



# CONGREGATION BETH EL SCROLL

FEBRUARY 2026 • SHEVAT - ADAR 5786

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From the Beth El Clergy

## THE WICKED WITCH IS BACK!

BY HAZZAN ASA FRADKIN



Those of you who are *Wicked* fans have undoubtedly seen *Wicked: For Good* at least a time or two since late 2025, and will recognize my slightly provocative reference to Elphaba here at the top. But you will hopefully get the not-so-subtle hint that this year's Megillah Madness theme is *WICKED*!

Back to Elphaba for a second. Elphaba is a character from Frank Baum's 1900 novel whose genesis is brilliantly explored in Gregory Maguire's 1996 novel *Wicked, the Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*. Maguire's novel is a savvy political commentary on race, political activism, and xenophobia. The labeling of Elphaba as "wicked" is a tragic outcome of the Wizard's political campaign against her. She is, like so many, the victim of a vicious political smear campaign.

Maguire's novel and Stephen Schwartz's subsequent smash musical hit explore how a poor misunderstood girl – the victim of happenstance, a mother's strange choices, and her own bravery – becomes the target of so much public scorn.

Of course, it's a perfect parallel for Purim. A misunderstood people who refuse to back down under pressure are then ridiculed and threatened with annihilation for refusing to conform. But it's not just about our people as targets of public scorn. It's also about those whose struggle isn't even seen. That's why inclusion is so important. Purim is the perfect time to highlight those in our community who live with disabilities. I am privileged to know many people at Beth El with a range of different challenges, and they have taught me a great deal about the importance of visibility.

When you enter a building, do you look to see if there are ramps? Do you notice the ramps that we use in the chapel and the sanctuary? When crossing the street, do you stop to check if there are lowered curbs for wheelchair access? And when you see these points of access, does anyone in particular come to mind? (This isn't even to speak of those who live with autism and many other mental health challenges.)

I'll end by quoting a therapist I have worked with who says, "Autism is a superpower." I would extend this to many other disabilities, because people with autism, for instance, can help us see things in ways that are otherwise hidden. As we enter the season of Purim and of joy, let's look for those who are hidden among us, bring them in, and allow them to open our eyes and arms as well. ■

# SCROLL

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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

\*Morning Minyan is at 9:00 am on Federal Holidays when the Beth  
El office is closed (February 16).

### SHABBAT SCHEDULE

#### Friday, February 6

6:00 pm [Young Family Shabbat](#) Service and Dinner

6:30 pm Friday Evening Service

#### Saturday, February 7

7:30 am Early Shabbat Service

9:15 am Main Shabbat Service

9:30 am Junior Congregation

9:45 am Minyan Ruach

12:30 pm [Support After Loss](#)

#### Friday, February 13

6:30 pm Friday Evening Service

#### Saturday, February 14

7:30 am Early Shabbat Service

9:15 am Main Shabbat Service

9:30 am Junior Congregation

12:30 pm [Yah Echsof Meditation and Exploration Group](#)

5:15 pm Layla Scott Bat Mitzvah

#### Friday, February 20

6:30 pm [Yedid Nefesh](#) Friday Evening Musical Service

#### Saturday, February 21

7:30 am Early Shabbat Service

9:15 am Main Shabbat Service - Maya Rales and Peter  
Goldberg B'nai Mitzvah

9:30 am Junior Congregation

9:30 am Minyan Chaverim

#### Friday, February 27

6:00 pm [Shabbat Together K-5th Family Service and Dinner](#)

6:30 pm Friday Evening Service

#### Saturday, February 28

7:30 am Early Shabbat Service

9:15 am Main Shabbat Service - [Sisterhood Shabbat](#)

9:30 am Junior Congregation

**For more information on Beth El's Shabbat services and daily  
minyanim, please visit [bethelmc.org/services](http://bethelmc.org/services).**

### Find Beth El on Social Media



[fb.me/congregation.beth.el](https://fb.me/congregation.beth.el)



[youtube.com/BethElMC](https://youtube.com/BethElMC)



[instagram.com/bethelmoco](https://instagram.com/bethelmoco)

Click on any event on the calendar below to find out more about these upcoming programs.

## February Events at Beth El

### Connect

Feb. 5  
7:30 pm

#### Hearing Men's Voices

David Margulies leads "Phantasia, Aphantasia, and Hyperphantasia – Differing Images of God."



Feb. 7  
12:30 pm

#### Support After Loss

A brief teaching and discussion led by Rabbi Greg Harris.



Feb. 8  
9:30 am

#### Family Camp Info Session

Come learn more about Family Camp, happening Memorial Day Weekend.



Feb. 8  
12:00 pm

#### Tzelem LGBT+ Teen Group

A safe space for Jewish teens to talk about the issues in their lives.



Feb. 17  
2:00 pm

#### Coffee with the Clergy

Join Senior Caucus and Rabbi Harris for schmoozing and a discussion on Adar.



Feb. 19  
7:30 pm

#### Keshet Nashim

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



Feb. 21  
7:30 pm

#### WBE & Men's Club Game Night

Board games, giant Connect 4, and more! \$25, includes snacks/beverages.



### Learn

Feb. 4  
10:00 am

#### Coffee & Hebrew with Yoel

Six-week drop-in conversational Hebrew on Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25, and March 1, 4, 11.



