Song of Songs Celebrated in New Art Exhibit.........................8–9

Thoughts on Israel from Participants in Inter-Faith Trip...............10–13

Bus Tour Explores Connecticut’s Jewish Past.............................16–18

Climbing Jacob’s Ladder Book Discussion on the Spiritual Practice of Mussar...............15

Norman Hanenbaum Honored..........................24

Reflections and Poetry from Leah Thorne............................22
Last year, Belinda Brennan and I spent a day in New York City at a “Yom Iyyun,” or a day of learning about prayer through the Institute for Jewish Spirituality. It was a powerful experience that we shared with at least 200 other people, mostly rabbis and cantors, from all streams of Judaism.

The day began with an hour-long service devoted to praise. The service, led by Cantors Angela Buchdahl and Richard Cohn, was almost all singing. We probably only sang about 5 songs in total — the songs just lasted and lasted and built upon each other to evoke waves of voice, guitar, clapping, and movement, until there really was nothing but praise in our hearts and in the room.

Later, we heard several rabbis and Jewish communal leaders speak about new modes of worship that they have been developing in their own congregations. Belinda and I were both struck by Rabbi David Ingber from the independent congregation called Romemu, in Manhattan. He spoke of his Saturday morning prayer services as a laboratory where the folks who attended were committed to a regular prayer practice and were open to trying new things — from chant to song to silence to movement.

This experience inspired Belinda and myself to explore the idea of creating a prayer laboratory of our own here at CBSRZ. One of the three main themes to emerge from last year’s Listening Campaign was that folks are looking for alternate modes of spiritual expression. We have been responding to this interest by offering meditation and yoga at the synagogue. But we can also use a space and a time to experiment with prayer itself.

The timing turned out to be perfect for exploring this idea. I’ve been studying for many years now with teachers such as Rabbi Jeff Roth, Rabbi Nancy Flam, and others at the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, and I’ve collected ideas, melodies, and new approaches to prayer from those experiences. Belinda has been building up a rich trove of resources from her own personal exploration and from attending conferences with the Women’s Cantors Network. And, we also benefited from a trip that Stephen and Clo Davis and Lary Bloom and Sue Levine took to Shirat Hayam in Swampscott, MA, where they experienced a Renewal-style contemplative, chanted service.

The resources are at our fingertips, and now it’s finally time to begin.

We will be opening our Prayer Lab for Shabbat morning prayer experiences starting on Saturday January 24 at 10:30am. We will convene again on February 21. Watch your weekly emails for the rest of the schedule for the year.

These labs will not be substitutes for our regular monthly second Saturday services, which will continue as usual. We aim to keep the Prayer Lab experience to an hour. As we begin, we will weave melodies and prayers that are already standards that should be familiar to the congregation with new chants and prayers. We will organize the service according to the traditional order, but we won’t use a prayer book — just a sheet with the words to the chants that we will be singing. Most chants are very repetitive, so participants will be able to catch on quickly. Some times we may choose to include a Torah reading experience in a new way — other times there will not be a Torah reading. Instruments such as drums and shakers may find their way into our service. And we will bring opportunities for silent meditation and contemplation, for movement, for teaching, and for spontaneous moments.

Now we need folks who are interested in being a part of this Prayer Lab! You don’t have to sign up. You don’t have to RSVP. But please come and try this out. Whether you find our traditional services satisfying or lacking, this Prayer Lab space is for you to try something new. Come with an open heart, an open mind, and curiosity about what Jewish prayer can be. We’ll explore and experiment together in the petri dish of our beautiful sanctuary.
**January Worship Services**

Friday January 2, 5:45 PM, Tot Shabbat; 6:15 PM, Dairy Potluck Dinner; 7:00 PM, First Friday Shabbat Service

Wednesday January 7, 7:45 AM, Morning Minyan

Friday January 9, 5:45 PM, Erav Shabbat Service

Saturday January 10, 10:30 AM, Second Saturday Shabbat Service and Kiddush Lunch

Wednesday January 14, 7:45 AM, Morning Minyan

Friday January 16, 7:30 PM Erav Shabbat Service and Choir with Speaker Andrew Cohen in Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Wednesday January 21, 7:45 AM, Morning Minyan

Friday January 23, 5:45 PM, Erav Shabbat Service

Wednesday January 28, 7:45 AM, Morning Minyan; 8:30–9:30 AM, Advanced Hebrew; 9:30–10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew; 10:30 AM, B’yachad Committee; 11:00 AM, Education Committee

Thursday, January 30, 5:45 PM, Erav Shabbat Service

**January Events**

- **January 1, **Office closed
- **January 4,** 8:30–9:30 AM, Advanced Hebrew; 11:00 AM, Congregational Meeting and Kiddush Lunch Followed by Shabbat Dinners in Congregants’ Homes
- **January 7,** 10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew; 11:00 AM, Sunday Morning Services
- **January 9,** 9:30–10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew; 11:30 AM, seder program
- **January 10,** 5:30 PM, Facilities Committee; 6:30–7:30 PM, Choir; 7:15 PM, Board Discussion: Jacob’s Ladder
- **January 14,** 9:30–10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew
- **January 16,** 7:00 PM, Program Committee
- **January 17,** 10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew; 11:00 AM, Martin Luther King Day
- **January 18,** 12:00–1:30 PM, Lunch & Learn; 7:00 PM, Board of Directors
- **January 23,** 10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew
- **January 26,** 9:30–10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew; 9:30–10:30 AM, Board of Directors

**February Worship Services**

Wednesday, February 4, 7:45 AM, Morning Minyan; 8:30–9:30 AM, Advanced Hebrew; 9:30–10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew; 11:00 AM, Education Committee

Thursday, February 5, 5:30 PM, Facilities Committee; 6:30–7:30 PM, Choir; 7:00 PM, Executive Committee

Wednesday, February 11, 7:45 AM, Morning Minyan; 8:30–9:30 AM, Advanced Hebrew; 9:30–10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew

Friday, February 13, 9:30–10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew; 11:00 AM, Board of Directors

Monday, February 16, Presidents’ Day

Tuesday, February 17, 6:30–7:30 PM, Choir

Thursday, February 19, 7:00 AM, Education Committee

Sunday, February 22, 8:30–9:30 AM, Advanced Hebrew; 9:30–10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew; 10:30 AM, Program Committee

**February Events**

- **February 1,** JOSTY Shul-in (Brookline)
- **February 2,** Tot Shabbat; 6:15 PM, Dairy Potluck Dinner; 7:00 PM, First Friday Shabbat Service
- **February 3,** 5:30 PM, Facilities Committee; 6:30–7:30 PM, Choir; 7:15 PM, Book Discussion: Jacob’s Ladder
- **February 4,** 9:00 AM, Chair Yoga; 7:00 PM, Program Committee
- **February 5,** Megilla Deadline (March-April); 7:00–8:00 PM, Meditation
- **February 7,** 7:30 PM, Interfaith Israel Trip Slide Show
- **February 8,** 8:30–9:30 AM, Advanced Hebrew; 9:30–10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew; 10:30 AM, Conversion Class
- **February 9,** 5:45 PM, Abbreviated Service
- **February 11,** 7:45 AM, Morning Minyan; 9:00 AM, Chair Yoga
- **February 12,** 12:00–1:30 PM, Lunch & Learn; 7:00 PM, Board of Directors
- **February 13,** 5:45 PM, Erav Shabbat Service
- **February 15,** 8:30–9:30 AM, Advanced Hebrew; 9:30–10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew
- **February 16,** 5:45 PM, Erav Shabbat Service
- **February 18,** 9:00 AM, Chair Yoga
- **February 20,** 6:00 PM, Dairy Potluck Dinner; 7:00 PM, First Friday Shabbat Service
- **February 21,** 5:45 PM, Erav Shabbat Service
- **February 24,** 6:30–7:30 PM, Choir
- **February 25,** 9:00 AM, Chair Yoga; 7:00 PM, Conversion Class
- **February 26,** 7:00 PM, Executive Committee; 7:00–8:00 PM, Meditation

**FEBRUARY EVENTS**

Sunday, February 1, JOSTY Shul-in (Brookline); 8:30–9:30 AM, Advanced Hebrew; 9:30–10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew; 11:00 AM, Tu B’Shevat Seder

