



CONGREGATION BETH EL SCROLL

JANUARY 2025 • TEVET - SHEVAT 5785

VOL. 74 NO. 5

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- From the Clergy • 1
- Service Information • 2
- Monthly Programming • 3
- Beth El Annual Gala • 4
- Middah of the Month • 5
- Joseph and David: Two Great Criers • 6
- Friday Night Kol
Haneshama Service
Returns to Beth El • 7
- Beth El in Photos • 7
- Israel in Focus • 8
- Books & Beyond • 9
- Women of Beth El • 10
- Men's Club • 10
- Beth El Religious School &
Youth Activities • 12
- Beth El Preschool • 12
- Community
Announcements • 13
- Contributions • 13
- Bulletin Board • 15

Click on a page number to go directly to that page.

From the Beth El Clergy

GIVE GLADLY

BY RABBI DEBORAH MEGDAL



I hope you've had the chance to enjoy the *simcha* (joy) and cuteness of the new wave of "baby" namings at Beth El. I put "baby" in quotes because most of

the children have been walking and talking their way onto the bimah to receive their Hebrew names. For a variety of reasons (e.g., COVID), some families could not have a naming in the first months, so they are now making the meaningful choice to give their children Hebrew names a few years later.

These happy occasions have challenged us to re-think the traditional gift that we give to Beth El babies: a colorful, terry cloth bib hand-decorated with the words "I was named at Congregation Beth El" in sparkly paint. Babies still receive the bib, but to older children, we are giving tzedakah boxes instead. So far, the response from families has been overwhelmingly positive.

Parents have shared that their children are thrilled to have their own tzedakah box at home. They are delighted by each opportunity to contribute to their collection. Imagine their glee when sliding their nickels, quarters, and folded-up dollar bills into their brand new tzedakah boxes. We grown-ups can learn from these

newly named children who find giving tzedakah so much fun.

Rambam (Maimonides) teaches that when we give grudgingly, our tzedakah is on the lowest level: *שִׂיִּתֵּן לוֹ בְּעֵצָב*. Rather, we should give like our children do: *בְּסִמְחָה פְּנִימִים יָפוּת*: "gladly, and with a pleasant smile."

Our attitude towards giving is important, but it is not the only factor. Consider Rambam's eight levels of giving (and if you are like me, you always appreciate a good list). In descending order from highest to lowest level of

giving, we give tzedakah that:

1. Allows another person to become financially independent.
2. Is anonymous on both ends, so that the donor and recipient are unknown to each other.
3. Keeps the recipient anonymous, although the donor is known.



ONE OF THE TZEDAKAH BOXES GIVEN TO CHILDREN AT THEIR HEBREW NAMING CEREMONY

4. Keeps the donor anonymous, although the recipient is known.
5. Is offered *before* the needy person asks for help.
6. Is offered *after* the needy person asks for help.
7. Is given with a pleasant attitude, even if not at an appropriate level.
8. Is given begrudgingly.
(Mishnah Torah, Gifts to the Poor 10:14)

As we reflect our own practices of tzedakah at the start of 2025, a few

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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SERVICE INFORMATION

MINYAN SCHEDULE

Sunday

9:00 am and 8:00 pm

Monday - Thursday

7:30 am and 8:00 pm*

Friday

7:30 am and 6:30 pm**

*Morning minyan is at 9:00 am on federal holidays when the Beth El office is closed.

**There is no 6:30 pm service on evenings with musical Shabbat services (*Shir Yachad* and *Yedid Nefesh*).

SHABBAT SCHEDULE FOR JANUARY

Friday, January 3

6:00 pm Shir Yachad Dinner

7:00 pm Shir Yachad Musical Service followed by oneg

Saturday, January 4

7:30 am Early Shabbat Service

9:15 am Main Shabbat Service

9:30 am Junior Congregation

Friday, January 10

6:00 pm Yedid Nefesh Dinner

7:00 pm Yedid Nefesh Service followed by oneg

Saturday, January 11

7:30 am Early Shabbat Service

9:15 am Main Shabbat Service - Sisterhood Shabbat

9:30 am Junior Congregation

Friday, January 17

6:30 pm Friday Evening Shabbat Service

Saturday, January 18

7:30 am Early Shabbat Service

9:15 am Main Shabbat Service - Robert Yuffee Bar Mitzvah

9:30 am Minyan Chaverim

4:45 pm Riley O'Mara Bat Mitzvah (Havdalah)

Friday, January 24

6:00 pm BERS Family Shabbat Dinner and Service

6:30 pm Friday Evening Shabbat Service

Saturday, January 25

7:30 am Early Shabbat Service

9:15 am Main Shabbat Service

9:30 am Junior Congregation

Friday, January 31

6:30 pm Friday Evening Shabbat Service

For more information on Beth El's Shabbat services and daily minyanim, please visit bethelmc.org/services.

Rabbi Greg Harris and Sarah Roark

INVITE THE COMMUNITY
TO JOIN US TO
CELEBRATE IN OUR

AUFRUF
(PRE-WEDDING BLESSINGS)

SHABBAT MORNING
JANUARY 25, 2025
PARSHAT VAERA

KIDDUSH WILL FOLLOW SERVICES
RSVP AT BETHELMC.ORG/AUFRUF



MONTHLY PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

Click on any of the events to find out more information.

January Events at Beth El

Connect

Jan. 1
4:45 pm

Light the Night

Come together with friends and family for an outdoor Hanukkah candle lighting.



Jan. 2
7:30 pm

Keshet Nashim

Women's cancer support group for cancer patients and survivors, via Zoom.



Jan. 2
7:30 pm

Hearing Men's Voices

"Useful Metaphors" discussion with Dennis Askwith, in person or via Zoom.



Jan. 5
12:00 pm

Tzelem LGBTQ+ Teen Group

A safe space for 7th-12th graders to discuss the issues in their lives as teens.



Jan. 25
8:00 pm

Beth El Annual Gala

Cocktails, silent auction, and a musical performance by Rachel York.



Learn

Jan. 12
11:00 am

Book Chat & Meet the Author

Meet historian-author Steven Ujifusa via Zoom as he introduces his new book.



Jan. 15
7:30 pm

Women's Study Circle

This month, Rabbi Avis Miller leads a discussion on b-mitzvah.



Jan. 29
7:30 pm

Leaving No One Behind

Learn about the Jewish National Fund's Special in Uniform program.



Pray

Jan. 3
6:00 pm

Families w/Young Children Shabbat

For families with children ages birth to six. Followed by light dinner.



Jan. 3
6:00 pm

Shir Yachad Musical Shabbat

Join Hazzan Fradkin for dinner at 6:00 pm followed by a musical service at 7:00 pm.



