

# Congregation Kehilat Shalom NEWS

A Welcoming Jewish Reconstructionist Community

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Newsletter of the Congregation Kehilat Shalom of Belle Mead, NJ **January 2016** Tevet — Sh'vat 5776

## Bulletin from the Board- Gregory Corsan

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In this first newsletter of 2016, I plan to share a few thoughts I had after recently attending my uncle's funeral in San Rafael, California. After his passing, my sister, niece and I accompanied my elderly mother on a flight to attend her brother's funeral. I was much closer to my uncle Jack Kadesh as a child growing up in Albany, as he'd moved to California over 40 years ago to build a life, career and family. Of course, I'd seen him at family events over the years, but I really can't say I knew much of his life's work and connections to his community until his memorial service in November. Aside from once serving as local synagogue president, my uncle worked as the Regional Director for the American Technion Society for over 25 years, which gave his life a deep sense of purpose. Technion is the Israeli Institute of Technology, one of the leading high tech universities in the world. During his tenure as Director, I learned that my uncle took his chapter from less than \$1 million in annual donations, to more than \$80 million in recent years. In addition to his own children's loving memories of their dad, friends of 50 years got up and spoke warmly of my uncle, and of the many projects they had participated in together in supporting the local temple and Jewish community. Friends described multiple trips to Israel to "schmooze" donors into giving to Technion. In summary, after sitting through the memorial service, I was in awe of the life and legacy my uncle had created by being a loving father and husband, and through his love and commitment to Jewish community and values. I imagine that all of us would like to be remembered one day like this.



Since recently starting my role as CKS treasurer, I have learned so much about the many talented people on the board that allow CKS to function. An incredible amount of time is spent by board members and congregants in planning events, and making the CKS experience welcoming and enriching for everyone. We are so fortunate to have CKS in our community given the relatively small Jewish population of Montgomery and surrounding areas. But we need to grow, not only in membership, but in the participation of all members in synagogue activities. Every member needs to have a connection – maybe it's primarily a social connection, a need to fulfill a spiritual yearning, or maybe you just need a place for your kids to begin their Jewish education. We all have busy lives, but CKS needs every member to get involved on some level. In this coming New Year think about what you can do to connect. It can be as simple as volunteering for a committee, or helping on an activity. Perhaps you can afford to make a financial donation to support the operations of the temple. Do what you can; we all have strengths and knowledge that, in some way, can benefit CKS. As Winston Churchill once said: "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

*Greg Corsan, Treasurer*

## CKS Donations

CKS gratefully acknowledges the generosity of our members and friends.

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in honor of Kate Fridkis  
in honor of Kol Ahava  
in memory of Mary Barondess  
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Anonymous

### High Holiday

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Donations from Neusner, Fraticelli, Millman, Nord, Lubin, Gartenberg, Krisiloff, Bartels and Todd specified they were part of the Grateful Giving Campaign.

### Remember CKS when you donate:

Dues only cover a portion of the CKS operating budget. Consider making a donation in memory of a loved one, honoring an accomplishment, or recognizing a friend or colleague.

### RICHARD M. NADLER, DMD, FAGD



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## Grassroots Judaism

My name is Scott Strauss and I am the newest member of the Ritual Committee at CKS. As a lifelong Conservative/Reform Jew with deep roots in Israel, I have enjoyed learning and experiencing the differences between Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism. Joining the Ritual Committee has given me even more insight into Reconstructionism. One of the things I have learned is that there is more freedom to change, or even to create, new rituals. Of course, this freedom comes with both more expectations of the congregation, as well as more personal responsibility.

What I mean by this is that Reconstructionist Judaism is grassroots Judaism. When Mordecai Kaplan first set down the tenets which would define Reconstructionism, he looked to democratize religion. His goal to demystify Torah, Talmud and Jewish Law, and to put more decision-making power regarding ritual and other practice in the hands of the community, rather than just the hands of the rabbis.<sup>1</sup>

What does this mean for congregants at CKS? It means that congregants have an opportunity to play an active role in creating ritual and policy at CKS. It means that it can be your voice helping to set the tone of Shabbat services, holiday celebrations, and High Holy Days. Congregants are represented by the Ritual Committee, whose members set ritual policy along with the Rabbi. The Rabbi acts as a guide and arbiter, to make sure that what we want is consistent with the tenets of Jewish Law. One of the great things about being a Reconstructionist congregation is that every member can take ownership of his or her own Jewish experience. I believe that by taking an active role, coming to services, volunteering, and interacting with the congregation, we can all have meaningful spiritual lives at CKS. Doing this gives us all the ability to make a positive impact, and together create vibrant spiritual life for our congregation.