Tuesday, February 3, 5:30 PM Facilities Committee; 6:30–7:30 PM, Choir; 7:15 PM, Book Discussion: Jacob’s Ladder

Wednesday, February 4, 9:00 AM, Chair Yoga; 7:00 PM, Program Committee

Thursday, February 5, Megilla Deadline (March-April); 7:00–8:00 PM, Meditation

Saturday, February 7, 7:30 PM, Interfaith Israel Trip Slide Show

Sunday, February 8, 8:30–9:30 AM, Advanced Hebrew; 9:30–10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew; 9:30 AM, Congregational Meeting

Tuesday, February 10, 3:00 PM, Shoreline Soup Kitchen and Pantry Board Meeting; 6:30–7:30 PM, Choir

Wednesday, February 11, 9:00 AM, Chair Yoga

Thursday, February 12, 12:00–1:30 PM, Lunch & Learn; 7:00 PM, Board of Directors

Sunday, February 15, 8:30–9:30 AM, Advanced Hebrew; 9:30–10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew

Monday, February 16, Presidents’ Day

Tuesday, February 17, 6:30–7:30 PM, Choir

Wednesday, February 18, 9:00 AM, Chair Yoga

Thursday, February 19, 7:00 AM, Education Committee

Sunday, February 22, 8:30–9:30 AM, Advanced Hebrew; 9:30–10:30 AM, Beginner Hebrew

Tuesday, February 24, 6:30–7:30 PM, Choir

Wednesday, February 25, 9:00 AM, Chair Yoga; 7:00 PM, Conversion Class

Thursday, February 26, 7:00 PM, Executive Committee; 7:00–8:00 PM, Meditation

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

Wednesday, March 4, Erev Purim; 6:00 PM, Purim Spiel with Pizza

Thursday March 5, Purim

Friday March 13, Shabbat Across America

Friday March 27, Shabbat service honoring 10th Anniversary of Jewish War Veterans

Sunday, March 29, 11:00 AM, Living Haggadah Program

**Holy Scrolls Torah Study Every Shabbat 9:00 –10:30 AM**

- Don’t Be Afraid of CBSRZ’s Social Media: Facebook, Blogs, and Twitter
  - Just the words alone can cause tremors for some but, like it or not, they are here to stay. CBSRZ is using one or more of these sites and invites members to come along, it’s really not hard, and explore the joys of cyberspace.

  - Begin by clicking on www.cbsrz.org to bring up the Synagogue’s site and then click away at any of the colorful sites that you want to access. Click on the Facebook icon at the bottom of the page and you will be directed to the CBSRZ Facebook page and a treasure trove of information beginning with Ellen Nodelman’s blog about what it is like to be an adult Bat Mitzvah. Click on the Like icon so you can be counted as a Friend of CBSRZ and thus receive postings as quickly as they are sent.

  - Charles Savitt has launched a Twitter site. Be sure to follow us on Twitter @CBSRZ.

  - Follow Rabbi Goldenberg on Twitter @rabbirg.

See page 14 for the Religious School Calendar of Events
O
ver the summer a salesperson from the Yale Repertory Theater called to see if Clo and I would like to renew our membership in 2015. I said sure, so the agent started asking the familiar payment questions. Among them was this: “Are you a senior?” I laughed. “A senior? I’ve been out of college for years!” The woman at the other end of the phone paused without saying anything, then politely completed the transaction. Later I told Clo how funny it was that the Yale Rep agent had thought I was a fourth-year college student. And then I realized with a depressing start: ah, no. That’s not what the marketer had meant when she asked if I was a senior. Yikes. Our own vision of who we are can clash alarmingly with what the outside world perceives.

I was recalling this miscue during a November session of Holy Scrollers when we read of a blind Isaac asking his son Jacob: “Who are you?” Now, Isaac might have been asking a perfectly straightforward question, because he didn’t really know whether Jacob or Esau was before him. But you can also read this as a more profound question. Our patriarch Jacob was one complex character. His long story of struggle may itself be the veiled point of what is meant to be chosen, or to choose, to be in the Jewish community. That is, nothing happens easily to him, or to us. There’s always a story. We can fail, but we stay in the journey. It is the story itself that forges identity. We have to look in the mirror regularly and ask: Who are you? Stories are the way we search for answers.

The Torah is itself the grandest of stories and, for some, it is an essential touchstone in the pursuit of meaning. CBSRZ is now embarked on our own complimentary, pioneering journey of storytelling, which amounts to a fresh way of asking ourselves: Who are we? But the narrative is unfolding in pixels rather than parchment; it is taking shape through a series of audiovisual initiatives. We are creating, in effect, a video arm of our community. And it, in turn, is forming what you could call a ‘Torah of Us’—an archive of our stories.

A video camera is something the chicken and dairy farmers who helped found our predecessor shul Rodfe Zedek nearly 100 years ago could never have imagined. But descendants with us today are now using the device to record memories of the early years thanks to a project spearheaded by Ellen Nodelman, Paula Feder, Sandy Herzog, Linda Rigono, Deb Rutty, and Dass Sinnappen. In a hunt for background information, the group has dug up research, toured the Moodus area with experts, and identified family members with tales to tell and memorabilia to share. With Dass behind the camera, they have sat down with congregants to document our past for posterity. Later in our centennial year congregants will be able to watch and discuss the results with the filmmakers and interviewees.

In a second, separate effort, Jon Joslow has been quietly editing a series of pilot interviews he recorded this past summer and fall with the help of a videographer. His aim is to test how we might profile the story of how our unique building came to be. That is a special challenge. To visitors, our space has international significance because of its special connection to Sol Lewitt; to us, its transcendence is rooted in the many of our fellow congregants, including Sol, who brought it to reality with design, ideas, funds and time. Again, later in 2015 we will be able to see how this comes out—what it tells us about ourselves—and whether we want to organize a fuller documentary.

Thirdly, of course, we have opened the door to video through live streaming, which now enables any homebound congregants, or prospective congregants, or anyone anywhere for that matter, the option to watch the spiritual energy that unfolds in our sanctuary, or the learning that arises from our Books & Bagels programs, from anywhere in the world with an Internet connection. We have Lon Seidman, Laura Roman and John Hausman to thank for that. John has even begun to post extracts of services so that you can now click on our YouTube channel, aka CBSRZ-TV, to watch and listen to single pieces of inspiring music such as ‘Oseh Shalom’. With these new online instruments we peer through the looking glass and see ourselves expressed in song and the colors of our ark, as well as words.

All this is but the start of something profound. Being Jewish means, among other things, wrestling with purpose together; we as a congregation can find ways to learn from each other’s stories even as we draw lessons from the stories of Torah. Launching a video arm demonstrates CBSRZ’s extraordinary will to innovate in the ways we do that sharing.

The Spielberg Film and Video Archive paved the way in recording the memories of Holocaust survivors. StoryCorps, often heard on NPR, pioneered in collecting audio accounts of relationships for podcast. Now CBSRZ is poised to inaugurate something equally new, but for spiritual purpose: an archive of collective identity. We are starting by applying video to the Rodfe Zedek centennial, the epic of our building, and the mystic pull of our services.

(Continued on page 6)
But imagine the next phase, where we interview any congregants who wish to relate their journeys, perhaps with help from our high schoolers learning to be video technicians and artists. Each one of us has stories that illuminate insights we have gained. Congregants could call these up on a flat screen in the synagogue, or through a link on their computers at home. Such accounts could bring us closer together, help us learn who we are, make us realize anew that we are not alone.

Just as profoundly, the very process of undertaking our video initiative shows that many at CBSRZ are ready to both reinvent and deepen what it means to be a Jewish community in the 21st century. This courage is our unique strength—and yes, I do think it earns us the title ‘ancient and cool.’ Please consider adding your energies to efforts under our roof that strike your passion.

Religious Affairs At CBSRZ

**IT’S A BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR TREES!**

In Israel, Tu B’Shevat, the Birthday for Trees, is celebrated at the time of year when, drawn from the roots by the warmth of the sun, sap starts running up the trees, just under the bark, carrying nutrients to the branches. In appreciation of the gifts given us by trees, we hold a seder during which we celebrate this return of life, the promise of a fruitful year. It is a treat to the senses. We celebrate with typical Israeli fruits and nuts, juices and wines, which are exquisite and varied in color, taste, aroma and texture. The fruits have strong skins we must peel or break, stones we do not swallow, and there are those that we can eat in their entirety. The tastes, the blessings, the narratives, the songs, the company we share at this seder table bring us joy in themselves as well as in anticipation of the coming spring.

