

Congregation Kehilat Shalom NEWS

A Welcoming Jewish Reconstructionist Community

Editor—Karen Bartels
karen.bartels@comcast.net
home phone 609-921-1811

Newsletter of the Congregation Kehilat Shalom of Belle Mead, NJ **December 2013** Kislev — Tevet 5773

Bulletin from the Board - Len Edelstein

Congregation
Kehilat Shalom
253 Griggstown Rd.
Belle Mead, NJ 08502
Phone: 908-359-0420
Fax: 908-359-8848
Regular office hours:
M-W 8:30-4pm T-Th 8:30-6pm
F-8:30-2:30pm

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rabbi@ksnj.org
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president@ksnj.org
Administrator
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robin@ksnj.org
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As I sit here in November 2013 thinking about the unusual circumstance of having Thanksgiving overlap Chanukah (oh no, it's only two weeks away, I haven't gotten my kids anything yet!), I think back to the last time this happened: November 29, 1888. You see, Thanksgiving used to be the last Thursday in November rather than the fourth Thursday in November. Looking at the *New York Times* archive I see that eleven steamships are due in today, that "commercial travelers, commonly called 'drummers' jolly, generally corpulent, and apparently affluent" could be seen around Grand Central Station. Maybe I would have attended the Temple Beth-El Thanksgiving Service at which Dr. Kohler will speak on "What does America owe to the Jew, and the Jew to America." No mention of Chanukah, though. Perhaps in the year 79811, when the Jewish calendar has completely looped around the Gregorian one and this convergence occurs again, someone will comment on it. Of course 80,000 years ago, humans were just leaving Africa, so I'm not sure how the Jewish or Gregorian calendar will apply to whatever planet we happen to be living on. It's a question for the rabbi.

If you want to ask Rabbi Susan about extraterrestrial solar and lunar calendars (what if there's two moons?) you will have to do so by December 13th, as that's the date of the Rabbi's last Shabbat service before she goes on her sabbatical to study Yiddish at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City. In her stead Rabbi Ora Nitkin-Kaner will be filling in. Ora is a third year student at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. Many of us who have met Ora have come away very impressed with her warmth and dedication.

So for this last newsletter for the solar year of 2013, let me conclude by asking you to remember CKS in your 2014 resolutions. If your resolutions include improving your health, in addition to pledging to eat better and exercise more, let me share with you the results of a survey commissioned by the UnitedHealth Group. They found an overwhelming majority of the participants reported feeling mentally and physically healthier after a volunteer experience. So let's rededicate ourselves to giving thanks for what we have. I hope you had a very nice Thanksgiving/Chanuking.

Len Edelstein, Trustee



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CKS Book Club

Thursday, December 5th -

Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth
by Reza Asian

Thursday, January 9th

The Chameleon in the Closet: A Conservative Jewish Mother Reaches Out to Her Orthodox Sons
by BJ Rosenfeld

All meetings are at CKS at 7:30pm

Join us for one or all of the discussions!

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Join us for the first Reconstructionist Movement trip to Israel, May 14–21, 2014. Deepen your connection to Judaism as you experience life in Israel today. Learn from leading academics, Israeli thinkers, and political activists in a unique series of stimulating and provocative programs. Take your part in a progressive Jewish conversation—an intellectual, spiritual and political dialogue that will build your knowledge, challenge your perspectives, and broaden your understanding of Israel. Learn more at www.rrc.edu/Israeltrip.

Spiritual Development Group

Meditation and Chanting

Tuesday, December 3rd

Beginning at 7:15pm

Is there such a thing as Jewish meditation and chanting? While study, prayer, and acts of kindness (Torah, Avodah, Gemilut Chasadim) are better known as Jewish practices today, Jews have been meditating for millennia...and we know Jews have been singing and chanting! Come and join this new unit of the CKS Spiritual Development Group as we begin the practice of meditation and chanting, drawing on Jewish teachings, music, and other sources. Through silence, sitting and walking meditation, as well as chant, cultivate personal awareness, calm, and joy.

Chanukah Items in the CKS Gift Shop



Shop with us – instant gratification, large selection, support your synagogue, shop with your kids!

We are open during religious school hours or by appointment (call Iris at 609-947-2633).

Two new items this year: we are carrying Chanukah wrapping tape from our member Jodi Mahoney. It's \$3.50 per roll. Be smart – wrap with grocery bags and decorate with tape!

We also have quilt free gelt this year. The gelt we eat on Chanukah is a reminder of the freedom our people won many years ago.