Feb. 5  
7:00 pm

#### The Art of the Spy

Author Michelle Young discusses her book via Zoom.



Feb. 14  
12:30 pm

#### Yah Eschov Meditation Group

Explore Judaism through meditation, chant, and study with Hazzan Fradk



Feb. 15  
7:00 pm

#### Chug Kriah Hebrew Lit. Group

Meet on Zoom to discuss *Tesaper L'achicha* by Meir Shalev in Hebrew.



### Engage

Feb. 15  
12:00 pm

#### Nani Vazana Concert at EDCJCC

Join Chai Society 60+ at the EDCJCC for this Ladino music concert. \$17 per person.



Feb. 22  
10:00 am

#### Mischloach Manot with Yoel

Schmooze with Yoel, learn about this mitzvah, and make mishloach manot for your children.



### Pray

Feb. 6  
6:00 pm

#### Young Family Shabbat

Shabbat songs and prayers, followed by dinner, for families with children 0-6.



Feb. 7  
9:45 am

#### Minyan Ruach

Join us for this lay-led, participatory service in the Beth El Library.



Feb. 20  
6:30 pm

#### Yedid Nefesh Friday Night Service

Friday night musical service led by Rabbi Deborah Megdal.



Feb. 21  
9:30 am

#### Minyan Chaverim

Join this lay-led, participatory service in the Swoff Chapel.



Feb. 27  
6:00 pm

#### Shabbat Together

Join us for a joyful Shabbat experience for children grades K-5 and their families.



Feb. 28  
9:15 am

#### Sisterhood Shabbat

Annual Shabbat honoring women within and outside of the Beth El Community.



CONGREGATION BETH EL  
OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Find out more and sign up to participate at

[bethelmc.org/events](https://bethelmc.org/events)

CONGREGATION BETH EL PRESENTS:

# MEGILLAH MADNESS

A VERY

# WICKED

# PURIM

FEATURING PERFORMANCES BY HAZZAN ASA FRADKIN,  
SHIR ATID, GESHER CHORALE, & BETH EL'S STARS

MONDAY, MARCH 2, 6:30 PM



CONGREGATION BETH EL



## Coffee & Hebrew with Yoel



Join us on Wednesdays, February 4 - March 11, from 10:00-11:30 am for coffee and conversational Hebrew, led by our Israeli *shaliach*, Yoel Gleizer. This is a relaxed, welcoming space to practice conversational Hebrew while enjoying great coffee and good company. Each session blends everyday Hebrew, Israeli culture, music, humor, and real-life conversation, with a strong emphasis on connection and community.

This series is perfect for anyone who wants to:

- Feel more confident speaking Hebrew
- Learn useful, real-world Hebrew phrases
- Connect to Israeli culture through coffee, stories, and music
- Practice Hebrew in a fun, social, and supportive environment
- Find community at Beth El

No prior Hebrew knowledge required; all levels welcome! This is a drop-in class, which means you can attend as few or as many sessions as you like, but you must register for each date separately. Go to [bethelmc.org/series/coffee-hebrew-with-yoel](https://bethelmc.org/series/coffee-hebrew-with-yoel) to see all dates and sign up. ■

Join Beth El's *shaliach*, Yoel Gleizer, for a morning of coffee, shmoozing, and learning. You'll learn about the mitzvah of *Mischloach Manot*, and make *Mischloach Manot* for you to give your children the following week at Purim!

RSVP at [bethelmc.org/mischloach-manot-0222](https://bethelmc.org/mischloach-manot-0222).

## Save the Date: Scolnic Institute

Join us this spring for another exciting session of the Scolnic Adult Institute. The spring semester of the Rabbi Samuel Scolnic Adult Institute will take place for six weeks, beginning Tuesday and Wednesday March 10-11 through April 28-29 (with two weeks off for Passover break).

Returning this spring are in-person learning opportunities, watch-parties (recordings available and at-home Zoom option) and Zoom options (recordings available). Take classes from some of your favorite instructors like Rabbi Harris, Hazzan Fradkin, or Amir Tibon ("More than Just Golda – Women in Israel Politics"). Or try something new like "The Architecture of Synagogues" (with congregant Lori Apfel Cardeli) or "Lead Me on the Path of Truth" (with Rabbi Jeff Amshalem from the Hebrew College).

Stay tuned for more exciting details. The class offerings brochure and registration packet will be available around the middle of February. Visit [bethelmc.org/scolnic](https://bethelmc.org/scolnic) for more information, a course catalogue, and to register.

Questions? Email [scolnicinstitute@bethelmc.org](mailto:scolnicinstitute@bethelmc.org). ■

## Seeking Ushers for Our Synagogue Community

We are looking for warm, welcoming volunteers to join our team of ushers! Ushers play an important role in creating a respectful, comfortable, and spiritually uplifting environment for everyone who walks through our doors. Serving as an usher allows you to fulfil the mitzvah of welcoming guests.

### Responsibilities include:

- Greeting congregants and visitors with a smile
- Distributing programs
- Assisting with accessibility needs
- Supporting safety and security protocols
- Providing general guidance during services and events

### Who we're looking for:

- Friendly, dependable individuals
- Comfortable interacting with congregants and guests of all ages
- Older teens and adults welcome

If you'd like to help foster a warm and welcoming experience for our community, we'd love to have you on the team!