The Tu B’Shevat seder program will begin at 11:00 on Sunday, February 1 and last approximately an hour and a half. All congregants are welcome and encouraged to participate. Religious School families will be supplying many of the delicious fruits and nuts. If you would like to help with the slicing and plating of the fruits and nuts and getting the table ready for the seder, please contact Liz Jones at sagenbasil@aol.com or (860) 391-3561.

**SAVE THE DATE — PURIM IS COMING!**

By the time you get this issue of the Megillah, Purim will still be two months away! So for now, mark your calendars:

**Sunday, March 1** – Religious School Purim Spiel and Carnival

**Wednesday, March 4** – Regular Religious School followed by Pizza and Spiel

The Wednesday night spiel will be similar to last year….different groups of actors performing their own interpretation of a specific section of the Megillah. If you would like to be part of this fun and entertaining evening, please contact our Spiel Coordinator, Shelley Sprague, at spragueshelley@gmail.com.
During the Grammy Award nominated and internationally renowned African American singers, SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK®, to perform during the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend was a dream of Miriam Gardner-Frum, longtime director of the Chester concert series, Music & More. The concert will be held on Sunday, January 18 at 3:00 pm at Congregation Beth Shalom Rodfe Zedek (CBSRZ).

There are of course many ways to celebrate the legacy of Dr. King, but one the most meaningful, Miriam thought, would be through the uplifting harmonies of SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK®, or as one music critic wrote, “The GOLD STANDARD... Their voices are all fabulous, and they unite to create a sound so pure and smooth and homogeneous that is does not seem humanly possible.”

Over the years, Miriam has brought many remarkable musicians to CBSRZ, and she saw her opportunity with Sweet Honey when she read that the group had received an award from Common Ground, an organization that recognizes exceptional efforts in humanitarian work.

As a supporter of Common Ground’s work, Miriam saw the stars aligned — potentially. “I thought how amazing it would be to have them here in our beautiful synagogue. They combine two exceptional features — great a capella music that lifts hearts even as it calls attention to great injustices of our world. This seemed a natural fit for us at CBSRZ. Through our Social Action efforts, we do much work along those lines as well.”

But of course theory and practice are not easy to reconcile. For Miriam, there were logistics to address in scheduling and in daunting terms of the performance contract.

“When I first contacted their agent, it didn’t seem possible that we could do this, but we worked with them, and they were very helpful, and here we are! I am grateful for their flexibility, and that they are eager to come to a synagogue and help spread the message of love that Dr. King expressed.”

Carol Maillard, one of the founding members of the group and still singing with it, says that Sweet Honey has celebrated Dr. King’s birthday in concert many times but never in a synagogue. She says, “We’re very excited about coming and we hope that folks will come with an open mind and heart. We hope they’ll feel uplifted and won’t be afraid to show they’re having a good time.”

The name of the performance group was indeed derived from a song, based on Psalm 81:16, which tells of a land so rich that when rocks were cracked open, honey flowed from them.

SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK® is rooted in African American history and culture. The ensemble educates, entertains and empowers its audience and community through the dynamic vehicles of a cappella singing and American Sign Language interpretation for the deaf and hearing impaired. Sweet Honey’s audience and community come from diverse backgrounds and cultures throughout the United States and around the world, and include people of all ages.

Rabbi Goldenberg says this concert is a perfect way to celebrate Dr. King’s legacy. “We honor him every year because of the Jewish People’s historical commitment to the struggle for human rights. But more importantly, we recommit ourselves to the ongoing work of demanding justice and equal treatment for all people living in this country.”

Tickets for the general public are $30 and advance ticket purchases are highly recommended. Premium seating (the first four rows) can be reserved at a cost of $180. For more information, please call CBSRZ at 860.526.8920.
Our February through April exhibit showcases well-known New Haven artists Alan Falk and Leah Caroline and their divergent artistic interpretations of “The Song of Songs.”

“The Song of Songs,” a book of writings from the Old Testament, is “…a universal love poem about the awakening of love between a youthful shepherd and a beautiful young woman. The couple meet in an idyllic landscape where they discover the pleasures of love. Their mutual adoration and intimacies are expressed through rich metaphor and symbolism.” (Alan Falk, www.alanfalkart.com)

This book is “…unique among biblical passages because it is exclusively concerned with the exultation of romantic, sexual love. Through lyrical poems, it describes the relationship between a Shulamite woman and her lover, their longing and love for each other and their celebration of each other’s bodies.” (Rachel Schwartz, The Williams Record, Nov. 6, 2013)

Falk feels that traditional translations of “The Song of Songs” are heavily influenced by specific theological agendas and finds the 1995 translation by Chana and Ariel Bloch “…to be a breath of fresh air” reflecting his feelings about the sensual nature of the poem. “Because the Blochs’ mission was to carefully bring to light the original linguistic meaning of the poem, it was the perfect guide to helping me understand the subtleties and nuances of the Hebrew/Aramaic text…The Song of Songs sings of the ideal of unconditional love and a harmonious relationship between us and the natural world [and is] an emphatic confirmation that unconditional love can be a holistic path to healing our world.” (Alan Falk, www.alanfalkart.com)

Alan Falk was born in 1945 in Manchester, England, attended the Manchester College of Art and Design and continued his art education and career in London.

Leah Caroline grew up in the Chassidic community of Crown Heights, earned a teaching certificate in Tzfat, Israel, and enrolled in the Lyme Academy of Fine Arts when her youngest child started school.
megillahs. More recently I have had to put more thought into the sacredness of the text I use, and how I use it,” Caroline says. “But I don’t see that as a conflict. If anything, it helps my artistic practice to think about these things. To try to understand why I make what I do and how I should make it. That being said, I do think there is some tension in creating artwork — any artwork, religious or not. Art is simultaneously private and public, which can be seen as tension between personal expression and tradition. But tension is a good thing; it enriches a work” (Connecticut Jewish Ledger, July 18, 2014, “Where Judaism and art converge” Cindy Mindell).

Viewers will find this colorful and intellectually challenging show both unique and stimulating. The exhibit will continue through April and is open to the public Monday through Friday, 10 AM - 3 PM. The artists will donate a generous percentage of all work sold to CBSRZ. A Sunday afternoon program featuring Falk and Caroline will be announced in the weekly CBSRZ emails.
Rabbi Goldenberg

Israel. For some it was the bright pink bougainvillea up against the dusty white Jerusalem stone, for some it was the Arabs in the Abulafia bakery in Jaffa wearing bright orange T-shirts that read “Jews and Arabs — We Refuse to Be Enemies.” For some it was the whirling Shabbat dancing at the Western Wall, for some it was the calm baptismal waters of the Jordan dripping down their foreheads. For some it was the intellectual and emotional challenge of an intractable conflict, for some it was the warmth and openness of all of the people. For me, it was the moving experience of seeing Israel as if for the first time again, through the eyes of my fellow first-time travelers. For all of us, it was a rich, layered, and unforgettable experience. Twenty-three Jews and Christians, guided and accompanied by Pastor Kathy Peters and myself, our challenging guide Eldad and our fearless bus driver Micha — our lives were forever transformed. Read below for reflections on our interfaith trip to Israel by some of our participants.

John Joslow

How was It?

Not a question that can be answered in a typical one-word vacation responses: Great!, Fun!, Relaxing! Our ten days in Israel were certainly not about floating in the Dead Sea (yes, we did That and it was fun).

This was never intended to be a vacation (but we made fast friendships with our group).

Intellectual, Educational, Immersive, Emotional !!!!

These words pepper the senses, but Intense also grazes the mark— however, nothing, no one word, hits it directly dead center. Why? Because, as my travelmates and I were prone to observe, “Well, it’s complicated,” and true to form, multiple guides and Israelis will utter that phrase at the end or beginning of any commentary on why things are the way they are (or were). Israel is full of deep passions in a land of conflicting realities. Author Ari Shavit, in My Promised Land, sums up these contradictions nicely:

“…Israel is not a normal nation. It is a Jewish state in an Arab world, and a Western state in an Islamic world, and a democracy in a region of tyranny.”