This Chanukah, we can support the 65,000 member farmers of Kuapa Kokoo, a Fair Trade cooperative in Ghana who are co-owners of Divine Chocolate. Fair Trade standards prohibit the



use of child labor. The organization is democratically run, and their children attend school rather than work in the fields. The cost is higher than what you get at the grocery stores – \$2.00 per bag. But it's a great lesson for our kids on this special holiday for kids.

Of course we have Chanukiah's of all styles, two kinds of candles, and many beautiful gift items. We carry ShopRite gift cards in several denominations. You can purchase those for a family in need too. So you see, it pays to do your Chanukah shopping with us. See you Sunday.

Message from the Rabbi

SO, NU? WHAT WILL THE RABBI DO ON HER SABBATICAL?

As I'm sure most of you know by now, I will be taking a four-month sabbatical from mid-December 2013 to mid-April 2014. Many of you have met Ora Nitkin-Kaner, now a third-year student at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia. Ora has already garnered a good amount of rabbinic experiences, among them, serving in an intensive chaplaincy training program at Bellevue Hospital in New York City; leading Jewish teens on a service trip to India; as well as service leading in different venues. There will be other opportunities to meet Ora this fall, so stay tuned for announcements.



Many of you have asked me what I will be doing with my time off. One of my plans is to take Yiddish classes at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City. The YIVO Institute was founded in Vilna, Poland (now Lithuania) in 1925 by European intellectuals, including Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud. As Europe swiftly modernized between the two World Wars, YIVO's founders believed that documenting the history of Jewish communities in Eastern Europe was essential. How right they were! In 1940, YIVO was fortunately able to relocate to New York – just in time, as the Nazis swept through Europe. Today, YIVO has an enormous library, as well as archives that hold over 24 million documents, photographs, recordings, films, and so forth, all documenting a world all but lost in Hitler's Europe. YIVO also runs classes in Yiddish language, Eastern European history, and other specialized topics.

Why am I taking Yiddish? Several reasons. Probably the major catalyst for my decision has been my recent interest in Klezmer music. Over the last few years, I haven't been able to get enough of this special, soulful music from Eastern Europe. Plus, the resurgence over the last 25 years or so of Klezmer (and Yiddish language and culture in general) has produced numerous Klezmer groups, playing both traditional as well as a kind of hybrid Jazz-Klezmer that is both innovative and irresistible.

Moreover, Yiddish is one of the most expressive and colorful languages of Europe, combining elements of Hebrew, Slavic and other languages into its base of Medieval German. No wonder some of the best Jewish literature, theatre, and film are in Yiddish. For centuries, Yiddish was/is the mammaloschen (the "mother tongue") of European Jews.

Finally, I have an interest in how Yiddish is still used today – particularly among non-Jews in Germany and other parts of Europe. Although most of the Jewish population was murdered by the Nazis, remnants of the language remain. One of my goals is to research and perhaps write an article on this topic.

What else will I be doing on my sabbatical? Well, you'll probably see me a lot more at the gym... or maybe in a Tai Chi or Yoga class. And I may take a trip or two.

Our Sabbatical committee thought very carefully about my duties here at CKS, and I have great confidence that between Ora and the Board, all will be well taken care of. In the meantime, I'll be around till

December 13th. I hope you'll come to Shabbat services that night and see me off!

B'Shalom uvracha/With peace and blessings,
Rabbi Susan

And speaking of the Shabbat service on Dec 13th, please join us as we share tokens for Rabbi Susan to take on her sabbatical adventures. Bring your thoughts, write a song, reveal a memory, impart a wish. We will have a pot luck dinner at 6:00 PM, organized by Bonnie Kramer, with sharing afterwards, hosted by Iris Rubinstein. We hope you'll come and make this special Shabbat more meaningful as we send Rabbi Susan off on a (brief) sabbatical and welcome Rabbi Ora to our congregational family. Questions? Contact Iris at igrubinstein@gmail.com or Bonnie at eldercaresolutions@comcast.net.



Tree of Life


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Contact CKS Office
908-359-0420




The CKS Gift Shop
is open each Sunday
11 am - 12 noon

Questions?
Susan Waskow 609-333-1113
or Iris Rubinstein 609-947-2633



Now in its 18th full year, CKS's non-sectarian pre-school for children 2½ to 5 years old, offers a unique atmosphere, giving children a chance to explore, create, and most importantly, learn to think and reason.