I invite you to share with me the experience of grassroots Judaism. It's made a difference in my life and maybe it will make a difference for you too!

*Scott Strauss*, Ritual Committee

# Tu B'Shevat



<sup>1</sup> Seventy Years after "Judaism as a Civilization": Mordecai Kaplan's Theology and the Reconstructionist Movement Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer; *Jewish Social Studies*: New Series, Vol 12, No 2, Mordecai Kaplan's "Judaism as a Civilization": The Legacy of an American Idea (Winter 2006), pp127-142

## Message from the Rabbi

### CALLING ALL SEEKERS: THE BEIT MIDRASH IS OPEN



What is a midrash? We often think of a midrash as a tale woven by the ancient rabbis to complement or fill in the gaps of our Biblical narratives. But really, the meaning of the word "midrash" is simply "interpretation". A midrash, then, can be an interpretation of a law as well as a story.

One of the mainstays of the CKS mission is to provide a Beit Midrash, that is, a "house of learning" for our members to study and discuss Judaism, as well as a whole host of issues relevant to our personal lives, and/or our society. This past fall, we heard from Rabbi Rachel Kahn-Troster of T'ruah: A Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, as she spoke about modern-day slavery in the agricultural industry in our country. We followed up this visit with the screening of "Food Chains", an important and engaging film regarding the history of agricultural workers in the United States, as well as the recent struggles and gains of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in the tomato farms in Florida.

Beginning this month, I will conduct a three-part adult education series on the values and wisdom that Jewish tradition can provide us when dealing with illness and end-of-life decisions. I am aware that many of you have lost loved ones over the years, or are taking care of ill and aging parents. Many of you have questions on how to make sense of suffering, on Jewish beliefs about afterlife, and on whether Jewish practices and rituals exist that can help us during these often difficult lifecycle transitions. This series of adult education classes is meant to answer these questions.

The first of these sessions, "Using Jewish Values in Making End-of-Life Decisions", will be on January 17<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 am. Together we will learn what both our ancient ancestors and contemporary Jewish scholars say about using life-sustaining equipment, hospice, and other kinds of end-of-life care. During this session, we will also make time to discuss how to navigate the sometimes highly emotional decisions that we may face at the end of life for ourselves or for our loved ones.

Session 2, "Prayers of Mourning, Prayers of Healing" will take place on February 28, 2016. In this class, we will study the familiar prayers of mourning – Kaddish, El Maleh Rachamim, and Psalm 23 – and discuss how they can be of help (or not!) in times of grief and mourning. Finally, on April 3, 2016, we will meet again for Session 3, entitled, "Body and Soul: Jewish

Beliefs about the Afterlife". At this time, we will learn about all the many, and often contradictory, Jewish teachings about the afterlife, as well as take time to grapple with these concepts and teachings for ourselves.

I hope you'll come, grab a cup of coffee at our "Bagel Café", and join in this valuable and meaningful learning and discussion. The word "midrash" comes from the Hebrew root "to seek". This winter and spring, let's fill the CKS Beit Midrash with as many seekers as possible. If you have an idea for an adult education topic, please contact me, Susan Waskow, Scott Strauss, or Richard Rosenberg.

B'Shalom,  
*Rabbi Susan*



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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 21st 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





### *How do we define successful Jewish education?*

We could say that it is the process that teaches skills and concepts, and sets in motion a lifetime of Jewish study. Before we get to this point though, we must be able to give our youngest students a happy experience where they will develop pleasant memories and associations with things Jewish.

Curriculum is more than a listing of courses and books. It is also a philosophy and approach to Judaism. At CKS, we work to provide a friendly, warm, and positive environment in which we can nurture our children's natural curiosity and enthusiasm for Jewish learning. The curriculum is crucial, but most important is the way our children feel about being here and learning here. We seek to give our students the gift of their Jewish heritage so that they will have a fascination with Jewish holidays and life cycle events and a passion for looking at the world Jewishly.