All of this historic and present reality makes it hard to find common ground from which any future agreement can take root. This is what I struggled with: I have made it my life’s work to make order out of chaos and to find ways for people and their organizations to work toward common goals until they are achieved. I’ve never experienced a situation as complex as this and left feeling very frustrated by not understanding how it can be resolved.

Israel, and the Middle East in general, is a holy tinderbox of a body with a can of petrol in one hand and a match in the other. The wind blows and swirls through the madness — something folks seem to weather as they reason with the laws of probability on a daily basis. Hard to fathom.

Heavy stuff and yet there is a polarizing beauty in the midst of it all. It seems evident that most want peace and are frustrated because they cannot find common ground from which agreement can take root. The fact that most religions hold “goodness” as an important virtue makes it more painful to see continuous actions of violence. To what end?

Its been several weeks now, and I am still trying to make sense of it all. Meanwhile, my heart will forever be impacted by what I experienced.

Josephine Elmoznino

On the Interfaith Trip to Israel a group of people from the Chester area, many meeting for the first time, became good friends while discovering a vibrant, fascinating and very complex land. It did not take us long to realize that what had been labeled a trip had quickly become to us all a kind of odyssey.

We were fortunate in so many ways. The weather smiled upon us during the entire trip. We were blessed with two amazing leaders, Rabbi Rachel Goldenberg and Pastor Kathy Peters, who gently guided us through this odyssey while we discovered our common roots and shared heritage. We were also fortunate to have as a guide Eldad, a brilliant and learned young man who helped us gain insight into the often unfathomable complexity of the history and politics of Israel. And who of us can forget the driver, Micha, who always greeted us with a smile and made us feel safe on the roads.

Whenever I reflect on the trip, (which is often), I’m presented with a mental kaleidoscope of unforgettable scenes. I will never forget the devastated expressions of our group as we emerged from Yad Vashem unable to find words and the heartfelt prayer offered by the pastor followed by the hauntingly beautiful chant of the rabbi. Nor can I forget Eldad’s expression when we stood at the place of Rabin’s assassination as he recalled his own emotions as a 20 year old present at this horrific event.

And what a contrast to recall the lovely female soldiers at the Western Wall, right before the Sabbath, young women no longer victims — who joined their hands in joyous, boisterous song as they pulled us into the huge circle of dancers, making us feel so welcome and happy.

There are many scenes of laughter: our trip through the desert and our rides on the gentle camel Sushi. Floating on the Dead Sea, a pillow of water and then discovering that it was nearly impossible to stand up without massive scraping of knees and foolish behavior. We all had tears in our eyes at the emotional baptism of Pastor Peter’s congregants in the River Jordan. I can also hear the enthusiastic “Shaloms” of the Palestinian chil-
dren at Tzippori National Park as they vied to have their photos taken with us. And the food!! Delicious North African food in a family home in Yerucham, a vibrant desert city. The sumptuous Yemenite dinner served at the Maganda restaurant in Tel Aviv!!

Thank you Rabbi Goldenberg and Pastor Peters for leading us on a life-changing and unforgettable voyage of discovery!

**Stanley Peters**

Unlike many of my Jewish traveling companions I don’t have nor did I feel that strong tie to the land or the nation that so many talked about. However, being raised as a Protestant, I was brought up on the stories of the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments. Being in Israel and seeing where many of these stories took place was absolutely fascinating. Getting the back story or tie ins from our guide, Eldad made the experience all that much better. Maybe we didn’t stand at the exact spot where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount or the exact spot where he was baptized by John the Baptist, but we were at the River Jordan and the Sea of Galilee in the same general area that these events took place. This trip gave life to many of the stories that I was raised on.

Part of this trip was an exploration of some of the stories in the Bible and part of the trip was to try to get a better understanding of what is happening in Israel today. And the only thing I can say about the latter is that it is complicated, oh so complicated. There are people on both sides that want peace and then there are radical elements on both sides that do not want peace. Then there are the countries that think they know what is best for the people of this region and can set up the proper or appropriate borders. I certainly have no answers; all I can do is to hope that the people on both sides who want peace prevail.

**Diane Lindsay**

*Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.  
As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, from this time on and forevermore.* (from Psalm 125)

*Peace be upon Israel!*

At our last group meeting before we left on our trip to Israel we read a poem called “Tourists” by an Israeli poet, Yehuda Amichai, meditating whether we were to be tourists or pilgrims in Israel.

On the Sabbath in Jerusalem, we were walking and came upon a fenced in green space in honor of the poet. There was a poem attached to the wall, which described the rocky arms of God wrapping around Jerusalem, gathering to protect her people.

Late on Saturday night in Jerusalem, we walked into the Old City, past the Wall, and down into the tunnels along the underground base of the Wall. Our guide showed us the massive stones, rocks, which were laid there over 2000 years ago, and have not been moved. The extravagant Temple is long gone, but the foundation endures.

God is our rock, the base, or foundation, upon which our faith rests. God can be felt in that Holy land, a very complicated land, as we kept hearing from our guide, Eldad… and people still pray and wait, centuries later…
We attended Shabbat Service at a Tel Aviv Synagogue Friday night and heard this blessing: Blessed are you, Lord who spreads the shelter of peace over us, over all his people Israel and over Jerusalem. May there be peace in your cities, tranquility in your house.

O God, surround us with your love and strength as we wait to celebrate the coming of your Son. Be with all the people of Israel/Palestine as they search for a way to live in peace. Be with all of us, in every place and time, as we search for ways to share your peace with our neighbors.

Peace be upon Israel!

Rev. Kathy Peters

Words of Gratitude at Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

It turned out that in the eyes of some... the whole interfaith pilgrimage to Israel from which Congregation Beth Shalom and the United Church of Chester members and friends just returned was as an act of courage and hope in a world that seems so torn by partisanship and division... too much division in the name of God... God is weeping I am sure. Rabbi Rachel and I were taken to separate corners of the airport check-in spot at JFK before we could even board the plane and questioned about an interfaith trip... they were skeptical about such a thing. Several others whom we encountered in Israel also raised an eyebrow at Christians and Jews traveling together, learning together, studying scripture together, celebrating together, praying together and attending each other’s worship services. Others were encouraged by our group and the hope of people of differing faiths coming together in peace. It is an act of hope that we hope we can continue as we learn more about one another and our Palestinian brothers and sisters.

We often take for granted the act of faith and hope that we take in this Thanksgiving interfaith service. We pray together, sing together, serve the Shoreline Soup Kitchen together, dream together of peace in our time. ...From Maya Angelou’s poem Amazing Peace ... hear these ending words, my hope and my gratitude:

“We shout with glorious tongues at the coming of hope. All the earth’s tribes loosen their voices To celebrate the promise of Peace.

We, Angels and Mortals, Believers and Non-Believers, Look heavenward and speak the word aloud. Peace. We look at our world and speak the word aloud. Peace. We look at each other, then into ourselves And we say without shyness or apology or hesitation. Peace, My Brother. Peace, My Sister. Peace, My Soul.” Amen

Lauren Gister

I have always wanted to visit Israel, while at the same time being uneasy about my understanding of the political and military issues in the area. Friends and relatives post their opinions on facebook and other social media sites in a way that leaves no doubt about their feelings and political position vis-a-vis the Palestinians and a possible two state solution. And I remain slightly uncomfortable. Listening, but not sure how to respond. It all seems so amorphous and abstract — a constantly moving target that I cannot quite reach...

And now I understand — that I will never really understand. The complexity of the situation, militarily, socially, politically — is mind-boggling.

Who is required to serve in the military, who is not allowed?

Who can worship where? Why is the Jews’ most holy place trumped by the Muslims' third most holy place? What is the role of the Christian in Israel?

Why did the Palestinians reject the Partition Plan offered in 1947, while the Jews agreed? How can the barrier wall possibly contribute toward peace and mutual understanding?

Why can’t the residents of Arab towns get permits to build homes?

How many Palestinians’ homes were taken and given to Jews? Can there be lasting peace without giving them back?

How can a country thrive while financially supporting large Jewish families whose husbands daven instead of work for a living?