To volunteer, you can go to [bethelmc.org/usher](https://bethelmc.org/usher). For more information, contact Allen Eisenberg at [allen.eisenberg@verizon.net](mailto:allen.eisenberg@verizon.net). Thank you for helping make our synagogue a place of connection, comfort, and *kedusha*. ■



**Beth El Preschool checks all the boxes!**

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 (301) 652-2606 ext. 107 ~ preschoolinfo@bethelmc.org  
[www.bethelpreschool.org](http://www.bethelpreschool.org)

Beth El Preschool's Annual Fundraiser

*The Big Event*

is seeking items and experiences for their  
 Silent Auction on  
 March 12, 2026



**Donate An Item**  
[www.bethelpreschool.org/thebigevent](http://www.bethelpreschool.org/thebigevent)

**Beth El Preschool is hiring  
 for the Summer!**

Is your teen looking for a fun and meaningful job this summer? BEPS is looking for teens to assist in our preschool summer camp!

Who should apply? Rising 7th-12th graders who have a positive attitude, are enthusiastic about having fun and playing with young children, enjoy working with other teens and can take direction from supervisors.

For more details or to apply:  
[www.bethelpreschool.org/summer](http://www.bethelpreschool.org/summer)

Contact Lauren Hirt, Director of Early Childhood Education, with any questions: lhirt@bethelmc.org.



**Looking for a fun class for your toddler this winter?  
 Register now for Mazel Tots!**

Mazel Tots is a baby and toddler program that meets one day per week for play time, music, dancing, art, snack time and more! Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Our Mazel Tots program is designed for children with birthdates ranging from September 1, 2023 through October 31, 2024.

**Class meets on Wednesdays from 9:30-10:45 am.**

Registration is open; only a few spots remain!



[www.bethelpreschool.org](http://www.bethelpreschool.org)  
 preschoolinfo@bethelmc.org ~ (301) 652-8569 ext. 107



**BETH EL RELIGIOUS SCHOOL AND BETH EL YOUTH**





## Israel in Focus

## Leadership, Anger and the “Sensitive Soul”

BY KAREN BENEZRA



Last month, the Beth El community had the privilege of hosting Dr. Masua Sagiv, a renowned scholar whose work sits at the critical intersection of law, society, and religion. A senior faculty member at the Shalom Hartman Institute and recently the Koret Visiting Assistant Professor at the Helen Diller Institute at UC Berkeley, her research focuses on the development of contemporary

Judaism in Israel – specifically as a culture, a religion, and an identity that is both Jewish and democratic. A leading specialist in religion and gender, Sagiv is also the author of the 2024 book, *Radical Conservatism*, which explores the “Halachic Feminist” struggle and the ways religious law (*halacha*) can serve as a vehicle for social change.

The teaching she shared during her time at Beth El reflected her distinctive ability to weave classical Jewish texts into urgent, modern questions of leadership.

Sagiv turned to the biblical figure of Moses to explore the psychological weight of leadership, particularly in moments of profound moral crisis. When Moses is tasked with leading the Israelites out of Egypt, he resists the call. He points to his difficulty with speech and protests, “They won’t listen to me.” God reassures him, saying, “I will give you the words,” yet Moses persists, pleading, “Please send someone else.”

It is only at this point that God becomes angry.

Moses’s reluctance is often interpreted as a lack of confidence or modesty, but Sagiv offered a reading by Rabbi Nachman of Breslev that reframes the episode entirely. Moses, she suggested, hesitated not because he doubted himself, but because he was deeply attuned to the “brokenness” of the world. Such sensitivity comes at a cost.

“People are not perfect, and they behave badly,” she noted. When humanity acts immorally, God responds not with constant destruction, but “steps back,” hiding God’s face from the world. This withdrawal, she explained, is felt most acutely by the most sensitive and righteous individuals. For Moses, seeing injustice so clearly made the responsibility of leadership feel almost unbearable.

From this place of heightened awareness emerges anger, a feeling we are often taught to fear or suppress. Sagiv challenged that assumption directly. “Anger, which we often think of as dangerous, is actually a very im-

portant feeling, an emotion that lets us fight despair,” she explained. Anger reflects a deep understanding that something in the way the world is supposed to function is not working, and it can serve as the emotional force that refuses to accept moral failure as inevitable.

### ANGER AS AN ANTIDOTE TO INJUSTICE

Drawing on the teachings of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, Sagiv further reframed anger as a necessary response to moral corruption. We move through the world, she observed, growing furious at injustice and watching as nothing seems to change. Eventually, we tell ourselves, “Ok, maybe I shouldn’t get so worked up, so angry, it’s not good for my heart...I should probably only focus on my community, on my people and my family – the people I know who act morally.” But Heschel warned that this instinct is dangerous. When we retreat in this

way, we *normalize* immorality.

Once we stop being shocked and shaken by injustice, it becomes part of the accepted fabric of reality. In this sense, anger is not a moral failure but an essential antidote.

Heschel famously taught that indifference is worse than corruption itself. When anger disappears, complacency takes its place, and we begin to “normalize” immorality by shrinking our moral horizons and insulat-

ing ourselves within small, comfortable bubbles. Anger, by contrast, keeps us awake. It prevents numbness and functions as a kind of “vaccine,” protecting us from despair, apathy, and inaction.