For more information, call 908-359-0420





CKS RELIGIOUS SCHOOL MONTHLY NEWS DECEMBER 2013



Dear CKS Families,
Last month, I had the privilege to attend the Reconstructionist Educators of North America (RENA) annual conference which was held at the Pearlstone Retreat Center in Reisertown, MD. The focus of the conference was “Reconstructioning Congregational Education – Keeping supplementary schools relevant and engaging.” It was three days of learning, collaborating and networking with 25 Reconstructionist educators from all over the United States.



The Torah portion read during this conference week was Vayetze, which we studied with Rabbi David Teutsch, Director of the Contemporary Year Program at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and the Director of the Center for Jewish Ethics. In this portion Jacob wakes up, stops to reflect on his dream, and discovers that “God was in this place, and I didn’t know it.” Jacob chooses to be there, to recognize this inspiring moment in his life. Rabbi Teutsch shared with us a connection to Jacob’s moment: “This place that I’m in can be a place of wonder. I need to be mindful and fully present in the moment and the place to experience it.” This conference gave us the opportunity to stop and reflect on the rewarding work we do and to connect with colleagues to share successes and problem-solve our challenges.

Some highlights from the conference included:

- Being introduced to new technological methods including Google Drive and creative ways to use web pages.
- Exploring the prophets through a modern lens led by Rabbi Isaac Saposnik, Director of Camp JRF. The exciting and engaging methods he used will help our students personally connect to the prophets.
- Sharing teaching strategies with a Reconstructionist perspective.
- Engaging in a productive discussion with representatives from the newly configured Reconstructionist movement, collaborating on a vision of mutual support between the movement and RENA educators.
- Participating in an engaging workshop with Marilyn Price, renowned Jewish educator, who made Torah stories relevant to our lives using imagery and puppetry.

I would like to thank the CKS community for supporting my professional development. This conference energized me with knowledge and provided me with strategies to create opportunities for our community to enjoy Jewish experiences of learning and living through a Reconstructionist lens.

- *Shari Rethstein*

DECEMBER EVENTS

Sunday, December 1, 2013

No School—Thanksgiving Break

Friday, December 6, 2013 - 7:00pm

5th - 7th graders will help lead Shabbat services.

Sunday, December 8, 2013

- K-2nd GRADE FAMILY WORKSHOP - 9:30am

Shma Pajama Party - all students and parents are encouraged to wear their PJs.

- MUSIC with Moreh Eric

- 6th Grade Mitzvah Buddy Family Meetings

Sunday, December 15, 2013

COOKING

Friday, December 20, 2013 - 7:30pm

Kehiloft led Shabbat services

Sunday, December 22 & 29, 2013

No School - Winter Break

Looking Ahead

Friday, January 3, 2014

Family Shabbat Services led by Rabbi Ora

Sunday, January 5, 2014

Music with Moreh Eric

Sunday, January 12, 2014

Cooking and Tu b'Shevat celebration

Sunday, January 19, 2014

Regular day of Religious School

Sunday, January 26, 2014

Visit from Camp JRF - Parents are invited
6th Grade Family Workshop

Kehi-Loft



My name is Hudson Waller, and I have recently joined the Kehi-Loft program at CKS. During my years in Hebrew School, I was unsure and unconfident about the study of Judaism. However, I gained more self-assurance, which played an immense factor in my Bar Mitzvah studies. I set myself to never give up, and used that motto throughout my daily life as well. This

would set a positive environment, and allow me to be in a friendlier community.

One of these communities was Kehi-Loft, where I knew I could come at the end of a stressful school day and be with other teenagers who are easily relatable. Here, I knew that I could be myself without getting judged or questioned. That resulted in a positive feeling, because I know that thousands of other children worldwide are not as fortunate to even feel comfortable. Perhaps one of the largest causes for that is bullying, which has unfortunately consumed the nation. For some strange reason, making others feel like outsiders brings joy and satisfaction to some people. However, that one bully is not what hurts most to the victim. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." Being a bystander is being a person that does not have the courage to confront the bully, or defend the victim.

I am currently reading a novel by Markus Zusak titled "The Book Thief", about a German family who hides a Jewish man during the Holocaust. The Jew asks the family, "If your eyes could speak, what would they say?" If a bystander's eyes could speak the tragedy of bullying, what words would come? Would they be thinking of anger, pity, or thankfulness it is not them? Just the word *thankfulness* can mean a mouthful, (especially during the upcoming Thanksgiving) as some children would have to ponder for quite a while about what they are thankful for. I can easily say that I am thankful for being a part of a healthy community, having a loving family, supportive friends, a good education, food to eat, and a warm home to come to at the end of the day. (Although some kids may never feel grateful, as they spend their whole time outside of school worrying about the next day!) No matter the situation though, everybody has a story, and has been through a hard place in his or her life.