Jan. 10
6:00 pm

Yedid Nefesh Friday Night Service

Join Rabbi Megdal for dinner at 6:00 pm followed by a musical service at 7:00 pm.



Jan. 11
9:15 am

Sisterhood Shabbat

Join us for our annual Shabbat service celebrating women in the community.



Jan. 24
6:00 pm

BERS Family Shabbat

First to third grade families will celebrate the start of their Jewish education.



Engage

Jan. 16
12:00 pm

My Story on Three Continents

Members 65+ meet for lunch and a special presentation.



Jan. 21
7:00 pm

Open Conversations About Israel

Rabbi Harris will lead a series of open and safe conversations about Israel.



Jan. 21
7:00 pm

Volunteering at Manna

Help sort food at Manna Food Center in Gaithersburg.



FROM THE CLERGY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

key takeaways: First, all levels are better than giving nothing at all. Anonymity is a plus, but it is not required. If possible, offer help before the person has to ask. Give an appropriate amount. And finally, give happily, like our children do.

Our Beth El community generously supports so many programs and people with funds, time, and heartfelt

effort. Your next chance to give tzedakah is right around the corner. Join us at the **Beth El Annual Gala on Saturday night, January 25**. I invite you to donate by purchasing a seat, offering a silent auction item, or contributing in any amount that you can give gladly. Register here: <https://www.bethelmc.org/gala/>. ■

Beth El Annual Gala 2025

Join us for an evening featuring music, cocktails, a silent auction, and a musical performance by award-winning Broadway performer Rachel York. Tickets start at \$180. Those who have given \$540 or more to the Annual Campaign since June 1 are eligible for two free tickets, though you must still register. For more information and to register, go to bethelmc.org/gala.



Join us on Wednesday, January 1, at 4:45 pm as we gather together on the last night of Hanukkah for an outdoor candle lighting. Our lights shine brighter together, and as a community, we can make the light of the world brighter. We will have warm drinks and sweet treats to follow. RSVP at bethelmc.org/light-0101.



Broadway comes to Beth El! The Beth El choirs and star soloists from our own community perform your favorite Broadway hits from both the latest shows and well-loved classics. Featuring music from *Rent!*, *The Greatest Showman*, *Wicked*, *Hamilton*, *Into the Woods*, *Aladdin*, and more!

The concert is free to attend, with a suggested donation of \$10. Registration is required. Register at bethelmc.org/broadway-concert.



COCKTAILS, SILENT AUCTION,
AND A MUSICAL PERFORMANCE
BY AWARD-WINNING
BROADWAY PERFORMER
RACHEL YORK



ABOUT OUR GUEST PERFORMER

Rachel York is a dynamic and versatile award-winning actress and singer. She is best known for her critically acclaimed Broadway performances in *City of Angels*, *Les Misérables*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Sly Fox* with Richard Dreyfuss, and *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* with Jonathan Pryce

REGISTER ONLINE
bethelmc.org/gala

SILENT AUCTION
bethelmc.org/auction



FIND COMPLETE DETAILS ABOUT THE EVENT AT
BETHELMC.ORG/GALA

GALA CO-CHAIRS
Jennifer & Alec Powers
Camilla & Andre Zugman

Cocktail Attire Invited
Complimentary Valet Parking

Middah of the Month: Tzedakah (Righteousness)

The Hebrew term *tzedakah* (צדקה) is often erroneously translated as “charity.” In fact, the word comes from the Hebrew root, ק.ד.ח. meaning “just” or “correct,” while the English word “charity” comes from the Latin word “caritas,” which “implies an act of giving by the ‘haves’ to the ‘have-nots’ - out of the goodness of their hearts.” (Source: Oxford Dictionary) The distinction is that charity implies an act of generosity rather than an expectation, while צדקה is quite simply “the right thing to do.”

Giving money or other material resources is certainly an act of צדקה. However, both the attitude of the donor and the emotional well-being of the recipient are also part and parcel of the act of צדקה. Thus, the 12th Century sage, Moses Maimonides, famously constructed a “Ladder of צדקה” with each rung representing either greater willingness on the part of the donor, or greater care for the dignity of the recipient. It is easy to envision how much more kind and caring a society would emerge if such attitudes were to prevail. Perhaps this is what was meant by the Torah’s commandment (Deuteronomy 16:20) of “צדק צדק תרדוף” - “Justice, justice shall you pursue.”

During the month of Tevet, Beth El will continue to explore the middot, including *tzedakah*, through the Pre-school, Religious School, and programs such as:

Leaving No One Behind: Empowering Beyond Ability - Wednesday, January 29, 7:30 pm. Imagine a way for Israelis with disabilities to find both purpose and a supportive community - this is the promise of the Jewish National Fund-USA’s Special in Uniform. This initiative creates an inclusive Israel Defense Forces service experience that instills pride, confidence, and skills. Learn more about this program from Lieutenant Colonel Tiran Attia, director and co-founder of Special In Uniform, who will also introduce the newly launched “Hero to Hero” initiative, where these special soldiers are paired with wounded veterans, sharing powerful moments of resilience and healing.

RSVP is required. To RSVP or for more information, contact JNF Executive Director Adam Tennen at atenen@jnf.org or 301-589-8565, ext. 842, or visit <https://events.jnf.org/e/GWSIU>. ■

Nisim v’Niflaot



Last month, during Kislev, we came together to celebrate the Middah of *Nisim v’Niflaot* (Miracles and Wonders). Some of the ways we celebrated included the Women of Beth El Annual Event - Candle Making Workshop, an outing to see *A Hanukkah Carol*, and the Mira-

cles and Light concert featuring Hazzan Fradkin, the Shir Atid youth choir, and Cantor Melanie Blatt Schuster and the Shir Hadash youth choir from Beth El Congregation Baltimore.

Joseph and David: Two Great Criers

BY ELLIOT WILNER

In the fourth chapter of his book *Beginning*, Meir Shalev reviews the several instances in the Hebrew Bible in which “crying” is described. The very first instance is that of Hagar, Abraham’s concubine, who cries bitterly after she and her young son are cast out of their home and sent into the wilderness. That is an interesting story, which Shalev analyzes at great length, but we will leave that for another day; and today we will focus on another “crying” story, that of Joseph, the son of Jacob. Surprisingly, Shalev depicts Joseph as a *bakh’yan*, i.e., a “great crier” or “crybaby.” This seems, at first blush, to be a strange depiction of the historical Joseph. Wasn’t he famous as a dreamer and dream-interpreter, who later rose to become a viceroy in the court of Pharaoh? When and how did Joseph become a “great crier?”