### THE SYNTHESIS: LEADING WITH LOVE

At the same time, Sagiv acknowledged the danger on the other side. Anger can push people away from leadership altogether, or it can warp leadership when it becomes the primary driving force. Leading *from* anger alone, she cautioned, is not sustainable. The question, then, is how to hold onto moral outrage without being consumed by it.

The answer she offered was a synthesis rooted in the teachings of Rabbi Nachman: leadership grounded in compassion and empathy. Anger may provide the spark that demands change, but love is what allows a community to endure. Human beings, she reminded us, can be “insufferable” and “beautiful” at the same time. Empathy does not cancel out anger at injustice; it tempers it, making leadership possible. As the prophet Isaiah put it, “The one who loves them, will lead them.” ■

We are grateful to the anonymous donors who make the annual Scholar-in-Residence program possible. Read Sagiv’s recent essay on hope [here](#).



LIVESTREAM SCREENSHOT OF SAGIV SPEAKING ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON



## Beth El in Photos



HANUKKAH CANDLELIGHTING



SOCIAL ACTION TEA



SOCIAL ACTION TEA



TALLIT WORKSHOP



GESHER CHORALE PERFORMANCE AT RING HOUSE



VOLUNTEERING AT MANNA

## MEN'S CLUB



### UPCOMING MEN'S CLUB PROGRAMS

**SUNDAYS, FEBRUARY 1, 8, 15, AND 22, 9:30 AM Men's Club Breakfast.** Join us after morning minyan every Sunday for a breakfast sponsored by Men's Club.

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 7:30 PM Hearing Men's Voices.** Beth El men are invited to join us in person or via Zoom as David Margulies leads a discussion of "Phantasia, Aphantasia, and Hyperphantasia – Differing Images of God." RSVP at [bethelmc.org/hmv-0205](https://bethelmc.org/hmv-0205).

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 7:30 PM WBE & Men's Club Game Night Unplugged.** See information on this page. RSVP at [bethelmc.org/game-night-0221](https://bethelmc.org/game-night-0221).

Game Night Unplugged at Beth El is back, bigger, bolder, and bursting with fun!

Join us on Saturday, February 21, at 7:30 pm for an evening of games, laughter, and friendly competition! Bruce the Bar Game Guru returns with fan favorites like Crokinole, Sjoelbak, and Giant Connect 4, plus a few brand-new games to keep things exciting. Classic board games and card games will also be on hand, so there will be something for everyone.

February nights may be dark and frosty, but we'll keep things cozy with gourmet adult hot chocolate, complete with toppings of your dreams – perfect for sipping while fueling friendly rivalries. Enjoy tasty bites along the way, too. Whether you're here for the competition, the cocoa, or the camaraderie, we promise an unforgettable evening of games, music, food, and high spirits.

The cost is \$25 per person. Register by February 6 at [bethelmc.org/game-night-0221](https://bethelmc.org/game-night-0221).



## Books &amp; Beyond

## The Film Director's Tragic Bargain

BY ROBIN JACOBSON

*The Director* by Daniel Kehlmann (translated from German by Ross Benjamin) is a powerful, darkly comic World War II novel about art, ego, and bad choices. The "Director" of the title is Georg Wilhelm (called G.W.) Pabst, a real-life 20th century Austrian film director who escaped the Nazis only to return to them.

Pabst fled Europe for Hollywood in 1933 after Hitler rose to power. Although not Jewish, Pabst was vulnerable to Nazi persecution because of his leftist, communist-leaning views and films showcasing social justice issues. His nickname was "Red Pabst."

Bafflingly, in 1939, Pabst returned to German-occupied Austria. Thereafter, Pabst made films for the Third Reich. What led to this bewildering turnabout? No one knows, but Kehlmann's novel blends facts and informed speculation to propose an intriguing answer to this puzzle.

**THE SAD JOURNEY OF G.W. PABST**

In *The Director*, G.W. Pabst first appears on a sunny Hollywood patio. Speaking broken English, Pabst is pitching a new film idea to Warner Brothers Studio executives. The Hollywood men put him off, saying they first want him to do another movie project. He dislikes the script but reluctantly agrees.

Although Pabst is internationally renowned for his innovative filming, editing, and approach to working with actors, the studio allows him little creative input into the making of *A Modern Hero*. As Pabst predicts, the movie is a box office flop. Afterwards, no one is willing to finance Pabst's film idea. In the meantime, an envoy from the Third Reich entreats him to end his exile, return home, and make German films with complete artistic freedom and abundant resources. Outraged, Pabst spurns the offer.

Nevertheless, in August 1939, Pabst travels to Nazi-controlled Austria with his family. In Kehlmann's novel, Pabst's purpose is merely to make elder care arrangements for his mother. Fatefully, he is injured, delaying the family's departure from Europe. When war breaks out, the trip is canceled. Neighbors and shopkeepers inform local authorities that communist Pabst is back and demand his arrest.

Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda Joseph Goebbels controls all German filmmaking. He is determined to show the world that the Reich can produce magnificent art. He offers Pabst the opportunity to make "non-political" films. Initially, Pabst refuses, but a mix of flattery, promises of bountiful budgets, and menacing threats wears down his resistance.

As Pabst begins filming, he continues to make moral compromises, gradually surrendering his principles. By

the time he reaches a climactic decision point, he feels justified in choosing a course of action he once deemed reprehensible. Creating great art, he insists, is what matters most.