As Jews, we are united in our commitment to God, Torah, and Israel—both the people and the country – and are bound to each other by common values, language, stories, music, food, and traditions. Because we want to give our children a foundation for Jewish life and an identity that will last their whole lives, our teachers bring all of this into the classroom. With our enthusiasm and love of everything Jewish, we make Judaism come alive for our children.



### **WINTER WEATHER SCHOOL CLOSINGS**

In the event that it becomes necessary to cancel school due to inclement weather, school closings will be transmitted through EMAIL. PLEASE CHECK email first, before calling the school.

Best wishes to everyone for a happy and healthy "secular" new year.

The faculty and I look forward to the rest of the school year with continued excitement and enthusiasm!

### **RELIGIOUS SCHOOL REMINDERS:**

**Sunday, December 27 -**

**Sunday, January 3: NO RELIGIOUS SCHOOL: *Winter break***

**Religious school resumes on Sunday, January 10**

**Friday, January 8:** Shabbat Mishpachah, 7:00pm (Kehiloft led)

**Sunday, January 10:** 4th grade PACT program: *Saying Goodbye to Shabbat*

**Sunday, January 17:** Regular school session; MUSIC

**Saturday, January 23:** Bat Mitzvah, PAIGE KOWALSKI, 9:30am; Shabbat Mishpachah

**Sunday, January 24:** 6th grade PACT program: *Torah, Torah, Torah*; COOKING

**Sunday, January 31:** Tu B'Shevat program: Ecology skit by Kehiloft

CAMP JRF Orientation (for grades 3-7) 11:30-12:00

**Friday, February 5:** Shabbat Mishpachah, 7:00pm (6th grade) with Shabbat dinner, 6:00pm

**Sunday, February 7:** 7th grade orientation to Kehiloft program with parents (10:45am-12:00pm)

COOKING

## Kehiloft, the next step in your Jewish journey

November was quite the busy month in Kehiloft! We started out by performing a skit for our D'var Torah on Friday November 20th at a Friday night Shabbat service.



The skit, as well as the Shabbat service (which Kehiloft led without any help from Rabbi Susan or Morah Karen) both went very smoothly! Personally, I really enjoyed playing Leah, a major role in the D'var Torah skit of Vayetze, and also leading the congregation in prayer during the service.

In addition to leading that service, Kehiloft has BIG NEWS! Because Kehiloft often performs D'var Torah skits when leading Shabbat services and we perform at many other occasions for the Religious School students, we have decided (as a group) to create a name for the acting branch of Kehiloft. We decided on the name "The Kehiloft Players", because we felt it was a name that best suited us, and we think it's a good way to spread the word of our acting expertise to the congregants here at CKS.

Kehiloft had a busy couple of weeks before Hanukkah, as we prepared our crafts for each Religious School class. We spent a meeting on just setting up and prepping for Hanukkah crafts. On December 6th, we met with each Religious School

class, and made special Hanukkah crafts that the students got to take home with them afterward. I really enjoyed having the opportunity to lead crafts and they all seemed to turn out really well! The jumbo rocket dreidels were a big hit! We also had a couple 8<sup>th</sup> grade Kehiloft members (Jared and Ethan) lead some of the crafts, which was really helpful. Nice job guys!

Looking ahead, Kehiloft is currently preparing for our next Kehiloft Shabbat service, which will take place in early January. This will be a family Shabbat service, however, as always, all are welcome! The Kehiloft Players might even make an appearance so don't miss out!

I hope everyone enjoys their winter break, whether it be from school or work, or just a break from any stress in general. Best wishes from us to you for a peaceful and restful break!

*Charlotte Birnbaum*

### SCHEDULE JANUARY

**Friday, January 8** - Shabbat service #2 (family service)

**Wednesday, January 13** - Rabbi Susan leads discussion #3

**Wednesday, January 20** - Prep for Kehiloft introduction workshops in RS

**Sunday, January 24 morning -- NEW** -session w/6th graders during Religious School.

**Sunday, January 31 morning- NEW** -compost skit performed in RS for Tu B'Shvat

### FEBRUARY

**Wednesday, February 3** - Rabbi Susan leads discussion #3

**Sunday, February 7 - 10:45 - 12:00** 7th grade family workshop into to Kehiloft

**Wednesday, February 17** - Regular session

**Wednesday, February 24** - Purim spiel rehearsal

*Session time is 6:00 - 8:00 unless otherwise noted. Kehiloft board meets 5:30-6:00 before each Wednesday session. PLEASE NOTE CHANGES TO JANUARY'S SCHEDULE.*

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# Jewish LIFE

It's the start of the New Year, and new programs from Jewish LIFE!