Shalev considers the historical David to have been a “great crier” too. He draws many parallels between Joseph and David: Each was the youngest of several brothers, each was dispatched by his father to visit the older brothers when they were away from home, each was scorned and mistreated by his older brothers, yet each would eventually attain a high political office. As for their common propensity to cry, David cried on numerous occasions during his lifetime, while the occasions when Joseph cried were all related to one substory: the reunification with his family in Egypt, many years after he had been presumed dead.

It is interesting to reflect on the number of occasions during Joseph’s lifetime when he did not cry: not when his mother died, not when he was stripped of his tunic and cast into a viper-infested pit, not when he was sold into slavery, and not when he was imprisoned unjustly. He cries only when he is reunited with his family: initially, with his ten older half-brothers; later, with his younger brother, Benjamin; and, finally, with his father, Jacob.

Shalev – himself a highly regarded writer – recognizes the consummate storytelling skill of the author of this biblical saga. When, in his interactions with his brothers, does Joseph manage to contain his emotions and when does he not? He doesn’t cry when his older brothers first come before him to plead their case, even though he recognizes them and the language they speak; he does not reveal himself as Joseph, only as a bureaucratic official. His brothers’ presence stirs up painful memories, and he is not moved to tears. On the contrary, he demands of his brothers that one of them return home and bring back their youngest brother, Benjamin—the

only other son born to Joseph’s mother, Rachel—while the others are forced to remain in Egypt pending Benjamin’s arrival (Eventually, Joseph will release all the brothers save one, Simon, who is detained.) (Ex. 42:1-17)

Only at a subsequent meeting with his brothers, when Joseph overhears them voicing recriminations against one another concerning their long-ago mistreatment of him, does Joseph lose his composure and exit the chamber so that he can cry privately (Ex. 42:18-24).

When Benjamin finally arrives in Egypt together with the other brothers and is brought before to the viceroy’s court, Joseph manages to maintain his composure. But later that day, when the brothers are brought to Joseph’s residence to break bread with him, he inquires after

their father and is assured that “Thy servant our father is well, he is yet alive.” Then Joseph focuses his gaze on Benjamin and asks – quite disingenuously -- “Is this your youngest brother...?” Then he bestows this blessing on the boy: “May God be gracious unto thee, my son.” At that point, Joseph is no longer able to contain his emotions, and the narrative describes his reaction poignantly: “And Joseph made haste, for his heart yearned toward his brother; and he sought where to cry; and he entered his chamber and cried there.” After regaining his composure, Joseph

“washed his face and went out and restrained himself,” but still he did not disclose his filial relationship to his guests. Indeed, he sat apart from them while they dined (Ex. 43:24-34).

Eventually, after Joseph has demanded that Benjamin remain in his custody, and after Judah has made an impassioned plea that Benjamin be released – because Jacob still grieves the loss of Rachel’s older son – “Joseph made himself known unto his brethren and he cried aloud.” Shalev wryly comments that Joseph did indeed cry aloud – very aloud, evidently – because, even though he and his brothers were alone in his house at the time, “the Egyptians heard and the house of Pharaoh heard.” It is no doubt upsetting when you hear your brothers describe you, in your presence, as dead!

Joseph will cry again when he is reunited with his father Jacob; once again when his father dies; and yet again following his father’s death, when his brothers fabricate a story to the effect that their father, on his deathbed, had expressed a wish that Joseph should not exact retribution against them.

All in all, Shalev has made a convincing case that Joseph was in fact one “great crier,” has he not? ■



ILLUSTRATION OF JOSEPH WEeping BY OWEN JONES, *THE HISTORY OF JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN* (1869)

Friday Night Kol Haneshama Service Returns to Beth El

BY LAURA NADEL

After a Covid 19-induced hiatus, we are excited for the return of the Friday Night Kol Haneshama service! This lay-led service, which will generally be held on the fourth Friday night of the month, will blend tradition and creativity, drawing on contemporary and innovative Jewish music from around the world, including from B'nai Jeshurun and Romemu in New York, and Shira Chadasha and Nava Tehila in Jerusalem.

Please join us on February 28, at 7:00 pm, as Scott Glick, Ellen Chubin Epstein, Rob Judson, and other Beth El congregants lead us in prayer, reflection, and song. Reconnect with friends and welcome Shabbat in a joyful, participatory, and engaging service, with melodies that calm, songs that enliven, and prayers that elevate.



Following the service, enjoy a communal Oneg Shabbat, which will also frequently include a guest speaker on an interesting and relevant topic. You can also register for a light Shabbat dinner before the service at 6:00 pm. No registration is required if you only plan on coming to only services and the oneg.

When asked for his thoughts on the return of the service, Rabbi Greg Harris had this to say: "I've heard that music is the elixir of prayer. This means that music helps open up our prayers, our hearts, our souls. I'm excited we're adding this new(ish) service to Beth El's Friday night opportunities for coming together to set the week aside and sing in prayer together. By doing so, we can open to the best of ourselves." ■

Beth El in Photos



TEITEL FAMILY PRESENTATION



PATHWAY TO B-MITZVAH



SINGING SONGS WITH BEPS



BERS HANUKKAH SING-ALONG



DOR L'DOR



PREPARATIONS FOR THE LATKE-HAMANTASCH DEBATE

Israel in Focus

Renewal and Reconnection in a Time of Crisis

BY KAREN BENEZRA

Several months back, a group of friends discussing Israel's long war with Hamas struggled with frustrating questions: How did a country with such military superiority get so bogged down battling a terror militia like Hamas? Why couldn't they spring more hostages? In a year of tragedy and suffering, with thousands of Palestinians dying in Gaza, did we even know the whole story? And finally, why weren't we seeing any "miracles" in the IDF's onslaught in Gaza that would bring about a decisive victory?

One person bluntly lamented, "No miracles in 2,000 years... How easy would it be to say, 'Hey guys, I really am here?' But no, dead silence."

"Well, the fact that Israel exists and has survived and won numerous *past* conflicts is an outright miracle," countered his friend. To which a third replied: "One person's miracle may be another person's coincidence. I think we have no clue whether miracles are occurring, but it's up to each individual to see them and perceive them as such."

And then it hit me. How could we expect miracles in a world that had become so mired in antisemitism and hate? How could we stay positive as campuses erupted in protests, with student groups lauding terrorists and openly calling for Israel's destruction? What to make of a global smear campaign where scientists, educators, artists and authors were being "cancelled" for supporting Israel, or the mere "crime" of being Jewish?

Are miracles happening, but we just can't see them?

Not only was Israel fighting a widening ground war, but also a flood of biased media reporting and propaganda spreading across global news outlets and social media platforms, perpetuating harmful narratives against the Jewish state.