How do we come to a peaceful solution with the Palestinians when we cannot even find peace between the ultra-orthodox and the reform?

During the trip, every conversation involving history or politics or culture ended with the phrase “it’s complicated,” to the point where it has become the subtle inside joke of the group. I have come to understand that (under)statement in a whole new light. It became very clear to me on the trip that the issues in Israel are so many and so deeply complex that they are impossible to fully understand, especially by anyone not physically present in Israel. These issues are not simply intellectual, or spiritual, or political — they are a constant, physical presence which become woven into the personality and being of every resident. I can’t wait to go back.
Marjorie Lander

For as long as I can remember, my Dad was a strong supporter of the State of Israel. He was proud of his Israeli Bond purchases and his support of Technion. As an engineer he was proud of Israel’s technology developments (as if he had thought of them himself). Unfortunately he did not live to see the many contributions that Israeli minds have made to the world since he died in 1980. As a young man, he had traveled to every state (except Hawaii and Alaska), and Israel was the only place left on his bucket list. My Mom went in 1981 or 1982, but it was a very lonely trip for her and bittersweet. She collected stones for him and put them on his grave when she returned to Boston.

I never had a Jewish camp experience that would have culminated in an Israel trip. Working the worst job on Kibbutz didn’t appeal to me when I was in High School either. I always felt a distant connection to Israel. I really like being Jewish, the comfort that it has brought me over the years and the memories of holidays celebrated with family and children from the religious school. However, when this trip came up, I knew I had to go. It was never a question for my Husband Bill; we would find the funds, and I would go.

I had no expectations about the trip, I knew about half of the folks going and I thought that it would be neat to share the experience with them. I glanced at our itinerary before leaving and looked up the hotels on line. I watched the weather forecast to see what clothes I should pack and actually paid attention to the packing list. What happened next was beyond my expectations.

I could not have handpicked a greater group of people to travel and share this experience with. The individuals “I knew”, I got to know better, and the folks I did not know have now become friends. No one kvetced. At restaurants when the bill came, we passed shekels back and forth like my Mom and her sisters on a Saturday morning.

So now cue Israel……

Six nights in Jerusalem, two nights in the Galilee at a resort kibbutz and then three nights in Tel Aviv. The food was amazing, the history, the politics, the people, the shopping, ah maybe the bathrooms left a little to be desired. BUT to say that this trip was amazing is an understatement. I cannot pick any one experience as a favorite. The Western Wall on Shabbat, dancing with Orthodox women, feeling included (which is kind of weird because we were separated from the men). Going to a Modern Orthodox shul and seeing a BAT MITZVAH. Meeting with Jewish and Palestinian bereaved families that are working together for peace, discussing the politics at every turn with Eldad, our extremely knowledgeable guide (whose commentary we frequently fact checked on Google). I actually had one last question to ask him, but was not sure his Sabra side would get my joke. “Where are all those trees that we collected money for as children in the 1960s?” A visit to a Kibbutz where Arab and Israeli youth are working together on agriculture projects that students from MIT have come to facilitate (Dad’s alma mater). We went to Christian and Jewish sites, I watched as four members of our group rededicated themselves to their Christian faith with tears in my eyes. It was the most incredible trip I have taken so far in my 58 years of being on the planet.

I feel that the letters on the dreidel sum up my feelings about the trip:

Nes Gadol Hayah Sham: A great miracle happened here. A group of Christians and Jews from Connecticut and a very nice woman from New Jersey had an incredible trip to a land, a land that is home to many.
The attentive reader will have noticed the absence of The Whole Mishpacha from this issue. For this, you have my most sincere apologies. Unfortunately, we no longer have the help of Leslie Krumholz who so ably compiled and edited this section. We are desperately seeking someone who is involved in the Religious School and Youth Programs to assume this very important role. Please contact sean.konecky@gmail.com.

**January 2015**
- **Sunday, January 4**
  - Sunday Session, Confirmation
- **Wednesday, January 7**
  - Religious School
- **Sunday, January 11**
  - NO SCHOOL - Swap Day, come instead on Saturday, Jan 10
- **Wednesday, January 14**
  - Religious School
- **Sunday, January 18**
  - NO SCHOOL - Swap Day, come instead on Friday, Feb. 6
- **Wednesday, January 21**
  - Religious School
- **Sunday, January 25**
  - Sunday Session, Breakfast with Rabbi/Grade 4, Gesher/Confirmation
- **Wednesday, January 28**
  - Religious School

**February 2015**
- **Sunday, February 1**
  - Tu B’Shvat Seder - 11am
- **Wednesday, February 4**
  - NO SCHOOL - Swap Day, come instead on Friday, Feb. 6
  - NO School Shabbat Service at 7pm
- **Sunday, February 9**
  - Sunday Session, Gesher/Confirmation
- **Wednesday, February 11**
  - Religious School
- **Sunday, February 15**
  - NO SCHOOL - MLK Weekend
- **Wednesday, February 18**
  - NO RELIGIOUS SCHOOL
- **Sunday, February 22**
  - NO SCHOOL - Winter Break
- **Wednesday, February 25**
  - Religious School

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**Novelist Bob Steele Brings His Casino Potboiler to Chester**

by Lary Bloom

Former Congressman turned novelist, Bob Steele, will address one of Connecticut’s hot-button issues, how we became New England’s Gambling State, when he comes to Chester at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, January 11 for Books & Bagels.

Steele, who served one term in the House of Representatives and also ran for Governor, will speak about Connecticut’s casinos and the background to his book, *The Curse: Big-Time Gambling’s Seduction of a Small New England Town* (Levellers Press).

“The casinos are places of fascination and mystery,” says Tracy Kleinberg, chair of the CBSRZ program committee. “Bob’s book provides an illuminating view of both the glitz and the unsavory side of casino life.”

The novel, which has just gone into its second printing, is set against the explosion of casino gambling in Connecticut during the 1990s, when two Indian tribes built the world’s two biggest casinos in the southeastern corner of the state.

The narrative begins in 1637 with the massacre of the Pequot Indians and a curse delivered by a Pequot sachem to the young English soldier who is about to kill him. The story then jumps 350 years as the soldier’s thirteenth generation descendant, Josh Williams, and his family become embroiled in a battle to stop a third casino that threatens their town and ancestral home.

WBZ Boston’s Dan Rea calls the novel “powerful” and Connecticut author Martin Shapiro describes it as “compelling and timely... a riveting story of history, money and politics that will make you wonder where America is headed.”

Bob Steele is chairman of Connecticut-based NLC Insurance Company and has been a director of numerous other companies, including the American Stock Exchange.

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**Religious School & Family Activities**

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**Happy Birthday! Yom Huledet Sameach!**

**January**
- Rabbi Goldenberg: 01/09
- Morah Lynn Coville: 01/15
- Moreh Stu Baker: 01/02
- Amina Goldenberg: 01/12
- Gloria Conley: 01/23

**February**
- Jack Conley: 02/07
- Ziv Goldenberg: 02/08
- Max Gill: 02/09
- Joe Mercier: 02/13
- Kaitlyn Burzin: 02/22
Climbing Jacob’s Ladder

Congregational Discussion of Alan Morinis’ book
Tuesday February 3, 2015 7:15–9:00 PM

In anticipation of our Scholar-in-Residence weekend, May 1–3 with Alan Morinis, the Adult Education Committee is offering an opportunity to read and discuss his seminal book, Climbing Jacob’s Ladder, a personal narrative of his exploration of Mussar, a Jewish spiritual tradition. This book tells the story of his journey to meet an accomplished Mussar master in, of all places, Far Rockaway, Long Island, and how it transformed him. Morinis’ very readable style is filled with honesty and warmth, as he explores how Mussar can be of value in the modern secular world.

From the cover: “Jewish by birth, though from a secular family, Alan Morinis, explored Hinduism and Buddhism as a young man. But in the face of personal crisis he turned to his Jewish heritage and happened upon a spiritual tradition called Mussar. He soon realized that it is an insightful discipline for self-development, complete with contemplative and transformative practices designed to penetrate the deepest roots of the inner life. Eventually reaching the limits of what he could learn on his own, he decided to seek out a Mussar teacher. This was not an easy task, since almost the entire world of Mussar had been swept away in the Holocaust. In time… he found an accomplished master who stood in an unbroken line of transmission of the Mussar tradition. This book tells the story of Morinis’ journey to meet his teacher and what he learned from him, revealing the central teachings and practices that are the spiritual treasury and legacy of Mussar.”