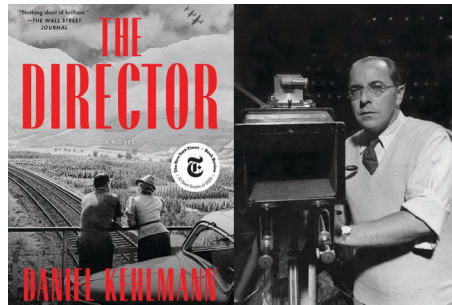
**EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE THIRD REICH**

Kehlmann masterfully portrays both the awfulness and absurdity of life in an authoritarian state. Based on his Jewish father's stories of growing up in Austria, Kehlmann shows how self-censorship and complicity with the regime permeated schools, workplaces, and everyday interactions.

In one telling scene, Pabst's wife, Trude, discovers that her new book club exclusively reads the works of a mediocre Reich-approved author.


Afraid to say anything critical, Trude limits herself to insipid comments. One woman is summarily ejected from the meeting for inadvertently mentioning a blacklisted author. All the while, the women sip coffee from dainty porcelain cups confiscated from a Jewish family.

Pabst pays a heavy price for his return to the Third Reich. His sensitive, artistic son, Jakob, transforms into a zealous member of the Hitler Youth. Despairing, Trude escapes into alcohol. Pabst himself becomes a broken man, his post-war reputation blackened by charges of having been a Nazi collaborator. Tragically, that was never his intention. ■



## THE ART SPY

### A Conversation with Author Michelle Young

Thursday, February 5, 7:00 pm Eastern via Zoom

Join us on Thursday, February 5, 7:00 pm via Zoom for a conversation with Author Michelle Young, author of *The Art Spy*. *The Art Spy* tells the thrilling, true story of Rose Valland, a World War II French resistance hero. When the Germans occupied Paris in 1940, they made the Jeu de Paume museum their headquarters for processing the art they plundered in France, mostly from Jews. For more information and to RSVP, visit [bethelmc.org/art-spy-0205](https://bethelmc.org/art-spy-0205).

## 2026 Gold Meir Award Recipient Sara Gordon

BY JEN POWERS

When this year's Gold Meir Award recipient, Sara Gordon (Immediate Past President and long time congregant) became president, she and the Beth El leadership were asking questions and seeking a better understanding of the types of people engaging in Jewish life, how they were engaging, and why. They were exploring expanding Beth El's reach beyond the building and asking questions about what being and serving a community really meant. They were looking to expand and focus efforts in three areas: Learning, Praying, and Connecting. However, the focus shifted after October 7.

"October 7 influenced everything we were doing and discussing and planning," Sara reflected. "There were things, like bringing into reality a full-day BEPS program, that stayed on course. And our learning, praying, and connecting framework still existed. But the situation in Israel meant that we needed to be intentional about creating opportunities for the community to learn about the various aspects of the war, incorporating meaningful prayer into our regular services that felt spiritually purposeful and supportive, and continuing to offer a space for the community to gather and be together in a most complicated and often painful period of time."

Sara was raised in the Washington, D.C. area with

a strong sense of Jewish identity and familiarity with Jewish religious observance. Jewish summer camp and spending her junior year of college at Hebrew University in Jerusalem played a big part in solidifying in Sara's mind and heart the link between her Jewish identity and Eretz Yisrael.



SARA, MICHAEL, ILA, AND GIL

Sara, her husband, Michael, daughter, Ila, and son, Gil, joined Beth El in 2010, and Sara immediately immersed herself in congregational life, first serving on the board of Zhava and then co-chairing the Religious School Committee. She then served as Beth El Vice President for Education and Lifelong Learning, chairing the search committee for a new director of the Religious School and working to implement the Sorkin Israel Teen Trip. The Sorkin trip remains an enduring tribute to the memory of Beth El president Jerry Sorkin z"l. As executive vice president, Sara worked with past president Jill Rider to mitigate the operational and financial difficulties created by the Covid-19 pandemic. Sara also co-chaired the Rabbi Search Committee that resulted in the hiring of Rabbi Deborah Megdal.

A social worker by training, Sara worked for many years at the organizational level, developing, implement-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

## Sisterhood Shabbat Speaker: Rabbi Rachel Hersh

BY SUE KANTER



This year's Resnick Memorial speaker is Rabbi Rachel Hersh. Rabbi Hersh is a familiar face at Beth El, where she regularly attends the Early Minyan on Shabbat and frequently reads Torah at that service.

Rabbi Hersh, MSW, BCC, serves as director of Jewish enrichment and engagement at JSSA, a Jewish human service agency serving neighbors of all backgrounds across the national capital region. Through her work at JSSA, she integrates Jewish wisdom and tradition with clinical human service practice, spiritual care and mindfulness techniques for agency staff, clients, patients and community partners. Rachel is rabbi hazzan emerita at Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation where she continues to provide spiritual and pastoral support. She and her husband Jonathan Epstein live in Bethesda and are parents to three young adult sons, all graduates of Beth El preschool.

During the Sisterhood Shabbat service she will speak on the Torah portion (Tetzaveh): "Sartorial Spirituali-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

### UPCOMING WOMEN OF BETH EL PROGRAMS

**MONDAYS, FEBRUARY 2 AND 23, 1:00 PM AND WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 7:00 PM WBE Crafters.** WBE

Crafters is open to anyone who does any kind of crafting. We meet to have social interaction, get help with our projects, learn something new, and to work on service project opportunities.