About a week later, Israel shocked the world with the "exploding pager" and walkie-talkie incidents dealing a severe blow to Hezbollah's political and military commanders in Lebanon. Next came the assassination of Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, a close ally of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. The following month, Israeli soldiers operating in the southern portion of Gaza chased down and eliminated three terrorists, one of whom was the elusive Yayah Sinwar. True, it was a "chance encounter" by a routine patrol in Rafah that brought down the notorious Hamas military leader. Were these actual miracles, or was Israel just getting luckier? Would the upheaval enable Israel to go after the so-called "head of the snake," the mullahs in Iran?

"Given that Iran relied on Hezbollah as a deterrent against U.S. and Israeli direct attacks," its weakened state leaves it vulnerable, wrote Robert Satloff, executive

director of the Segal center at The Washington Institute.¹ And so, he predicted, a much-feared retaliation against Israel would be considerably less forceful than its revenge assault back in April.

With that opening, he added: "the possibility [of a restored Lebanon] is more real today than it has been at any moment in recent memory."

Through a fall term marked by a pitched U.S. Presidential Election and pressure campaigns on Israel to "wrap up its conflicts," we waited and watched – with no more of the 101 hostages returned. And then, a breakthrough of a ceasefire declaration between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Last month, the rapid and dramatic changes continued with the collapse of Syria's brutal Assad regime after 54 years of rule. Experts noted that the surprise 12-day advance by rebel forces was hastened by a lack of intervention by Iran and Russia in support of President Bashar al-Assad, though the latter granted him an escape route and safe passage to Moscow. In their glee, ordinary Syrians ran beside rebels to unlock prisons, search for long-lost relatives and free thousands of their "disappeared" countrymen from terror dungeons; others could be seen ransacking Assad's former residence, in a settling of scores with the dictator. To secure its northernmost border and ensure that Assad's vast military hardware would not fall into the hands of hostile factions, Israel launched hundreds of deep airstrikes in Syrian territory – the most since the Yom Kippur War. In less than 24 hours, the Israel Air Force destroyed a range of Syrian missiles, drones, radar systems and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



**Open Conversation
About Israel**

WITH RABBI HARRIS

Tuesday, January 21, 7:00 pm at Beth El

Join Rabbi Harris for a series of open and safe conversations surrounding Israel. The first session will take place on Tuesday, January 21, at 7:00 pm. All are welcome as we come together to support one another. Go to bethelmc.org/conversations-0121 to register.

¹ 6 *Consequences of Israel Killing Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah* - TheHill.com

Books & Beyond

Cracking Codes and other Capers

BY ROBIN JACOBSON

At a book event in 2019, a librarian posed a fateful question. She asked the assembled authors whether they might like to collaborate with another writer one day. Award-winning authors Steve Sheinkin and Ruta Sepetys say that they looked at each other, and “the idea was sparked” for what would become *The Bletchley Riddle*, their action-packed World War II-era novel for grades 6 and up. Praised as “historical fiction at its best” (*The Horn Book*), the novel has been racking up starred reviews since its publication in October.

BLETCHLEY PARK

The Bletchley Riddle, as its title suggests, is set in Bletchley Park, a manor house and grounds located about 50 miles northwest of London. Bletchley Park was a top-secret center of frenetic code-breaking efforts during World War II as the Allies struggled to learn German battle plans.

It was at Bletchley Park that pioneering computer scientist Alan Turing and a host of associates – cryptanalysts, mathematicians, linguists, chess champions, and crossword-puzzle experts – managed to successfully decrypt German military communications sent through the infamous Enigma machines. Because of the many billions of ways Enigma could encrypt a message, Enigma communications were thought to be impenetrable.

Some call the cracking of Enigma codes the single most important Allied victory of World War II. Historians estimate that the Bletchley Park codebreakers shortened the war in Europe by as much as two years.

JAKOB AND LIZZIE

The novel, which takes place during 1940, centers on two teenage siblings, Jakob and Lizzie Novis. Jakob, 19, a brilliant mathematics student, is recruited by a Cambridge University professor to work at Bletchley Park. Fourteen-year-old Lizzie is supposed to be in Cleveland, Ohio, with her grandmother. But before her ship to America set sail, she escaped from Gran’s hapless steward, Mr. Fleetwood, assigned to escort her to Cleveland.

Lizzie wants to remain in England with Jakob. Together, she hopes, they can discover what happened to their mother, Willa, their only living parent. Her last known whereabouts were at the American Embassy in Warsaw during the evacuation on September 1, 1939, as Germany invaded Poland. Jakob believes Willa is dead, but Lizzie is convinced she is still alive.

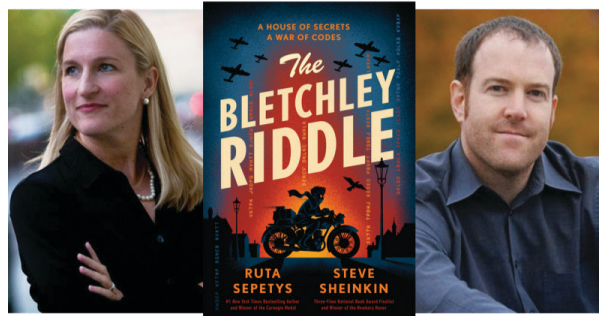
The narrative alternates between each sibling’s perspective (Sepetys wrote Lizzie’s chapters and Sheinkin wrote Jakob’s chapters). Despite sharing a room at the Shoulder of Mutton Inn (a real place), Lizzie and Jakob have many secrets from each other, some chosen and

some compulsory because they signed the Official Secrets Act when they began working at Bletchley Park. Lizzie has become a messenger at the park, carrying sealed envelopes between departments. In her free time, she investigates Willa’s mysterious disappearance while avoiding recapture by Mr. Fleetwood.


Jakob works the midnight to 8:00 am shift at one of the wooden huts in the park, analyzing German army and air force ciphers. Sheinkin, drawing on his experience as a master of nonfiction for young readers (*Bomb, Fallout*) marvelously illuminates the workings of the Enigma machine and the role of careless German operators in providing clues that enabled codebreakers to decrypt messages.

On top of his exhausting and intense codebreaking efforts, Jakob must cope with a menacing MI5 agent. Agent Jarvis is on the hunt for wartime spies; he is suspicious of Jakob because of Jakob’s not-British-enough background (Polish-Jewish father and American mother) as well as Willa’s disappearance. He suspects Willa is a German spy and accuses Jakob of concealing information about her, a treasonable offense.

