms.

There will be another “Lox and Lecture” event on Sunday, September 7, 2008 at 10:A.M. The topic of the lecture will be “The New Jews”, which will focus on the return to Jewish life, in contemporary times, of long forgotten or ‘Lost’ Jewish groups. It will be dealing with “Returnees” from all over the world, including the southwest United States, Brazil, Spain, Portugal, India, China and Uganda.

The speaker will be Dr. Abraham J. Gittelson, Ed.D, the Senior Consultant for the Rose and Jack Orloff Central Agency for Jewish Education of Broward County, Florida. A native of New York, Dr. Gittelson holds degrees from Yeshiva University, the City College of New York, Hunter College, and the University of Miami. For the past seven years, he has devoted himself to teaching and lecturing to Jewish adults, on a wide range of Judaic subjects.

As always there will be a light breakfast served at each lecture. There will be no entrance fee but donations will be gratefully accepted.

Please put these dates on your calendar.

A Birthday Wish

Mazel tov and congratulations to Marvin Peyser, who celebrated his 80th birthday in February. Marvin and his lovely wife, Harriet, took off to Atlanta to celebrate the milestone with family. Marvin is our longtime chair of the ritual committee, among other things. Harriet also is a longtime supporter of the synagogue, Sisterhood and Hadassah. We wish them many more happy and healthy birthdays and anniversaries.

***Deadline for the next Voice
May 5, 2008***



**Birthdays
and
Anniversaries**

Birthdays

Arthur Wolk	Mar 2
Kyle Faust	Mar 2
Jimmy Hayward	Mar 4
Robert Heimler	Mar 5
Selma Ginsberg	Mar 5
Sarah Handelman	Mar 7
Linda Scofield	Mar 8
Jody Cohen	Mar 8
Sherry Ginsburg	Mar 14
Debbie Goring	Mar 16
Lynn Goldman	Mar 18
Sarah Lynch	Mar 21
Chuck Ginsburg	Mar 21
Patricia Anderson	Mar 21
Peggy Knox	Mar 23
Adina Matisoff	Mar 25
Janis Griffin	Mar 26
Joyce Krutick Craig	Mar 26
Jerry Casbolt	Mar 26
Josh Gottfried	Mar 27
Eve Matisoff	Mar 28
Barbara Cohen	Mar 29

Anniversaries

Dr. and Mrs. Gary Griffin	Mar 20, 26th
Mr. and Mrs. Wells Cunningham	Mar 22, 22nd
Mr. and Mrs. Saul Karasyk	Mar 27, 60th

(Birthdays and Anniversaries for May and June will be in those months' newsletter ""From the Presidents' Desk.)

Tadah

Donations to Building Fund:

Albert & Bernice Firestone,

General Donations:

Mardo & Reine Zermati, Irving & Renee Rubinson
 Arnold & Audrey Heimler, in memory of Joan Selma Heimler
 Cheryl Marino and the Marino family, in memory of Anne Cohen
 Leslie & Lynn Goldman, in memory of Jack Seigel
 Joel & Lynn Malkoff, in memory of Mina Malkoff

Arnold & Audrey Heimler, in memory of Barry Gerson

Leslie & Lynn Goldman, in memory of Yetta Schwartzberg

Joe & Sherry Ginsburg, in honor of the Nadels becoming great-grandparents

Alan & Eve Matisoff, in honor of Dennis Gottfried's 60th birthday

Joe & Sherry Ginsburg, in memory of Phil Gershfeld, Mildred Gershfeld, & Paul Weingarten

Donations to Rabbi's Discretionary Fund:

Joyce Krutik Craig, Kathy Carullo, Mal & Bea Guralnick,

Donations to Religious School:

Steven & Gayle Temkin; Jana W. Dublin, Lauren, Rob, Jessica & Jordan Bass; Al & Anita Strumar; Steve, Illona, Josh, Sam & Abby Roll; Lynn & Glenn Downs; Robert & Marlene Downs; Debby & Ron Iken; Jeannette Radom; Robert & Stephanie Oakan; Joann Temkin; the Barbara Wolfson-Loker School Sunshine Fund; Mal & Bea Guralnick; Cathy Tyrell; Al & Irma Evans; Wayland Middle School Dept of Special Services; Sharon Beck; Marvin & Harriet Peyser; Lauren & Richard Langevin; Wayland Middle School faculty & staff; in memory of Mary B. Kaplowitz

Michael & Heidi Madow, Richard & Jennifer Lotstein, Kathryn Carullo

Donations to Beautification:

Jocelyn Regenbogen,

Donations to Lily Silverman Fund:

Ida Dressler,

Yizkor Donations:

Richard & Sally Bergad, Liselotte Siebenberg, Robert & Marvis Gersten, Hadassah Weiner, Benjamin & Debra Freund, Corinne Johnson,

Presidents' Message

We are a little more than midway through our tri-presidency, which seems to be working well. We each have our niche to oversee.