Alice Eve Cohen, author of *The Year My Mother Came Back (a Memoir)*, is the featured guest speaker on **Thursday, January 7, 12 Noon** at the Birnbaum JCC, Bridgewater. Join us for *The Irma Horowitz Film Series featuring Falafel and*



*Films Thursday, January 14, 6:30pm* at the Birnbaum JCC, Bridgewater with a special screening of *Havana Curveball*. The film will be followed with Q & A with the filmmakers in California (via Skype).



**Looking ahead to February...**

Chaya Deitsch will lead a discussion on *Here and There: Leaving Chasidim, Keeping My Family* **Thursday, February 4 at 12 Noon** at the Birnbaum JCC,



Bridgewater. On **Friday, February 5**, Chabad of Hunterdon County is hosting a Shabbat Dinner with guest speaker, Rabbi Professor Eli Silberstein.



Jay Michaelson will discuss *The Gate of Tears: Sadness and the Spiritual Path*, **Thursday, February 25, 12 Noon** at the Birnbaum JCC,

Bridgewater. (This program is co-sponsored by JFS.)

Save the Date... **Tuesday, April 12** for our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Celebrate Israel event at Raritan Valley Country Club in Bridgewater. Our distinguished guest speaker is Malcolm Hoenline, Executive Vice Chairman of the [Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations](#). More details to come!

If you have any questions regarding Jewish LIFE, and to register for special events, please contact the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC at 908-725-6994 x201. To register for synagogue-hosted classes and special events, please register directly through the host synagogue.

## Judaism at the End of Life Starting in January

**A Three Part Series: Judaism at the End of Life**  
Taught by Rabbi Susan Falk

**January 17th** at 9:30 am - Part 1, Using Jewish Values in Making End-of-Life Decisions Through study and discussion, learn how Jewish teachings can illuminate and provide guidance with the issues people face in making end of life decisions and the search for meaning. Together we will discuss navigating technological advances, patient self-determination, and the ability to control one's own destiny.

**February 28th** at 9:30 am - Part 2, Prayers of Mourning, Prayers of Healing

**April 3rd** at 9:30 am - Part 3, Body and Soul: Jewish Beliefs about the Afterlife  
Members free. Non-member suggested donation, \$7.00, \$18 for all three  
For questions or additional information contact the synagogue office, 908-359-0420 or [admin@ksjn.org](mailto:admin@ksjn.org)

# JANUARY 2016



Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4 7:30pm Mah Jongg	5	6	7 7:30pm Exec Committee	8 7:00pm Shabbat Mishpachah by Kehiloft	9
10 9:00am Religious School	11 7:30pm Mah Jongg	12	13 6:00pm Kehiloft	14 7:30pm Board Meeting	15 7:30pm Shabbat Services	16
17 9:00am Religious School 9:30am Judaism at the End of Life, Part 1: Using Jewish Values in Making End-of-Life Decisions	18 7:30pm Mah Jongg	19	20 6:00pm Kehiloft	21	22 7:30pm Shabbat Services	23 9:15am Paige Kowalski Bat Mitzvah 9:15am Shabbat Mishpachah
24 9:00am Religious School 6:00pm Kehiloft	25 <b>TU B'SHEVAT</b> 7:30pm Mah Jongg	26 7:00pm Ritual Committee Meeting	27 7:00pm Membership Committee	28	29 7:30pm Shabbat Services	30
31 9:00am Religious School 1:00pm Reconstructionist Day of Learning						

The CKS office hours are changing. Until further notice the hours are as follows: Monday - Thursday: 8:30 am - 4:00 pm  
Friday: 8:30 am - 3:30 pm Sunday: 9:00 am - noon. Should you need assistance from the office outside of these hours contact Robin at 908-359-0420 or [admin@ksnj.org](mailto:admin@ksnj.org)

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*Fulfilling the religious, educational and social needs of our Jewish community since 1982.*

**January 2016**

Deadline for next newsletter:  
**January 15<sup>th</sup>**

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