To add to the drama, Lizzie and Jakob are receiving puzzling, riddle-laden messages from an unknown person who may – or may not – be Willa. ■



**Meet Author
Steven Ujifusa**
The Last Ships from Hamburg




**Sunday, January 12
11:00 am via Zoom**

**THE LAST SHIPS
FROM HAMBURG**

BUSINESS, RIVALRY, AND THE RACE TO SAVE
RUSSIA'S JEWS ON THE EVE OF WORLD WAR I

STEVEN UJIFUSA



Meet historian-author Steven Ujifusa via Zoom as he introduces his acclaimed new book, *The Last Ships from Hamburg: Business, Rivalry, and the Race to Save Russia's Jews on the Eve of World War I*. Ujifusa's book is unique in that it focuses on the role played by shipping and business titans in the epic tale of Eastern European Jewish immigration to America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. RSVP at bethelmc.org/book-chat-0112.

2025 Sisterhood Shabbat

BY MARSHA REHNS

This year's Sisterhood Shabbat on January 11 will feature Rabbi Shira Stutman delivering the annual Celia and Audrey Resnik Memorial Lecture, "How to Not Just Live, but to Be Alive: Creating Meaning and Generating Action in the Dead of Winter." The Golda Meir Award for Leadership will also be presented to former Women of Beth El co-presidents, Alison Baraf and Sharon Fine. Following the kiddush, Women of Beth El will continue the observance and celebration of Shabbat with a study session led by Rabbi Stutman, where we will explore the topic, "Are You a Prophet or a Rabbi? – Jewish Paradigms for Leadership."

Rabbi Stutman is a nationally known faith-based leader and the co-host of the PRX podcast *Chutzpod!* in which she provides Jewish answers to life's contemporary questions, and the author of the forthcoming book, *The Jewish Way to a Good Life*. She is the senior rabbi of the Aspen Jewish Congregation and founder of Mixed Multitudes. A graduate of Columbia University and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Rabbi Stutman was named one of "America's Most Inspiring Rabbis" by the *Forward*.

The Resnik Memorial Lecture and Golda Meir Award for leadership was endowed by Dr. Harvey Resnik z"l in



SHARON FINE, ALISON BARAF, MICHAEL KATZ, AND ARYEH PORTNOY

memory of his mother, Celia, and his wife, Audrey, each of whom were esteemed leaders in their synagogues and communities. This year's award recipients, Alison Baraf and Sharon Fine, assumed the co-presidency of Sisterhood in 2022 as the world emerged from the covid pandemic. Early in their presidency, they began using the name Women of Beth El to encompass both Sisterhood and Zhava in a successful effort to reinvigorate women's involvement with Beth El. Next, they supported the redesign and re-opening of the Beth El Judaica and Gift Shop, which had been closed during the pandemic.

Alison grew up in Potomac and celebrated her bat mitzvah at Washington Hebrew Congregation. "[Her] Judaism always played a strong role" in her life. Alison notes that whenever her family traveled, they made it a point to learn about the Jewish history of an area, including Florence, Italy, where Alison spent her junior year abroad. Attending a seder at the Great Synagogue of Florence, Alison was surprised to learn that on Passover "some Jews eat rice!"

Alison attended law school at NYU, where she met her husband Aryeh Portnoy, and they both knew they wanted to make the Washington, D.C. area home. They joined Beth El in 1999, drawn to the "warm community." Alison had met Rabbi Bill Rudolph previously - he was a juror on a case when Alison was clerking for a Montgomery County Circuit Court judge. Alison served as an Assistant State's Attorney for Montgomery County and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

UPCOMING WOMEN OF BETH EL PROGRAMS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 7:30 PM VIA ZOOM Kesher Nashim: Women's Cancer Connection. See information on page 16.

THURSDAYS, BEGINNING JANUARY 7, 9:30 AM Learn to Play Canasta. Class is full. Email wbe@bethelmc.org to be added to the waitlist.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 11, 9:15 AM Sisterhood Shabbat. See article on this page.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 11, 1:00 PM Are You a Prophet or a Rabbi? – Jewish Paradigms for Leadership. Stay after Sisterhood Shabbat for this learning session led by Resnik Memorial Lecturer Rabbi Shira Stutman.

TUESDAYS, JANUARY 7, 14, 21, AND 28, 7:00 PM Mah Jongg. Players of all levels welcome to join us. RSVP to play at bethelmc.org/tuesdaymahj.

MONDAYS, JANUARY 13 AND 27, 1:00 PM WBE Crafters. Join the WBE crafters for community, fun, help, and social action projects.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 7:30 PM Women's Study Circle. January's topic is b-mitzvah. Go to bethelmc.org/study-0115 for more information and to register.

MEN'S CLUB

UPCOMING MEN'S CLUB PROGRAMS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 7:30 PM IN PERSON OR VIA ZOOM Hearing Men's Voices. Beth El men are invited to join us in person at Beth El or via Zoom as Dennis Askwith leads discussion of "Useful Metaphors." What metaphors do we use, both religious and secular, to help us to navigate life's challenges? RSVP at bethelmc.org/hmv-0102.

SUNDAYS, JANUARY 5, 12, 19, AND 26, 9:30 AM Men's Club Breakfast. Join us each Sunday in December for breakfast following morning minyan.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 21, 7:00 PM Volunteering at Manna Food Center. We are looking for 12 volunteers age 11-plus to help sort nonperishable food. Go to bethelmc.org/manna-0121 for more information.

SISTERHOOD SHABBAT *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10*

has been a jewelry designer for nearly two decades. Alison and Aryeh's three sons, Max, Brandon, and Tyler, went to Beth El Preschool and CES-JDS.

Alison's leadership at Beth El began on the Preschool Board where she oversaw parent education and coordinated biannual Preschool Shabbat dinners. She has been a member of the Sisterhood Catering Committee, the Beth El Gala Committee (co-chairing the 2023 Gala), and the committee that planned Sheila Bellack's retirement celebration. Alison was a member of the Zhava board early in its formation and joined the Sisterhood board in 2018. Beth El Judaica and Gifts, a project close to Alison's heart, was a collaborative effort led by Alison, Jen Powers, and a dedicated group of WBE members during her tenure as co-president. This past summer, on a visit to Israel, Alison was excited to visit with staff at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, whose artists create wares that are sold in the shop.

Alison has rejoined Beth El's board in an at-large position. Her work inside and outside Beth El have inspired her "to do more. We need to continue to find avenues for Jewish joy," she says. "My passion is engagement, and I am committed to continuing the work."

Outside of Beth El, Alison serves on the Board of Governors for the Charles E. Smith Life Communities (CESLC). She is the vice chair of the CESLC Development Committee and a member of the Advisory Board of CESLC's Elder Safe Program. She is also on the Film Council for the Edlavitch DCJCC's JxJ, which includes the Washington Jewish Film and Music Festivals, and she coordinated the first Beth El Night at the Jewish Film Festival, bringing more than 225 Beth El members to a screening on opening night of last year's Festival.