—Daniel Goleman, author of Emotional Intelligence

The discussion will be lead by Rabbi Goldenberg and Deborah Rutty.

For your convenience, books are available for sale at our office. Price of $16.23 reflects a 15% discount plus sales tax, Preferred payment is by check made out to “R.J. Julia Booksellers” (please put phone number plus name of book on memo line). Cash also accepted accompanied by your name.

From our Librarian

David Tilles


Books that were gifts to children who lived long and are now remembered by their grandchildren. Books with shopping lists slipped between page 47 and page 48 – in English, in Yiddish. Prayer books, atlases, histories, philosophies and arguments and laments and inspirations, stories from around the world, everywhere a Jew has been there is a story, and cookbooks, for everywhere a Jew has been there is a recipe.

Today is October 22. The children’s library was organized last year, but now some hundred books for children have emerged from the compass points of the building. They will soon join their brothers and sisters on the right shelf. The children’s fiction is all catalogued. The catalogue is on the shelf next to the sign-out box. It is split by reading level, roughly at a fourth grade level. The catalogue is alphabetical by author, and each entry has a description and many have reviews and recommendations.

In the adult library, the fiction is all shelved alphabetically by author. The biography is all shelved alphabetically by subject. All the Holocaust books are shelved in the conference room where the Olim students have ready access to them for their studies of the Holocaust.

The rabbi’s study contains two collections – basic texts and reference materials that are not to be circulated (e.g., the Talmud, the Jewish Encyclopedia, etc.) and books about life-events that the rabbi uses in personal counseling (marriages, conversions, grief, etc.). By the time you read this in the Whole Megillah, the entire collection will be organized and shelved. And there will be a sign-out system.

The next step after that is to give call numbers and cards to all the books that lack them (roughly a thousand books). Then the next step after that is to create a master catalogue, and make that catalogue accessible from the congregation’s website. Then the next step after that is to cull books that are unlikely ever to be read by anyone, and to buy new books that are likely to be read by many.
It was the coldest day yet of Autumn 2014 but on November 2, five of our congregants met early, braving the gusty wind and falling temperature, to take a bus tour of the synagogues of early farming Connecticut. Beginning at the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford, the group joined other curious visitors on a bus that went from one end of eastern Connecticut to another, visiting three synagogues, one other historical society and the town of Colchester which at one time had a population that was 50% Jewish.

With Rodfe Zedek’s 100th anniversary celebration approaching, we are preparing not only to celebrate our synagogue’s origins but to document the congregation’s origins and growth, all the steps that led from 1915 to the present. Part of that history, of course, is the history of the farms that many of our early congregants established and the guest industry that developed into resorts on many of those farms. We are looking forward to guiding our present day congregants around Jewish Moodus so they can see where it all began and how it developed from those origins.

A small group of us, (Linda Rigono, Deb Rutty, Paula Feder, Sandy Herzog and Ellen Nodelman) has been working on piecing together that history, and that was the group that went on this particular bus tour, led by Mary Donohue, an expert on early Jewish farming in Connecticut. Our object: to learn more about the early Jewish farming communities in Connecticut and to connect that history to our
own. And — a dividend — get some ideas about how we might go about creating our own bus tour of Moodus and beyond.

We left the sheltered preserves of the Jewish Historical Society in West Hartford, after viewing its impressive exhibit of photographs from the early days of Connecticut farmers (which included a photograph of two bar mitzvah boys at Humpty Dumpty Farm in Chester) and went to Agudas Achim Synagogue in Hebron, very much still a working synagogue. Our second stop was the Agudath Achim Synagogue in Columbia which is also still a synagogue but one with a dwindling congregation and reduced functions, opening for the High Holidays and then for the occasional odd session, such as our visit.

As we went from one synagogue to the next, we were impressed by the massive amount of farm land still under cultivation in this area of Connecticut. Most of the Jewish farmers have moved on to other enterprises but it was evident that farming is still a very going proposition in our state.

Our next stop was the Lebanon Historical Society Museum, where we had our lunch and saw an exhibit which included Jewish farming artifacts and records. Our final synagogue was Anshei Israel in Kenneth Mahler of the Lisbon Historical Society, instrumental in the restoration of Anshei Israel, addresses the bus tour group.

Agudas Achim Synagogue in Hebron CT, built in 1940, notable for its Art Deco style; among its congregants is Joel Bernstein, son of Rodfe Zedek’s legendary rabbi, Rabbi Henry O. Bernstein.
Lisbon, now owned by the Lisbon Historical Society, which has restored it lovingly.

To finish up the tour, we drove to Colchester and saw many of the sites associated with the early flourishing Jewish community there which included businesses, industries, farms and resorts.

One of the bus tour participants was Roberta Friend Buland who grew up on Humpty Dumpty Farm in Chester and who is providing us with lots of valuable information about our own group of Jewish farmers involved in the founding of what was later to become Congregation Beth Shalom.

It was a long day and a long ride, and we came away exhausted but inspired and ready to put together our own tour of CBSRZ’s Jewish farms and synagogues. To that end, we are planning an exploratory field trip this month with Rodfe Zedek’s very own guides Jackie Michael, and Joel and Morty Pear. We’ll be taking special guest Mary Donohue with us as well, in hopes of drafting her next year for our own bus tour. Keep tuned for the latest information!
PICTURE GALLERY

David Tilles leading a discussion on the Maccabees

Bat Mitzvah Tillie Ripin

Simchat Torah

Holy Scrollers
B’tzelem Elohim

by Rabbi Goldenberg

“Black Lives Matter” “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot!” “B’tzelem Elohim — We are all created in God’s Image.” A crowd that grew from 200 to 500 protestors marched through Hartford on a cold, rainy Saturday in December. People of all colors and faiths expressed their commitment to justice and human rights. Eleven CBSRZ members were a part of the group, among them several Religious School students who had studied the Jewish Value of “B’tzelem Elohim,” that all humans are created in God’s image and that all lives are therefore sacred and equal.

Within days of each other, Grand Juries in Ferguson, MO and in Staten Island, NY decided not to indict police officers who had killed unarmed Black men — Michael Brown and Eric Garner. We came to Hartford on December 6 to protest these decisions and to demand equal treatment for people of all races by law enforcement and our justice systems.

As Jews, we know what it means to be targeted and profiled and feared. As members of a mostly white community in America, we are also aware of our privilege. Watching our students marching with their hands up, chanting, “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot!” alongside African American kids of similar ages, I felt uneasy. My kids will likely never have to face a situation in which their lives are in the hands of the police, while for African American kids, boys especially, it is almost inevitable. As I lifted my hands above my head and chanted, my chest exposed, I felt the tinge of vulnerability that is an ever present experience of fear and worry for Black Americans.

So, why is it important that we were there, when this is not our personal experience? Because, as the Dr. Martin Luther King said so wisely, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” We are all human beings, we are all Americans. The suffering and the injustice done to one American is a shared suffering and a shared injustice.

As I lifted my hands above my head, tears began to well up in my eyes — my heart ached. We are all created in the image of God — we are all connected. And when my brothers and my sisters are hurting, I am too. I will never be free as long as we all are not free. I hope that our kids felt this truth in their hearts and in their bones, along with the wet and the cold, on that Shabbat afternoon in Hartford.

EMBRACING DIVERSITY

What’s in a word?

One of our Social Action Committee themes has been “tolerance” — but who wants to be tolerated? And is tolerance enough — at least for social action? If we aim for tolerance, what happens when we fall a little short? Can you be just a little intolerant?

Social science research suggests our animal instincts are to group with those like us and reject those dissimilar. But our humanity may be enhanced — indeed, may ultimately only survive — if we can learn to support those who are different and make them friends.

As a long advocate of civil liberties, I have stressed the concept of putting all ideas out in the open — the best ideas emerge, and the moldy ones cannot stay in the darkness and grow. Sunlight is always the best disinfectant.

For Jews, these concepts — diversity and discussion — meet an even more practical need. Recent research by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has shown evidence of significant anti-Semitism around the world — probably nothing new, but no less alarming. And yet, what do we do about it? Should we try to be tolerated? Get into fights?