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY, 7:30 PM VIA ZOOM Keshet**

**Nashim.** This support group for female cancer survivors and those with a new cancer diagnosis meets monthly. Contact Judy Spector for more information and to register.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 7:30 PM WBE & Men's Club Game Night Unplugged.** See information on page 8. RSVP at [bethelmc.org/game-night-0221](https://bethelmc.org/game-night-0221).

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 9:15 AM Sisterhood Shabbat.** Join Women of Beth El for our annual Shabbat honoring women within and outside of the Beth El community. Read more about our honoree, Sara Gordon, and our guest speaker, Rabbi Rachel Hersch, on this page.

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## 2026 GOLD MEIR AWARD RECIPIENT SARA GORDON CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

ing, and evaluating public health programs. She now works with individuals as a clinical social worker.

During her time as president, Sara was an integral part of Beth El's response to the increased security needs that resulted from the antisemitism and threats related to the war in Israel. She is grateful for the generosity of donors who enabled Beth El to elevate our security capabilities.

Sara also highlights Beth El's formation of an Israel task team that met weekly for almost the entirety of the war to share information among the different parts of the synagogue and make decisions together about programming and other synagogue needs.

An initiative led by Rabbi Harris, that Sara and the Beth El Leadership fully supported, was a focus on community partnerships – both our connection with Jewish organizations and our interfaith partnerships.

"As antisemitism intensified," Sara shared, "Our interfaith partnerships were vital to underscoring that if the Jewish community was being threatened, all faith communities were being threatened, and our mutual support was essential".

Sara's involvement in various spaces at Beth El has been something that has grounded her over the years.

She is always struck by congregants' dedication, not just to the task at hand, but to the community as a whole.

"Serving as Beth El's president has only deepened my connection to Beth El. I feel more connected to staff, leadership, and to the community than prior to serving. My sense of obligation and responsibility to the Beth El community and the Beth El organization have also grown. Learning more about the stories that shape our community has had a lasting (positive) impact on me." ■

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## SISTERHOOD SHABBAT SPEAKER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

ty – Joseph, Aaron and Esther." What do the Torah and Megillah teach us about the connections and obstacles between our external material world and our internal spiritual intelligence? How do these elements impact leadership during times of challenge?

After services, stay for a special session: "Rereading Parashat Zachor." Have we met the enemy and is it us? And what about Amalek? Midrash offers perspectives on the commandment to "erase the memory" of Amalek, giving us new ways to think about Purim.

Women of Beth El are grateful to the Resnik family for their support of this annual special Shabbat. ■

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## COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Minyan Ruach

The next Minyan Ruach is on Saturday, February 7, in the Library. Minyan Ruach is an alternative to the traditional service. It is a low-key, mostly lay-led, participatory service. We always sing with our special song leaders and have an interesting presentation. Come join us and bring a friend! Any questions, contact Marsha Liss at [lissmjs@gmail.com](mailto:lissmjs@gmail.com) or Sally Ehrlich at [salehrlich@yahoo.com](mailto:salehrlich@yahoo.com).

### Chug Kriah

Chug Kriah meets regularly to read and discuss modern Israeli literature in Hebrew. Our next meeting will be on February 15 at 7:00 pm via Zoom. We will be reading *Aravim Rokdim (Dancing Arabs)* by Sayed Qashu. We are reading *Al Tesaper L'achicha (Don't Tell Your Brother)* by Meir Shalev. For more information including Zoom link, please contact Bill Kanter at [kanterdsw@aol.com](mailto:kanterdsw@aol.com).

### Kesher Nashim

Kesher 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. 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, February 19, at 7:30 pm, via Zoom. For more information, please contact Judy Spector at [judithspector@verizon.net](mailto:judithspector@verizon.net).

### 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. Visit [bethelmc.org/kiddush](http://bethelmc.org/kiddush), email [info@bethelmc.org](mailto:info@bethelmc.org), or call 301-652-2606 for more information. At least two full weeks' advance notice of sponsorship is required.

### Shabbat Kiddush Servers Needed

30 minutes and a smile! That's all it takes for one of the happiest mitzvot at Beth El. Serve the kiddush luncheon after b-mitzvah services on Shabbat and make sure everyone gets a warm "Shabbat Shalom" with their delicious food. Everyone 11 and older is welcome to serve. No food prep or cleanup involved. For more information and to sign up, visit [www.bethelmc.org/kiddush](http://www.bethelmc.org/kiddush) or contact Sue Kanter at [kanterdsw@aol.com](mailto:kanterdsw@aol.com).

### Celebrate Purim with Delicious Sunflower Bakery Hamantaschen

Order by Noon on Monday, February 23, to pick up at Beth El on Monday, March 2, 10:30 am – 5:00 pm. Sunflower is featuring traditional hamantaschen favorites plus creative, fun flavors that are sure to please. There are also a gluten-free, nut-free, and vegan options for those with dietary restrictions. Sunflower now offers a delicious culinary menu with an assortment of main dishes, sides, etc. The Purim page at [sunflowerbakery.org](http://sunflowerbakery.org) will go live on Monday, February 2. Sunflower donates a percentage of holiday sales to Beth El. Questions? Contact Sunflower at [info@sunflowerbakery.org](mailto:info@sunflowerbakery.org) or 240-361-3698.