Sharon grew up in Norfolk, Virginia, in a "small but tight Jewish community", where her family belonged to an Orthodox synagogue and the Conservative synagogue "across the street." She credits her love of Judaism to her father who was a first-generation Lithuanian Jew.

After college, Sharon moved to Washington to work on Capitol Hill, and she and her husband Michael Katz joined Beth El in 2000. Michael is business development manager for AMD, a technology company. Their oldest child, Noah, made aliyah two years ago and currently serves in the IDF at Tel Nof Air Force Base. Son Benjamin works as a marketing associate for CADCA, a non-profit that helps communities fight addiction, and their youngest child, Lilah, is a fellow with the New York Legal Aid group. Sharon works for the American Jewish Committee, where she spearheads outreach to fight antisemitism in the DMV community, particularly in independent schools.

When Sharon and her family first joined Beth El, she became involved with the Preschool, Nitzanim, and Minyan Chaverim. For almost a decade, she led Shitufim, the Shabbat service for 2nd, 3rd, and 4th graders which is "one of the best jobs," she ever had. In 2016, she was

co-founder of the Refugee Committee, helping a family of nine from the Democratic Republic of Congo and later a family of five from Afghanistan. "It was unbelievably rewarding," she recalls.

Sharon also helped start the women's inter-generational Rosh Chodesh group and co-led the Kol Hane-shema High Holiday service for five years. Currently, she participates in the Torah study group on Shabbat at 10:00 am in the library. She is the proud graduate of Rabbi Rudolph's three-year Torah study class and Rabbi Harris's Prophets class. With the support and encouragement of Rabbi Rudolph and Sisterhood President Amanda Ford 20 years ago, Sharon and Arielle Grille created and led the first Zhava board focusing on programming and connection for younger Beth El women.

Sharon reflected that as WBE co-president, she has both grown as a leader and furthered her love of Judaism and love of learning. Alison and Sharon complemented each other in their roles, and she is thrilled with the participation and enthusiasm of the women of Beth El. Sharon underscored that with its new leadership, including president Jen Powers, "WBE is in fabulous hands." ■

To read more about Alison and Sharon's tenure as WBE co-presidents, see page 8 of the [June 2023 Scroll](#).

ISRAEL IN FOCUS *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8*

chemical weapons depots (by some estimates, accounting for 70 percent of its military capabilities), and took out a considerable portion of the Syrian Navy.

Suddenly, the pace of change reshaping the Middle East is the most significant since the 1920s. Iran remains a threat, and insurgencies may yet rattle neighboring Jordan and Iraq. Whether Assad's ouster will lead to elections or another civil war among disparate rebel groups, is still unclear. But as tyrants fall and history unfolds before our eyes, I'm left with my friends' thoughts that yes, actual victories are happening – and miracles can be seen if we choose to believe in them. That alone can lift our spirits.

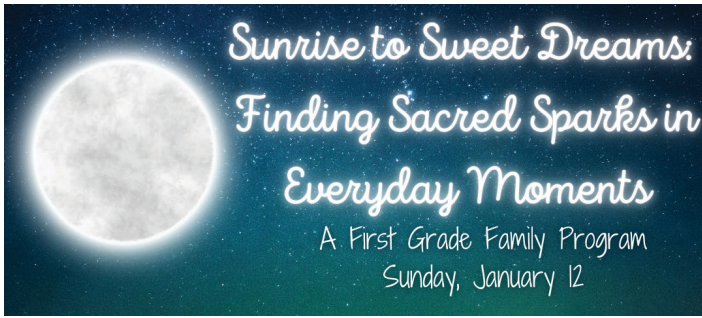
As we light our final Hanukkah candles to dispel the darkness, we can do more. Look through our "[Israel Resources](#)" page and find a worthy cause to support. Sign a [petition](#) to end media bias against Israel, or support Jewish students under attack. [Call your representatives](#) and demand they do more to bring our hostages home. Attend a meeting of the Am Yisrael Chai Committee (Jan. 8th) or the next [open conversation about Israel](#) with Rabbi Harris (Jan. 21st).

"To emerge stronger, we need to believe in miracles we can barely detect," noted visiting Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) student Iliana Brodsky. "Let us attune ourselves to the miracles of the world however they present – and work to bring about peace."

May the secular new year usher in a new chapter of peace, the liberation of all our captives, and recovery. ■

BETH EL RELIGIOUS SCHOOL AND BETH EL YOUTH

Click on any of the events to find out more information.





Sunrise to Sweet Dreams:
Finding Sacred Sparks in
Everyday Moments
A First Grade Family Program
Sunday, January 12



Join us for
BETH EL YOUTH

MOVIE NIGHT & PAJAMA PARTY

 Saturday, January 11, 2025
6:00 - 9:15 pm 
Bring a sleeping bag, a pillow & a stuffy!
We provide the movies, pizza & snacks!

Scan to Register



Sixth Grade Shabbaton
@
Pearlstone
An agency of The Associated and Adamah Headquarters
January 24-January 26




BETH EL TEENS
Nailed It!
We're making plans for the new year.
ARE YOU IN?
Shadowland
TOPGOLF
Six Flags AMERICA

BETH EL PRESCHOOL



BEPS
Beth El Preschool

BEPS is a parent co-operative, play-based preschool with classes for children ages 15 months to 5 years.

NEW for 2025-2026:
We will be offering a Full Day option!

Visit our website for more details:
www.bethelpreschool.org/admissions

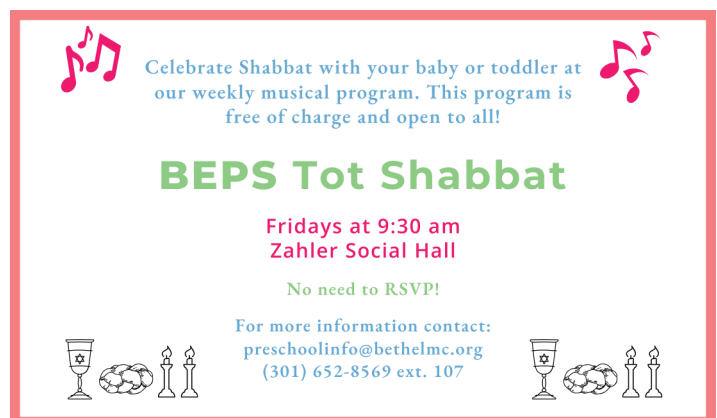
Contact us to set up a tour:
preschoolinfo@bethelmc.org
(301) 652-8569 ext. 107


Registration for the 2025-2026 school year and for Summer 2025 will open in January.



