

Congregation Kehilat Shalom NEWS

A Welcoming Jewish Reconstructionist Community

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Newsletter of the Congregation Kehilat Shalom of Belle Mead, NJ **February 2016** Sh'vat — Adar I 5776

Bulletin from the Board - William Ries

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Published by:

Calli-Graphics

Proofreader: Shana Bartels

I've started the New Year feeling especially grateful for all the good things in my life, and after attending a recent Shabbat service conducted by Kehiloft, I felt even more appreciation for being a part of CKS. The teens led prayers and songs, performed a skit filled with humor, and led a thoughtful discussion with both the children and the adults in the congregation. I couldn't help but to be reminded of the people at CKS who make possible moments like these. They commit their time and energy to the spiritual, educational, and social health of this community, as well as its financial and operational fitness.



I'd also like to share great news about our Grateful Giving campaign. The overall goal of the campaign is to sustain CKS by expanding our program offerings, such as adult education, and rebuilding our financial reserves (which had been at low levels due to recent building upgrades and other one-time costs). We were pleased to learn that some very generous families had offered matching grants to CKS, so the Grateful Giving campaign focused on encouraging donations from the entire community to benefit from this remarkable opportunity. It is wonderful to be able to say that CKS received so many contributions from our community that we have been able to realize nearly the entire \$20,000 match offered to us! We're almost there, but we still have a few thousand dollars more to raise. So, if you are still thinking about donating, your contribution can really make a difference. Please remember: the Grateful Giving campaign lasts until June 30.

We'll have another great opportunity to enrich our community, and to have some fun with friends while we are at it. Our annual spring event will be held on Saturday, April 9. It's called "Cruisin' CKS" and you'll be able to board the good ship and set sail for an evening of entertainment, shopping, food, and more! Donations for the Cruisin' CKS auction are now being accepted, and any submitted before February 28 will be featured on our auction website. And, if you have a nice bottle of wine you'd like to give, I'd love to include it in our mystery wine station. Invitations for Cruisin' CKS will be mailed out soon, and I hope to see you there!

I hope you've also been able to reflect recently on the good things in your life! If you haven't, take a few moments to do so - you might find that the list is longer than you think! I wish everyone's 2016 to be a year filled with love, health, and happiness.

William Ries, Trustee

CKS Donations

CKS gratefully acknowledges the generosity of our members and friends.

General

- ♥Michael Kalison & Debbie Lampf
- ♥Bob Sohor
- ♥Barbara & Tom Berger
- ♥Diane Wions
- ♥Debbie & Gary Gartenberg
- ♥Ron & Donna Lubin
- ♥Bob & Peggy Fass
- ♥Marc & Harlene Rosenberg
- ♥Sharon Underberg Davis

In grateful recognition of Sheryl Rosenberg for years of adding her beautiful voice and spirit to Kol Ahava

- ♥Michael Kalison & Debbie Lampf
In honor of the birth of Aviva, Kate & Simon's Berring's new baby
- ♥Michael Kalison & Debbie Lampf
In thanks for all the healing prayers for our friends & family
- ♥Aaron & Tracy Goldberg
- ♥Mike Arons
- ♥Lisa & Rich Kent
- ♥Natalie London
Welcome to Aviva Berring and Mazel Tov to the Berring & Fridkis families.
With thanks to all who organized and participated in the Stonebridge Hanukkah celebration: Susan Waskow, Rabbi Susan, Kol Ahava, Kehiloft students, Janis Todd, Jon Bartels, Fraticelli family, Gabi Rubenstein and all the other CKS members who participated.
In memory of the yarzeits of Julian Gelvan, Meyer London, Nathan London, Thoraya Albarell, Della Gorovitz and Lillian Mahler
- ♥Amy & Chris Doelling
- ♥Marc & Harlene Rosenberg
In honor of the birth of Aviva Fridkis Berring, daughter of Kate & Simon Berring and granddaughter of Karen & Larry Fridis
- ♥Janis Barondess Todd & Alan Todd
In honor of Jeff Bachrach's 60th birthday
In memory of Barbara Pulvers
- ♥Steve & Bonnie Kramer
- ♥Albert & Ellen Dweck
- ♥Rendi Dalpe
- ♥Eleanor & Herb Tillman
In memory of Morris Levitsky and Sylvia Tillman
- ♥Joel Schindler
- ♥Eleanor & Herb Tillman
In memory of Carrie Levitsky

High Holiday

- ♥Steve & Thea Morrison

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

- ♥Jane Shapiro & Bob Eckardt
- ♥Lisa & Rich Kent
- ♥Natalie London

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.