That is one of the many things that I enjoy about Kehi-Loft – everybody there has a story. We all have a variety of obstacles within our lives. But that never gets in the way of this varied group of teenagers. Every meeting begins with stating something good that happened to us during the week. And each person always has something to share, whether it be getting an A on a test, or holding the door for somebody else. These then turn into happiness, just as we all are on Thanksgiving and Hanukkah. Spending time with family, eating delicious food (and of course some presents) all comes together into a day of joy and love. But Thanksgiving is not the only day to feel like this. As sung in the musical "RENT", "no other road, no day but today." So forget life's troubles, and live every day like it is your last. I do this by waking up in a positive manner, and know I am excited

for whatever the day has to offer. I hope that all CKS members and everybody else can live like this too, and have a happy Thanksgiving!

Shalom! *Hudson Waller*

DECEMBER

Monday, Dec 2 - 7:00 - 8:30. **New Date.** Chanukah program at Stonebridge

Wednesday, Dec 11 - Judy Turkheimer leads discussion

Sunday, Dec 15 - Social session. Paint mural.

Friday, Dec 20 - 7:30 - 9:30. **New session.** Kehiloft leads Shabbat services

JANUARY 2014

Sunday, Jan 5 12:00 - 2:00. First session with Rabbi Ora

Wednesday, Jan 15 - Regular session, possibly continue painting mural

Wednesday, Jan 22 - Shabbat service prep

Invitations by Sharon

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Jewish Community

Jewish LIFE

Join us for these upcoming Jewish LIFE program

Letty Cottin Pogrebin, author of *How to Be a Friend to a Friend Who's Sick*. **Wednesday, December 4, 12:00 p.m.** Hosted by the Birnbaum JCC, Bridgewater. Program includes luncheon. Ms. Pogrebin will be sharing her experiences of friends' and relatives' diverse reactions to her suffering from breast cancer including how some friends and family members behaved; how some misspoke or misinterpreted her needs; and how wonderful it was when people read her right.



Fee: \$18/person in advance or \$22 at the door. This program is being co-sponsored by Brandeis National Committee, Somerset Chapter; Jewish Family Service of Somerset, Hunterdon & Warren Counties; Jewish Federation Women's Philanthropy of Somerset, Hunterdon & Warren Counties; Hadassah; Temple Beth-El, Hillsborough Sisterhood; Temple Beth El, Somerset Sisterhood; Temple Sholom, Bridgewater, Sisterhood.

The Irma Horowitz Film Series featuring *Falafel and Short Israeli Films*. **Thursday, December 12, 6:30 p.m.** Films presented by the Ma'aleh School of Television Film and Arts in Jerusalem include: *The Breakfast Parliament*, *The Ranch* and *The Rabbi's Daughter*. Hosted by the Birnbaum JCC, Bridgewater. Fee includes Falafel dinner: \$10/person in advance or \$15 at the door.

Dr. Robert Harris, Associate Professor of Bible at The Jewish Theological Seminary, will present *Jews and Christian Read Scripture*, **Thursday, January 30 at 7 p.m.** Dr. Harris will be examining the commonalities as well as the differences between Jews and Christians in medieval biblical study; the relationships and mutual influences that Rabbis and churchmen had on one another (particularly in northern France) and, in particular, the polemics through which they typically interacted. The program will be hosted by the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC in Bridgewater. The event fee is \$8/person in advance and \$10/person.



To register for all Jewish LIFE Programs, please call the Birnbaum JCC at 908-725-6994 x201.

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(908)725-6994 x210
dgolden@ssbjcc.org

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DECEMBER 2013



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1 NO RELIGIOUS SCHOOL 4:00 PM Stonebridge Chanukah Celebration 6:00 PM Chanukkah Dinner and Celebration	2	3 7:15 PM Spiritual Development Group 7:30 PM Mah Jongg	4	5	6 7:00 PM 5 - 7 Grade Family Shabbat Services	7
8 9:00 AM Religious School	9	10 7:30 PM Mah Jongg	11 6:00 PM Kehiloft	12 7:30 PM Board Meeting	13 7:30 PM Shabbat Services	14
15 9:00 AM Religious School 6:00 PM Kehiloft	16	17 7:30 PM Mah Jongg	18 7:00 PM Education Committee	19	20 7:30 PM Shabbat Services	21
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Deadline for next newsletter:
December 15th

December 2013

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