Beth El Preschool's Annual Fundraiser
The Big Event
is seeking items and experiences for their online Silent Auction on
March 12, 2025

Donate An Item
www.bethelpreschool.org/thebigevent
or
bepsboardchair@gmail.com




 Celebrate Shabbat with your baby or toddler at our weekly musical program. This program is free of charge and open to all! 

BEPS Tot Shabbat

Fridays at 9:30 am
Zahler Social Hall

No need to RSVP!

For more information contact:
preschoolinfo@bethelmc.org
(301) 652-8569 ext. 107



COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chug Kriah

Join the Chug Kriah on Sunday, January 5, at 2:00 pm at the home of a congregant to read and discuss modern Israeli literature in Hebrew. In January, we will begin reading *Fontanelle* by Meir Shalev. Please contact Bill Kanter at kanterdsw@aol.com to register and receive the address. New members who are fluent in Hebrew are encouraged to join.

Keshet Nashim

Keshet Nashim supports female cancer survivors and those with a new cancer diagnosis. Join Beth El women for confidential, lively discussions, friendship, and support at our monthly meetings. Discussion/Support group for women newly diagnosed or survivors of cancer. One or two women from the group will be "On Call" monthly to talk to any woman interested in more information about the group. Our next meeting is Thursday, January 2, 7:30 – 9:30 pm via Zoom. For more information, visit bethelmc.org/keshet-nashim-0102.

PJ Havdalah

Join BEPS and Nitzanim on Saturday, February 8, at 5:30 pm for a fun Havdalah experience. Enjoy a yummy breakfast for dinner in your PJs while we end Shabbat together. There will be food, a craft, a story, and a fun Havdalah celebration. \$18/member family. RSVP at bethelmc.org/havdalah-0208 by 3:00 pm on January 31.

Shabbat Kiddush Servers Needed

Join the kiddush servers in one of the happiest mitzvot at Beth El. Serve the kiddush luncheon after services on Shabbat and make sure every congregant, family member, and guest gets a warm "Shabbat Shalom" with their delicious food. All it takes is 30 minutes and a smile! For more information and to sign up, go to bethelmc.org/kiddush or contact Sue Kanter at besisterhoodsignup@gmail.com.

Seeking Kiddush Sponsors

Celebrate a special day, remember a loved one, or just because – sponsor a kiddush on a Shabbat/Festival morning when there is no b-mitzvah. Various menus available. Upcoming available dates: January 4; February 1; April 12 (Shabbat HaGadol), 13 (Passover Day 1), 14 (Passover Day 2), 19 (Passover Day 7), and 20 (Passover Day 8); and May 3. For more information, please visit bethelmc.org/kiddush, email info@bethelmc.org, or call 301-652-2606. At least two full weeks' advance notice of sponsorship is required.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Please remember that contributions can be made easily, quickly, and securely via our webpage – www.bethelmc.org/give

Donations from November 13 to December 9, 2024.

BY:
The Kulp family
Golden Shiur class
Daniel and Jennifer Bachner
Thomas Plotz and Cathy Klion
Bernard and Adele Sherman
Steven and Alice Rosenberg
Sarah Birnbach and Jake Guttmann
Samantha and Jonathan Gordon
Michael Polis and Rhoda Barish
Nicole and Joshua Bowden
Gale and Ronald Dutcher
Diane Goldman
Mitchell and Rachele Solkowitz
The Cardeli family
Henry Kahn and Laura Primakoff
Linda and Burt Liebowitz
Tierra Joslyn
Ilana Cohen
Maria Aranha
Heather Garrett
Michelle and Alex Bronzo

Allyson and Jared Friedland
Flavia Figueiredo Aranha
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Stanley Asrael and Lynn Grodzki
Jack and Laura Summer
Charles and Susan Edson

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Frank Crantz
Larry and Jan Gandal
Raphael and Varda Daniels
Charles and Krayna Feinberg
Cary and Nancy Feldman
Geoffrey Green
Richard Kahn
Edward Jack and Nancy Kopf
Morton and Phyllis Lessans
Kenneth and Marlene Markison
Harold and Janet Pincus
Raymond Scalett
Eugene Sofer and Judih Bartnoff
Michael and Mical Schneider
Cary Sherman

CONTRIBUTIONS

Milton Shinberg and Judith Ross
Jared Silberman and Deborah Miron
Bert Simson and Joan Bacharach
Paul R. Taskier
Emanuel Thorne and Julia Paradise
Jeffrey Weinberg
Harvey and Diane Weiner
David and Denise Mills

IN HONOR OF:

Upper School anti-racism/racial
justice programming, by Josephine
Sanders-Levie
Concert sponsorship by Suzanne
and Ben Bronheim
Hattie Goodman and family on the
birth of grandson Eigel Sennels
Yastrov, by Dov and Sharon
Margolis Apfel
Marsha Liss for receiving the
Volunteer Impact Award from
the Bikkur Cholim of Greater
Washington, by Gale and Ron
Dutcher, Toby Schonfeld and
James Blasingame
Paz BenAvram on becoming a bat
mitzvah, by Philip Itzkowitz, Howie
and Holly Stein
Rabbi Greg Harris by Thomas Plotz
and Cathy Klion
Rabbi Harris for officiating at
Matthew and Madi's wedding, by
Harry and Rhonda Eisenstein
Rabbi Harris for officiating at shiva
for my mother, by Lisa Sorkin
Ricardo and Irene Munster on
the birth of grandson Yona and
granddaughter Liv, by Dov and
Sharon Margolis Apfel, Doris
Povich
Ricardo Munster for his kindness,
by Sheldon Bolasny and Paola
Samakovlija-Bolasny
Sophie Polon on becoming a bat
mitzvah by Shayna Bloom and Josh
Rosenstein
The birth of Judy and Craig
Futterman's grandson, by Sheila
Bellack
Rabbi Megdal by Dana Rosenfeld,