Judaism at the End of Life

On Sunday morning, January 17th, 35 people streamed into our sanctuary eager to study and discuss a subject that can be hard to find guidance on- the end of life. Through Talmud and other text studies, Rabbi Susan skillfully expounded on Jewish values which have stood the test of time, regarding illness, death, and dying. There was energetic and emotional discussion about the fine line between prolonging life and hastening death, questions about when life truly ends, discussion about patient self-determination, and many shared stories about shepherding loved ones through the process with love and dignity. The support of the congregation during illness and end of life was mentioned more than once during the morning, as a positive aspect of Judaism at the end of life.

The series will continue on the morning of February 28th with "*Prayers of Mourning, Prayers of Healing.*" What do the traditional Jewish prayers teach us about grief and loss? How can these ancient words offer us comfort as we confront our loved ones and our own mortality? We will study three familiar prayers from the liturgy and discuss how they can be of help in times of grief and mourning. Basic mourning practices and rituals will also be reviewed. We urge all adults who have been challenged by this difficult end of life issues, to consider attending. For questions or additional information, or to pre-register contact Robin at the temple office or email her at admin@kehilatshalom.org. We hope to see you there.



OF ANGELS AND STARDUST



(Editor's note: in order to give the rabbi a break during a particularly stressful week, I have decided to run this column from February of 2009, for reasons which should be obvious upon re-reading.)

This month in our Torah cycle, we chant the *shirat ha-yam*, the Song of the Sea, an ancient Israelite poem re-enacting that mythical moment of the splitting of the Sea, and of our Redemption from slavery. In the Torah scroll itself, the poem stands out, the Hebrew words sprawling boldly across the parchment in three distinct columns meant to resemble the sea walls on either side with the Israelites marching up through the middle. Roughly halfway down the page, if you look carefully, you will find the words: *Mi chamocha ba-eilim Adonai, mi kamocho ne-e-dar ba-kodesh, norah tehilot, oseh fele*, "Who is like You among the gods, Adonai, who is like You, splendid in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders!" We chant these famous words not just on Shabbat, but in the daily liturgy as well. So profound is the moment of Redemption in the mind and heart of the Jewish spirit!

The Torah text states that Moses and the children of Israel sang the entire Song of the Sea when they, in awe and joy and incredulity, witnessed this moment of their oppressor crushed beneath the waves. Our ancient Rabbis, however, tell another story about this moment. Their story, their midrash, concerns not what happened on earth, but what happened in the heavens, in the minds and hearts of God and the angels. The Rabbis said that when the angels saw the sea walls collapse upon Pharaoh's army, they too, like their human counterparts, began to burst into songs of praise. But God rebuked them instantly saying, "The works of My hands are drowning in the sea, and you would utter song in My presence!" With these words, God appeals to the angels' better nature. In telling this story, the Rabbis appeal to the "better angels of our nature" (to borrow a phrase from Abraham Lincoln's first Inaugural Address in 1861). While all deserve liberty, we do not rejoice at the destruction of our enemies.

I write these words on a snowy Martin Luther King Day, and on the day before the inauguration of our new President, Barack Obama – may he be blessed with the wisdom and strength to lead us. I write these words as a new cease-fire is implemented between Israel and Hamas – may it be of long-lasting, eternal effect.

These are hard times. We are all concerned with the violence and acts of terror that exist in Israel and Gaza, in Iraq and Afghanistan, in Sudan and Zimbabwe – and right here on our own city streets. I know also that some of you have lost your jobs, and

that most of us have watched our hard-earned savings diminish.

These are hard times. But our ancient Rabbis also teach us that we human beings have a dual nature – part earthly, part heavenly; or if you prefer, part dust-of-the-earth, part stardust. And the human condition, the human struggle, is the constant search for the "better angels of our nature". Our country – and our world – are in search of these angels right now.

May our own little corner of the world, Congregation Kehilat Shalom, be a place where we can search out and find those better angels in ourselves and in each other. May it be a safe haven where we can pray and eat and learn together – and create a vibrant, healthy, peaceful, and unified *kehilah kedoshah*, a sacred community.

Keyn yehi ratzon. May it be so soon and speedily in our time.