To update everyone: The board of trustees chose gray speckled granite to replace the blue facade on the front of the building. Work will begin as soon as weather permits. The facade replace-



ment is part of the ongoing project to repair the roof and exterior of the building and replace the front steps.

Many thanks to Rabbi Eisenberg and the rest of, the committee handling the re-kashering of our kitchen.. (See the Rabbi's column on page 1.)

Rabbi Eisenberg has an interesting continuing class on the Mishnah and capitol punishment. The class meets Monday evenings from 7-8 p.m. Anyone is welcome to join at any time.

An adult bar and bat mitzvah class is forming, meeting Mondays at 5 p.m. You don't need to know Hebrew to join the group and you don't even have to commit to a bar or bat mitzvah. Anyone is welcome to sit in on the class to study Judaism.

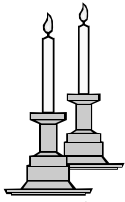
If you haven't attended a Saturday morning or Friday night Shabbat service lately, you're missing something special. Rabbi Eisenberg makes these services interesting, upbeat, and memorable. Join us if you can.

Speaking of services, save April 11 for us. That's the date we are inviting Interfaith Council of Northwest Connecticut members and clergy to a Friday night Shabbat service and to meet Rabbi Eisenberg. We need to have a good showing of our own members. The Oneg Shabbat will be hosted by Bea Guralnick, Kathy Carullo and Stephanie Oakan.

If you haven't visited the Radom Library, you're missing an opportunity to find some good reading. The Library Committee Chair Joel Malkoff and Lynn, Patricia Anderson, Stephanie and Bob Oakan, and Joyce Peck- have been working hard to update and re-organize the library. There still is more to come. The library was overseen for many, many years by Jeannette Radom. Without her diligence and dedication there would be no collection of Judaic books, videos, CDs, and other materials at all. As far as we know, this is the largest such collection in the Northwest Corner and something of which to be very proud.

Spring is coming! Stay healthy and warm.

Joyce Peck, Michael Madow, Alan Cohn.



Candlelighting Times

March 7 5:29	April 4 7:00	May 2 7:31
March 14 6:37	April 11 7:08	May 9 7:38
March 21 6:46	April 18 7:15	May 16 7:45
March 28 6:52	April 25 7:23	May 23 7:52
		May 30 7:58

JNF and Hadassah Certificates

JNF certificates acknowledge contributions of \$12 or more to plant trees and support other JNF projects in Israel. Hadassah also offers Region Certificates to support heart research, youth aliyah, cancer research, the Children's Pavilion, and Hadassah Medical Organization. Please consider purchasing a certificate in honor of a special occasion or in memory of a loved one. Contact Stephanie Oakan at (860) 489-3044 or sroakan@optonline.net

Get Well, Stay Well

Jennifer Overton
Carol Jensen, mother of Robin Faust.

Yahrzeits

Light the memorial candle the night before. *These names have been inscribed on the memorial tablets.

Sam Kuzneow	March 1
Samuel Fourman	March 2
Anna Paletsky	March 2
Janis Paletsky*	March 3
Yetta Balk*	March 5
Morris Radler *	March 5
Ida Schneider *	March 5

William Kasenetz *	March 6
Esther Radler *	March 11
Abram Peters *	March 16
Claire Reibman *	March 17
Harry Richard	March 18
Pearl Richard	March 25
Gerald Rubens	March 31

(Yahrzeits for April and May are in those months' *From the Presidents' Desk.*)

Become part of the Jewish community's initiative to help combat poverty in the Hartford area

Go to the Greater Hartford Jewish Community's First Hunger Banquet, "Hunger in a World of Plenty."

Experience a dramatization of the unequal distribution of food and other resources in the world and in the Hartford community

**Sunday, April 6, 2008 ,3:30 – 5:30 PM,
Beth El Temple
2626 Albany Avenue
West Hartford , CT**

\$5.00 per person plus a non-perishable food item

*Jewish Community Relations Council of the
Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford
RSVP: to Betsy Richards ,
brichards@jewishhartford.org, (860)727-6169
(Casual attire.)*