## CONTRIBUTIONS

Please remember that contributions can be made easily, quickly, and securely via our webpage –  
[www.bethelmc.org/give](http://www.bethelmc.org/give)

*Donations December 10, 2025 - January 13, 2026.*

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Marcie Brecher  
Bill and Paula Whyman  
Sheryl and David Friedlander  
Dov and Sharon Margolis Apfel

### IN HONOR OF:

Rabbi Harris by Elliot and Lily Feldman  
To support federal workers by Paul Weinberger  
Ariella Gilbert by Leslie Dellon  
Ben and Suzanne Bronheim on their 55th wedding anniversary, by Jack and Stephanie Ventura  
Bill and Sue Kanter on their milestone anniversary, by Tierra Joslyn  
Dylan and Oliver Cardeli by Dov and Sharon Margolis Apfel  
Amanda Ford by Holly and Howie Stein  
Ben Miller with gratitude for his steady and gracious leadership of the early minyan, by Rachel Hersh  
Hazzan Fradkin for planning the wonderful Geshet Chorale trip to Jacksonville, Fla., by Ellen Chubin  
Epstein and David Epstein  
Jacob Gross and Abby Wolfe on their wedding, by Phyllis and Jeff Lavine  
Levi Brenner on becoming a bar mitzvah, by Sarah Roark  
The birth of Jacob Myer, son of Mira Kahn and Jason Ethridge, and grandson of Henry Kahn and Laura Primakoff, by Sheila Bellack, Rachelle Bernstecker and Bob Abramson, Victoria Paton, Madi Kirch and Gordon Bronson, Ricardo and Irene Munster, Heather Garrett  
Mitchell and Rachelle Solkowitz on their milestone anniversary, by Tierra Joslyn  
Rabbi Harris by Dan Hirsch and Brenda Gruss, family of Aileen Cooper  
Rabbi Megdal by the Shiur class  
Robbie Belson and Gracie Aaronson on their wedding, by Phyllis and Jeff Lavine  
Sam Boxerman, Beth El Board President, by Patricia Silver and Jeffrey Trauberman  
Samuel Orenstein by Alan and Linda

Orenstein  
Sandra and Paula Friedman by Phyllis Stearman  
Staff and all involved at Beth El for doing such a great job, by Carol Ann Greenberg  
Audrey Klein on becoming a bat mitzvah, by Judy Bisman  
Dani Mathison on becoming a bat mitzvah and for Alexandra and Jacob Mathison's chanting of the Ashrei, by Judy Bisman  
The daily minyan leaders by Steve Shapiro

### IN MEMORY OF:

George Liss, may his memory be for a blessing, by Julie and Marvin Liss, Sharon Kobrin  
Ira Pearlman by Eugene Meyer and Sandra Pearlman  
Bunny Weinstein by Rosalyn Weinstein  
Allen Farrar by Rachelle Bernstecker and Bob Abramson  
Allen Lesser, my father, by Howard Lesser and Hanna Gutmann  
Anne L. Margulies, my mother, by David Margulies  
Bernie Berger and his great sense of humor, by Jon and Sandy Simon  
Bruce Strauss, beloved husband of Suzanne Strauss, by Ellen Tillman, Donna Vogel and David Margulies, Kevin Strauss, Susan and Art Bruckheim, Allen and Barbara Cohen Lerman, Ariella and Bob Gilbert  
Daryl Sherman, outspoken supporter of Israel, by Jon and Sandy Simon  
Jeanette Rosing, my mother, by Douglas and Barbara Rosing  
Edith Weisz by Jon and Sandy Simon  
Eleanor Koblenz, my mother, by Andy and Katey Koblenz  
Emanuel Kantro, father of Joshua Kantro, by Sheila Bellack, Gabriela and Leonard Bebchick  
Eugene Nadel, father of Laura Nadel, by Lisa Sorkin, Michelle Lynn Brafman and Tom Helf, Ellen and David Epstein, Allen Eisenberg and Connie Stromberg, Rob Fersh and Sharon Markus, Sara Greenbaum  
Eve Stern, mother of Barbara Gold, by Jon and Sandy Simon



## CONTRIBUTIONS

Gregory Nusinovich by Sheryl and David Friedlander  
 Gregory Nusinovich, my husband, by Yelena Nusinovich  
 Hedy Weinberger (Hadash bat Falek) by Paul Weinberger  
 Helen Popper, wife of Arthur Popper, by Jack and Stephanie Ventura, Cary and Nancy Feldman, Sara Greenbaum  
 Henrietta Bruckheim, my mother, by Arthur and Susan Bruckheim  
 Henry Roth, beloved father, grandfather, and husband, by Steven and Elisabeth Escobar  
 Herb Levinson, our neighbor, Jon and Sandy Simon  
 Hilda Getz, mother of Sid Getz, by Angela and Alex Munitz, Sara and Mike Gordon, Dale Rosenthal and Michael Cutler, Walter Arnheim and Marsha Rehns, Sid and Janet Getz, Marci Levin, Donna Vogel and David Margulies, Jack and Stephanie Ventura, Rita Liebowitz, Pat and Jerry Danoff, Ron Kabran, Rob Fersh and Sharon Markus, Debbie and Michael Fink, Liz Schrayner and Jeff Schwaber  
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 Fannye Gold by Harvey and Dale Gold  
 Ronald and Evelyn Treinish by Lloyd and Linda Treinish  
 Sylvia Cohen by Andrea and Michael, Ethan and Charlie Goldstein  
 Anne Rosensky by Phyllis and Jeff Lavine  
 Zahava Baikovitz Rosenberg by Wynne and Ron Sitrin, Sue and Bill Kanter  
 Irene Simon, Alex Simon, Liba Goldberg, and Mendel Goldberg by Jonathan and Susan Simon