With blessings for peace and prosperity,

Rabbi Susan

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

Tree of Life

Purchase a leaf for \$54 to celebrate a *simcha!* Each leaf includes three lines of engraving.

Contact Shelley Nord
908-874-8464

The CKS Gift Shop is open each Sunday 10 am - 11 am

Questions?
Susan Waskow 609-333-1113
or Harlene Rosenberg 908-874-8283



EVALUATING OUR STUDENTS

Every year toward the end of January or early February, our teachers write evaluations of our students. We do the same at the end of May. Regardless of what we may call these forms--student evaluations, report cards, progress reports--the purpose is to give parents information as to how their children have been doing during the semester just completed.

These reports are unlike the evaluations your child receives in public school. It is difficult to objectively know whether your son deserves a 95 or 80 in understanding "Jewish Values" or whether your daughter has achieved an A or C in learning about "Jewish Holidays." Our method of evaluating whether a child has mastered material is much more subjective than it is in the public schools, and therefore the way in which it is reported to parents must also be subjective.



We use several criteria to evaluate our students. Some of the questions asked are: does the student come prepared to class; does the student listen and follow directions; does the student possess a positive attitude, and does the student participate in class activities. If we know this of each student, then we can better understand if the student is successfully absorbing the material of the curriculum. We then translate this to the parents by indicating areas of excellence or otherwise through a checklist and comments written by each teacher about the student.

We believe that this method is appropriate for reporting your child's progress and we hope that this gives you the information you are seeking. If you would like to discuss the report, or have any other questions or concerns pertaining to your child's studies, please call or email me. Thank you.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL REMINDERS:

- Friday, February 5** Shabbat Mishpachah service, 7pm featuring the 6th grade; Shabbat Dinner, 6:00pm
- Sunday, February 7:** 7th grade orientation to Kehiloft program with parents (10:45-12:00); COOKING
- Sunday, February 14:** **NO RELIGIOUS SCHOOL**, *President's weekend*
- Sunday, February 21:** 5th grade PACT Program: ***Tzedakah and the Giraffe Connection***; MUSIC
- Sunday, February 28:** Regular school session;
Special program: FRESH THEATRE ARTS with Tova Halpern (10:30-12:00)

UPCOMING SPECIAL PROGRAMS:

- Sunday, March 13:** Everyone (age appropriate) is welcome to join us on a school trip to the KELSEY THEATER at Mercer County Community College to see **THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK** (a theater production by the Pennington Players, 2:00pm (More details to follow))

Kehiloft, the next step in your Jewish journey

My name is Lea Goldhammer, and this is my third year in Kehiloft, but my first time writing a newsletter article.



Kehiloft made our first appearance of the New Year on January 8th with a Friday night service. We spent weeks preparing for this service, even tacking on an extra meeting to practice our skit. To get ready for the service we read that week's Torah portion and talked about it. We then created discussion questions based on what we found most interesting. The service went very well, and we provided a thought-provoking skit and discussion afterward. The Torah portion that week was Va'era. Va'era is one of the more well-known parshas, as it depicts Moses' pleas for the Jews' freedom from Egypt, the Pharaoh's refusal, and the plagues. As a community, we discussed questions about hardening one's heart, and when, if ever, it is okay to do so. We were thrilled by the insightful responses from adults, Religious School students, and everyone in between.

The Kehiloft Players made another appearance at the Religious School in January. They performed a skit encouraging students to compost, written by Kehiloft's own Hudson Waller. The skit featured Charlotte Birnbaum playing Trash, Joshua Goldhammer portraying Kid, Compost performed by Hudson, and Recycling played by me! We had lots of fun rehearsing and performing for the kids. My personal favorite part was the rap, which was impossible to deliver with a straight face. Building the compost was a Kehiloft project a few years ago, and we're working hard to keep it going so that CKS can be a more environmentally friendly place.

Speaking of Kehiloft's annual project, at a recent meeting we made our final decision, and I'm excited to be the first to announce the 2016 Kehiloft project! We need to get approval, but if all goes well, we hope to host a Lag B'Omer carnival in early May of this year. It will be held after Religious School on the CKS grounds. There will be games, food, and activities for people of all ages. If all goes well, we're hoping this can become an annual event.