David and Josh Biel
IN MEMORY OF:
Anna Boman by Julian and Iris
Tishkoff
Kate Diamond Schwartz, beloved
aunt, by Dov and Sharon Margolis
Apfel
Brandon Garrett by Heather Garrett
David Ross by Andrew and Jennifer
Schwartz
Debbie Leibowitz by Judy Goldman
Dolores Dobrow by Jim and Leslie
Dellon
Erwin E. Shalowitz by Linda and
Mark Packman, Carolina and
Henry Purdy, Stephen, Jessica, and
Emmett Portnoy, Sam Langerman,
Jill Osato and Travis Taylor
Eva W. Sussman, my mother, by
Naomi Morse
Eve Tishkoff by Julian and Iris
Tishkoff
Geraldine Pollen by Dan Hirsch and
Brenda Gruss, Patti Silver and Jeff
Trauberman
Gladys Barish by Rhoda Barish and
Michael Polis
Gloria and Lee Derkay by Lori
Derkay
Gloria Morris by Jim and Leslie
Dellon
Harlee S. Popick, my mother, by
Barbara and Douglas Rosing
Harold Cohen, my father, by Barbara
and Allen Lerman
Herbert Heinemann, my uncle, by
Howard and Holly Stein
Jessie Qui Arnheim, our daughter-
in-law, by Walter Arnheim and
Marsha Rehns
Joachim Baer by Elizabeth Baer
Joel Herman by Fran Katz Watson
Julius Boman by Julian and Iris
Tishkoff
Klare Heinemann, my aunt, by
Howard and Holly Stein
Lea Glick, my beloved mother, by
Scott and Deborah Glick
Marc Russell Devinsky, in loving

memory, by Paul Devinsky
Martin Lipman by Robert Lipman
and Nancy Rose
Irv Weiss, my beloved husband, by
Rita Weiss
Carola Shapiro, my beloved mother,
by Yael Greenberg
Naomi Kirsch by Sharon and Jeremy
Zissman
Pearl Segal, my mother, by Debbie
and Sam Olchyk
Philip Florin by David Florin and
Robin Thomashauer
Regina Steiner, my mother, by Don
and Roberta Steiner
Robert Einzig by Bertram and Judith
Spector
Robert L. Edenbaum by Robin Harris
and Sandy Edenbaum
Ronald and Evelyn Treinish by Lloyd
Treinish
Ruth D. Vogel, my mother, by Donna
Vogel
Ruth Gutmann/Liba Rifka bat
Channa v'Avraham, by Hanna
Gutmann and Howard Lesser
Sheila Gursky, Lisa Sorkin's mom,
by Fran Katz Watson, Nancy and
Kevin Lapidus, Josephine Sanders-
Levie, Michelle Brafman and Tom
Helf
Lillian Glaser, my mother, by
Suzanne R. Glaser
Sidney Ross, my father, by Gail Ross
and Roy Niedermayer
Sidney Stahl by Sid Stahl and
Dorothy Wolf
Sondra Brody by Diana Savit
Stanley and Leанore Cohen, my
parents, by Charles and Helen
Cohen
Sylvia Cantor by Judy Goldman
Tova Solter by Jonathan and Judith
Levin
William Davis by Libby Gordon
Eric Biel by Dana Rosenfeld, David
and Josh Biel

MAZAL TOV TO

Emmett Barry on his bar mitzvah on December 21.

Proud parents are **David** and **Fern Barry**.

Paz BenAvram on her bat mitzvah on November 23.

Proud parents are **Vincent** and **Debra BenAvram**.

Adam Toker-Katskee on his bar mitzvah on December

14. Proud parents are **Richard Katskee** and **Rachel Toker**.

Zoe Patron on her bat mitzvah on December 7. Proud

parents are **David** and **Michelle Patron**.

Sophie Polon on her bat mitzvah on November 16.

Proud parents are **Jonathan Polon** and **Jennifer Latz**.

Jared Herman on his bar mitzvah on December 30.

Proud parents are **Jeremy** and **Michelle Herman**.

January milestone birthdays: **Jay Bedell**, **Henry Birnk-**

rant, **Jeffrey Clark**, **Fenya Gelfer**, **Etta Kline**, **Steven**

Koppel, **Julian Levin**, **Michael Polis**, **Diane Rosen-**

berg, **Julie Silver**, **Ronald Swers**, and **Paul Weinberg**.

January milestone anniversaries: **Louis** and **Geryl Baer**

(15 years), **Steven Brown** and **Karen Levy-Brown**

(25 years), **Barry Elman** and **June Eichner** (25 years),

Elliot and **Lily Feldman** (30 years), **Robert Kaufman**

and **Katherine Smith** (15 years), and **Paul Love** and

Kathy Sklar (15 years).

CONDOLENCES TO

The family of longtime congregant **Sondra Brody** on her passing. Sondra was the sister of **Julian Levin**.

Caren and **Michael Ravitch** on the death of Caren's father, **Joel Herman**, grandfather of **Jessica**, **Jacob**, and

Sadie Ravitch.

The family of longtime congregant **Johanna Wein-**

stein on her passing. Johanna was the wife of **Jack**

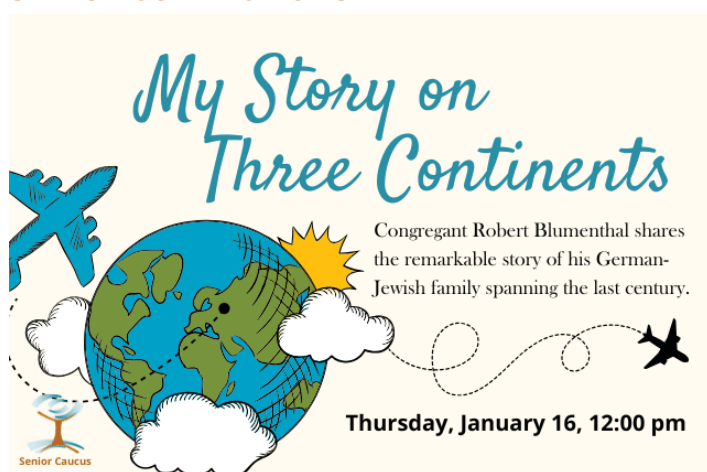
Minker z"l and mother of **Larry** (Patty), **Chuck** (Lisa),

Steven (Yvonne), and **Kenneth** (Dana) Weinstein. She

was the grandmother of 11 and great-grandmother of

two.

SENIOR CONNECTIONS



Senior Caucus Lunch: My Story on Three Continents - Thursday, January 16, noon.

Beth El congregant and retired NIH scientist Dr. Robert Blumenthal will share the remarkable story of his German-Jewish family, which spans the last century. Among many episodes along the journey are his father's WWI service to the Kaiser; his grandparents' lives in the Netherlands and deportation to Nazi death camps; the internment of his father in a Japanese prisoner of war camp; and his own flight to Australia and eventual reunion with family members. Cost is \$10 per person and rides are available if needed. RSVP by Tuesday, January 14, at 3:00 pm at bethelmc.org/lunch-0116 or contact Ricardo Munster at rmunster@bethelmc.org or 301-652-2606, ext. 116.

Find Beth El on Social Media



fb.me/congregation.beth.el



x.com/bethelmoco



instagram.com/bethelmoco



youtube.com/BethElMC

CONGREGATION BETH EL

Annual Gala

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