Maimonides recognized years ago that one productive response to minority status — to being “the other” nearly all the time — is to engage with the wider community — and to do philanthropy aimed at helping the larger community in which we live. [That has been a motto of our Social Action Committee, and we again invite everyone to join in our work — but I digress.]

The point is to be active, to be aggressive, to be positive, in the fight to survive and thrive. The best defense is a
good offense. We all win if we realize that what makes us great — what makes us truly human — what makes us noble — indeed, perhaps what makes us all holy — is our ability to surpass the base instincts, to be the master of our differences rather than its victim. By embracing that diversity, we learn to respect and appreciate those differences — and perhaps to teach it as well. So that is our new SAC theme — “Embracing Diversity.”

In December, SAC hosted a panel discussion about anti-Semitism in Connecticut and what we can do about it. One thing SAC is doing is hosting more panel discussions! In March, we will celebrate the shared immigrant experience with our program “Coming to America” — focusing on the current Hispanic experience and comparing it to our own (including the farmers who came here and started Rodfe Zedek 100 years ago). In April, we hope to focus on the Muslim experience post 9/11. In May and/or June, we will focus on Christian-Jewish relations in our community — including our shared work with churches throughout our region, including through United Action CT, and the intense push by the Congregational Church in Old Lyme on the issue of Palestinians. Stay tuned for details.

In the meantime, life intervenes. Regardless of our views about the justice of the grand juries’ failure to indict white police officers killing black citizens in Ferguson and New York City, we demonstrated last month to celebrate the value of black citizens and their lives. As we would have others celebrate ours.

Let’s embrace diversity.

A New Year’s Resolution to help SAC Fight Hunger?

Contrary to common belief, there is a significant amount of food insecurity in the areas most served by CBSRZ (eligibility for school lunch programs ranges from over 8% of kids in Essex to 19% in Old Saybrook and over 50% in Middletown, and need among seniors is nearly 30% in Westbrook). And poverty amidst plenty is often the toughest to fight, as community leaders often prefer to ignore it — which means state political leaders often ignore it as well.

Here are some simple ways you can help the Social Action Committee fight against hunger in 2015:

Help Staff Community Food Sites (soup kitchens) for Shoreline Soup Kitchens and Pantries (SSKP)

— Each calendar quarter, we welcome volunteers to staff a meal site in Deep River (February 12, contact Johanna Schaeffer at harjs2002@aol.com) and Chester (March 15, contact Linda Rigono at irigono@sbcglobal.net).

— If you would like to volunteer for another date or gather a group of friends to do a another quarterly meal site for SSKP (as SSKP has lost volunteers from other organizations and have dates available), contact debbytrautmann@comcast.net.

Leave Food in the Box at CBSRZ to Donate to SSKP: Thanks to our overwhelming turnout, CBSRZ donated a record 2718 pounds of food in our High Holiday food drive, and we are adding to that total each week.

Food Growing and Training: The community garden at CBSRZ is available to those who want to grow food (and donate at least 10% of it), and CBSRZ is working on a “farm program” to expand the size and use of community gardens and farming. Contact Steven Barasz, sгbarasz@gmail.com, for details about CBSRZ’s farm project or andy@andrewschatz.com about other food growing programs in the area.

Follow — and Share — the Work of the Shoreline Basic Needs Task Force — perhaps the simplest step is to go on Facebook to “The Shoreline Basic Needs Task Force” (https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Shoreline-Basic-Needs-Task-Force/84449382266915, “follow” the work and “share” the information. CBSRZ helped SSKP set up the SBNTF in 2013, and our work has already led to school breakfast and lunch programs in the schools in Essex and Old Lyme, the last towns in the area without such programs, and a commitment for the first summer kids food program for next summer. We are also working to: (i) expand further school food programs, which have proven successful at improving behavior and learning, (ii) expanding use and effectiveness of other food programs, such as SNAP; (iii) making local farmers’ markets more responsive to food insecurity, (iv) expanding food growing and training programs, to further the ultimate goal (and Maimonides ultimate level of giving) of creating self-sufficiency, and (v) advocating for changes in state programs which would help our residents. And this is in addition to work the SBNTF has done in sustainable housing and other areas to increase self-sufficiency throughout the Valley-Shore area.

Please act today!
Know me: a talk by Anglo-Jewish spoken word poet Leah Thorn

Know me: a talk by Anglo-Jewish spoken word poet Leah Thorn

At the end of October 2014 I was delighted to have the opportunity to come to BSRZ to talk about my work in women’s prisons.

I lead poetry-as-empowerment workshops for women in UK prisons. Here is a poem handed to me by an older woman prisoner during a poetry residency that I undertook in HMP Holloway in London. It is a beautiful example of poetry enabling a woman to express her yearning to be recognized for who she is and signals the danger of stripping away individuality.

Know me.
Tell me that you know me.
As I look into your eyes,
I hope you realize
that you know me

If I drift so far out
and don’t wave or shout,
will you dive in to save me
or will you let me go
because you didn’t know?

Just one look from you
to show that I’ve got through
would be enough to save me
—Vicky

In 2012, I was lucky enough to receive a Winston Churchill Travel Fellowship that enabled me to visit women’s correctional facilities across the States, including York CI in Niantic. During my talk at CBSRZ I said that the situation for incarcerated women felt familiar to me. Women are a small and often ignored minority of the overall prison population, 4.8% in England & Wales, 8.5% in the United States. However, the impact of their incarceration is enormous. The vast majority of women are convicted of non-violent drug or property offences. Only around 18% are incarcerated for violent crimes and in that category are women who have experienced domestic and/or sexual abuse and who struck back at their assailants. Certain populations of women are more vulnerable than others to being criminalized. Black women are four times more likely to be imprisoned than white women and to receive longer sentences.

Not surprisingly, there is a universality to women’s narratives. The stories and poems I heard from women in the United States duplicate those of the women I work with in the UK, interchangeable in their similarity of detail and emotion. Once a safe creative space is made, the women focus mainly on traumatic stories that they are eager to share, often for the first time. Throughout the Travel Fellowship I was audience to poignant poems, monologues and dance/movement pieces on themes such as domestic violence.

However there are stark differences, too, between incarceration of women in the UK and the USA, for example, the wearing of uniforms, the use of restraint and strip searches. For more details, visit http://www.leathorn.com/index.php/prison-work/naked-state/

It is no coincidence that I do this work as a Jew and as the daughter of a Holocaust survivor. In my family I learnt early on that it did not work well for several people to panic at the same time, so I taught myself to be (outwardly) relaxed and comforting when my mother panicked, to become that calming influence, a benign contradiction to raging terror and grief. This is an invaluable skill in prison.

Because of the heaviness of my upbringing, I learned to think well in hard places, and I am quick to use light, sometimes humorous, interventions to deflect a threatening atmosphere. I always try and think of a positive way to interrupt what I perceive as unjust action. Again, useful in prison settings.

Very early on, I decided I would never be a bystander. I can’t bear to see the intense pain of another person yet am drawn to it, a kind of ‘Horror by Proxy’. Working in prison means coming face to face with all that is wrong in the world — and just how wrong it is. I want to ‘fix things’, (tikkun olam) with all that’s honourable about that AND all that comes from the urgency and unbearable-ness of seeing suffering up close, stark, stripped bare.

If you are interested to learn more, visit my website http://www.leathorn.com/index.php/prison-work/beautiful-sentence/ and take a look at ‘Beautiful Sentence’, a documentary made during my two year residency in HMP Bronzefield.

...and she does

I can’t do this  she says
I don’t do this   she says
then she does

no, I don’t dance   she says
I only look like a dancer   she says
then she dances

and the body stretches and fills the space that she thought she could never have again and she sees there is no straitjacket only the tightness of self-criticism and the constant searching for the criticism of others to prove

I can’t this
I don’t do this
then she does

she has photos of her back
back-lit at the waist
hips rounded and ready for sweeping hands
she has flesh as her hair grows
she leaves the Holocaust behind forever

I can’t she says
I don’t she says
yet she does

she falls back into water
leans against unseen energies
allows unknown hands to rest on her

I can’t trust she says
I don’t trust she says
then she does

life was never meant to be like this
she says
I wasn’t supposed to be close to you
she says

I can’t love she says
I don’t love she says
and she does

—from Leah Thorn’s performance piece
I Place My Stones
Summary of Board of Directors Minutes, November 13, 2014.