We also had the pleasure of participating in a discussion with Rabbi Susan at a recent Kehiloft meeting. The topic of discussion was Judaism and the afterlife. We started off the meeting with a "mindfulness meditation" led by Rabbi Susan, which I think was the perfect activity to get our heads in the right place for this kind of discussion. We talked

about if we believed in an afterlife at all, as we read quotes from the Torah and ancient Rabbis and compared their ideas to ideas we had discovered in books and movies. One of my favorite quotes described death as merely a transition from one room to another. I and some other Kehilofters particularly liked this idea because it described dying as simple and painless, rather than something to fear. This was one of my favorite sessions with Rabbi Susan, and I definitely learned a lot!

All in all this has been a great month for Kehiloft. We're starting off the New Year strong and looking forward to and wishing you a wonderful 2016!

Lea Goldhammer

SCHEDULE

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 - NEW topic Purim spiel rehearsal

Wednesday, February 24 - Purim spiel rehearsal

MARCH

Wednesday, March 2 - Purim spiel rehearsal

Sunday, March 13 - 9:00 - 12:00 Purim spiel performed by Kehiloft Players

Sunday, March 13 - 12:00 - 2:00 Purim carnival

Wednesday, March 16 - NEW regular session tentative

Spring break 3/20-3/26

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 MARCH'S SCHEDULE.

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Jewish Community

Jewish LIFE

Please join Jewish LIFE for these upcoming programs in 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.)



Looking ahead...

The Jewish Film Series at Temple Beth-El, Hillsborough will be showing the film *Epilogue*, **Saturday March 5 at 7pm**. **Steven Ray Gimbel** will discuss *Einstein, His Space and Times* on **Sunday, March 6, 10:30am** hosted by Or Chadash Flemington.

Join us for *The Irma Horowitz Film Series* featuring *Falafel and Films* **Thursday, March 10, 6:30pm** at the Birnbaum JCC, Bridgewater. Three Israeli short films will be screened, with discussion to follow after each film.

Save the Date...Tuesday, April 12 for our **4th Annual Celebrate Israel** event at Raritan Valley Country Club in Bridgewater. Our honorees this year will be Marjorie & Jonathan Slass, and a Rutgers Hillel Student. The event's distinguished guest speaker is Malcolm Hoenline, Executive Vice Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. The

evening will include a special remembrance of Rabbi Evan Jaffe ז"ל. 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.

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FEBRUARY 2016



February						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1 7:30pm Mah Jongg	2	3 6pm Kehiloft	4 7:30pm Exec Committee	5 6pm Shabbat Dinner 7pm Shabbat Mishpachah	6
7 9am Religious School	8 7:30pm Mah Jongg	9	10	11 7:30pm Board Meeting	12 7:30pm Shabbat Services	13
14	15 Presidents Day 7:30pm Mah Jongg	16	17 6pm Kehiloft	18	19 6pm Shabbat Dinner & Services	20
21 9am Religious School	22 7:30pm Mah Jongg	23 7pm Ritual Committee Meeting	24 6pm Kehiloft 7pm Membership Committee	25	26 7:30pm Shabbat Services	27
28 9am Religious School 9:30am Judaisim at the End of Life	29 7:30pm Mah Jongg					

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

February 2016

Deadline for next newsletter:
February 15th

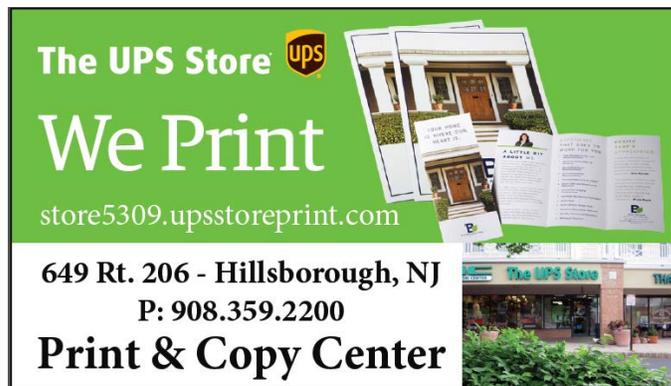
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Gift Shop	Iris Rubinstein
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Kinderappers	Natalie London 908-874-6955
Kehi-Loft (Hebrew High)	Karen Fridkis 609-333-1119
Life Cycle (Caring for Each Other)	Sheryl Rosenberg 908-253-7049 swellcourt@verizon.net
Long Range Planning	Stacey Anderson
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