Attending a board meeting is a great way to get a first-hand, big-picture perspective of all that happens at CBSRZ. If you are a congregant, you have the right to join in and speak. Please come! Meetings normally convene on the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm at the synagogue, and they end by 9:00 pm. Check the calendar to confirm. We also promise tasty popcorn.

Leadership Reports:

a. President: The Project 100 logo is finished thanks to Erica Udoff. Centennial projects under way include a booklet, field trips, and videos, and finally a gala near the actual anniversary date. ARZA is beginning a campaign to elect members to World Zionist Congress and we need a leader to help with vote turnout at CBSRZ in the spring. There is a new link to Shalom Learning on the website. The emergency call list is completed. Stephen attended a Memorial service on Veteran’s Day for Marvin Baron, who died at Anzio in 1944.

b. Rabbi: The rabbi was on the congregation trip to Israel.

c. Temple Administrator: Four new member applications to be approved. S. Seidman made a motion to approve, second by K. Fox, unanimously approved. We presently have 235 member families. Our “Friend in Need” family is in their new apartment. They wrote three lovely thank you notes. For the Shabbat Home Dinners there are eight host families with nearly 50 congregants attending.

d. Financial Vice President: At the board’s request the Finance Committee developed a new “Endowment Fund Procedures” statement, which resolves that any fund with two years of inactivity will go into the General Endowment Fund. Furthermore, in accord with the bylaws, the statement provides that the President may allocate an expenditure up to $2,000; from $2,000-$10,000 the Executive Committee can approve, and greater than $10,000, the entire Board of Directors must approve it. The Treasurer will create a form that committees can use to request funds. Motion to accept new procedures by K. Fox, second by E. Pinn. Motion approved with one opposing vote.

e. Vice President: The Personnel Committee has developed an employee evaluation schedule. In sum, by Dec. 1 employees are to start to think about their self-evaluation; and in January supervisors meet with their respective reports to discuss. All evaluations are to be completed by beginning of February, and then recommendations for salaries are sent to the Personnel Committee for review and approval. Final recommendations are then sent to the Financial Vice President for inclusion in the budget. S. Davis added that the Board/Personnel Committee has an obligation to the Congregation to ensure that every employee is doing his or her job the best they can. Motion to accept the Personnel Evaluation policy by S. Seidman, second by K. Fox. Unanimously approved. This document should be included in the Employee Handbook. At the last B’yachad meeting there was an in depth discussion about improving our Communications; Eddie Binder is developing a memorandum about revamping our current website.

Facilities Update:

There was a two-week delay in installing the new video and light security system owing to a contractor error. Sculpture repair will be overseen by G. Amarant on his return from Israel. Main roof repairs have been completed, with final shingles being installed this week. The skylight is still leaking and needs to be fixed.

Music & More Update:

M. Gardner-Frum confirmed that contracts are signed with Sweet Honey in the Rock and efforts are in high gear to procure ads and sponsors for the program book, which is being produced by Lynne Stiles. We are applying for insurance in case of weather cancellation. They have put our date on their website. First four rows are premium-priced at $180, as a fundraiser; while other tickets are far less.

Iris Freeman Introduction

Welcomed as our new Caring Coordinator. She thanked everyone for a very warm welcome. She is already working with Chesed and Rabbi Sommer. She feels she is already getting enmeshed in the community and has had a few visits with congregants. Her prime task now is to determine needs of the community. She wishes to meet with members of the Chesed Committee. And she would welcome input from the Board in setting priorities.
Norman Hanenbaum Receives the William J. Pomfret Veteran Community Service Award

MIDDLESEX — On Nov. 10, Norman Hanenbaum of East Haddam was presented with the William J. Pomfret Veteran Community Service Award at the 14th annual Middlesex Council Chamber of Commerce “Support the Troops & Honor the Veterans” Member Breakfast Meeting. The award is presented to a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces in recognition of his or her distinguished service to the citizens of Connecticut and selfless commitment to public service in Middlesex County. Hanenbaum was nominated for the award by Arthur S. Meyers, adjutant of the Jewish War Veterans of the USA (JWV) Major General Maurice Rose Post 51 in Middletown.

A member of the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II, Hanenbaum served as commander of JWV Post 51 and the Department of Connecticut JWV. A special education teacher in Hartford, he was recognized as a pioneer in the field. He was one of 15 founders of the Connecticut Special Olympics in 1968 and has remained a volunteer ever since. He is an inductee of the Connecticut Special Olympics Champion Society, Connecticut Special Olympics Hall of Fame, and Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame. He was named an “Everyday Hero” by WFSB Channel 3 in Hartford.

Hanenbaum is music director of the Alleluia Players, a multi-ethnic ensemble of young musicians with disabilities that he founded in 1972 and helps to fund. He also directs Klez Act, a musical group based at Congregation Beth Shalom Rodfe Zedek in Chester.

“Norman is very modest about his nearly full-time volunteer commitment in a wide range of areas,” Meyers wrote in his nomination. “He is the first to urge recognition for the Alleluia Players and others who are building a ‘better community.’ In his genuinely humble way of living and communicating, we find a person who is a very active ‘citizen volunteer’ but seeks no recognition for himself.”

“As an American Jew, and recalling all the misery and suffering our people have endured through the centuries, I am truly blessed to have my mental and physical faculties, and to live in a nation that allows freedom of worship and self-expression,” Hanenbaum says. “I count my blessings and am motivated to contribute in a meaningful manner to my community and society.”

Judie Jacobson, The Connecticut Jewish Ledger (reprinted with permission)

CBSRZ NEWS

Kennedy and King

In June 1963 President John F. Kennedy delivered a speech finally committing the federal government to a landmark civil rights agenda. On Friday January 16 2015, on Martin Luther King week-end, CBSRZ’s Shabbat service will feature the inside story of how and why Kennedy acted. The speaker will be renowned Canadian journalist and author Andrew Cohen. His new book, Two Days in June: John F. Kennedy and the 48 Hours that Made History, is being reviewed as breakthrough research — and a cracking good read. Join us for this timely dive into America’s search for justice.
Memorial Plaques
10th of Shevat 5775 to 11th of Shevet 5775

Alba Alcorder—father of Andrew Freeman
Sam Adelman—grandfather of Judi Weintraub
Zaide Alpert—sister of Adele Alpert
Abraham Alpert—father of Adele Alpert
Sharon Alpert—sister of Adele Alpert
Max Alpert—father of Adele Alpert
Beth Wolpert—grandmother of Adele Alpert

Yahrzeits
12th of Shevet 5775 to 9th of Adar 5775

Albina Alcorder
Judy Alpern—sister of Adele Alpert

Our Sincere Condolences to
Adrienne Hutt on the death of her uncle, Leon Horowitz.
Barry Ilberman on the death of his mother-in-law, Elaine Melion.
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<td>9:00 am Torah Study</td>
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<td>No Religious School 8:00 am Morning Minyan 8:45 am Religious Affairs 9:00 am Chair Yoga 7:00 pm Program Committee</td>
<td>5:30 pm Facilities 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm Choir 7:15 pm Book Discussion: “Climbing Jacob’s Ladder”</td>
<td>Megillah Deadline (March/April) 7:00 pm Meditation</td>
<td>5:45 pm Tot Shabbat 6:15 pm Potluck Dinner 7:00 pm First Friday Erev Shabbat Service</td>
<td>9:00 am Torah Study 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm Interfaith Israel Trip Slide Show</td>
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<td>8:00 am Morning Minyan 9:00 am Chair Yoga 4:15 pm Religious School</td>
<td>12:00 pm Lunch and Learn 7:00 pm Board of Directors</td>
<td>5:45 pm Abbreviated Service, followed by dinners in Congregants’ homes</td>
<td>9:00 am Torah Study 10:30 am 2nd Saturday Shabbat Morning Service and Kiddush Luncheon</td>
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<td>5:45 pm Erev Shabbat with Piano - early service</td>
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The Whole Megillah may be viewed in color on the web at www.cbsrz.org

Many thanks to these recent Oneg sponsors

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