Joseph Postar by Michael and Adeen Postar  
 Judy Levine, my mother, by Kenneth Levine  
 Lawrence Dobrow by Leslie and Jim Dellon  
 Lotta Brafman by Michelle Brafman and Tom Helf  
 Marianne Schissler by Andrew Schissler and Julie Goldberg  
 Max Cohen, my loving father, by Barbara S. Spitzer  
 Maxine Stromberg by Connie Stromberg and Allen Eisenberg  
 Melvin Baer on his yahrzeit, by Gerri Baer, Dan Isaac, Alex and Julian Isaac  
 Mindell Wien, my mother-in-law, by Jon and Sandy Simon  
 Janice Goldin, my beloved mother, by Lynn Goldin and Henry Birnkran  
 Rabbi Shamai Kanter, my brother, by William and Sue Kanter  
 Steve Hertz, my dear cousin, by Janet White  
 Benjamin Levine, my grandfather, by Susan Levinson  
 Rose Kanovsky, my mother, by Helen Kanovsky  
 Barbara Fink, my sister, by William and Sue Kanter  
 Nettie Birnbach by Sarah Birnbach and Jake Guttmann  
 Eddie Hazan, our beloved father, by Danielle and Evan Sultan  
 Paula and Nathan Super, grandparents of Nancy Gaba, by Jeffrey and Susan Super  
 Phyllis Loeb, mother of Lisa Handelman, by Patti Silver and Jeff Trauberman, Amy Schwartzman, Phyllis and Jeff Lavine, Paul Frieden, Robin and Matthew Weinberg, Ellen Kessler  
 Rabbi Rudolph by Mark and Abby Nathans  
 Rabbi Sam Scolnic and Rabbi Bill Rudolph by Bernard and Paula Friedman  
 Samuel Shapiro, father of Lynn Shapiro Snyder, by Neil Gurvitch and Aimee Imundo, Ellen Tillman, Jerome Gabry, Liz Schrayner and Jeff Schwaber, Kay Klass and Mark Levitt  
 Sandy Kay by Jon and Sandy Simon  
 Sarah Metzger, my niece, by David

and Carole Metzger  
 Seth Fox by the Bender cousins and family  
 Sidney Hoffman, my father, by Howard J. Hoffman  
 Sigmund and Rosalind Clayman and Joseph and Doris Miller by Carol J. Miller and Robert S. Clayman  
 Sylvia Cohen by Dede and Ken Feinberg, Sue and Bill Kanter, Ellen Chubin Epstein and David Epstein  
 Sy Taubenblatt, father of Joel Taubenblatt, by Ellen and David Epstein  
 Victoria "Vita" Imas-Duchovny by Gabriela and Leonard Bebchick  
 Yana Douchang by Gabriela and Leonard Bebchick

### Did You Know?

In every digital issue of the *Scroll*, there are several ways you can interact with the content. Click on any item in the Table of Contents to be taken directly to that page. You can click on a page number wherever you see "continued on page..." or "continued from page..." to go directly to the page that is referenced. This will help you more easily read articles that are spread over multiple pages. Click on any blue link (example: [bethelmc.org](http://bethelmc.org)) or any event-related graphic to be taken to the corresponding page on the Beth El website. *Please note that these features only work in the digital version, not the PDF version.*

## MAZAL TOV TO

**Garrett Keating** on his bar mitzvah on January 10.

Proud parents are **Bryan** and **Laurel Keating**.

**Mira Kahn** and **Jason Ethridge** on the birth of their son, **Jacob Myer**, brother of **Maya** and **Eliana**. Proud grandparents are **Henry Kahn** and **Laura Primakoff**.

February's milestone birthdays: **Howard Barshow**, **Diane Braunstein**, **Dennis Carlton**, **Benjamin Cohen**, **Linda Goldsmith**, **Naomi Greenwood**, **Audrey Griff**, **Howard Hoffman**, **Rita Kahn**, **Nancy Lemann**, **Robert Levine**, **Dave Metzger**, **Deborah Reiser**, **Robert Rubin**, **Rose Saady**, and **Leonard Seeff**.

February's milestone anniversaries: **Jerrold Keilson** and **Ellen Silver** (45 years), **Stephen Levy** and **Lois Zuckerman** (40 years), **Michael** and **Faith Schwartz** (40 years).

## CONDOLENCES TO

**Yelena Nusinovich** on the death of her husband, **Gregory Nusinovich**. Gregory was the father of **Maria z"l**, **Liza**, and **Paulina**, father-in-law of **Igor**, **Josh**, and **Dan**, and grandfather of **Hannah**, **Essie**, **Noah**, **Philip**, **Maya**, and **Nadia**.

**Joel Taubenblatt** and **Jody Axinn** on the death of Joel's father, **Selig "Sy" Taubenblatt**. Sy was the grandfather of **Brielle** and **Bryce Taubenblatt**.

**Lisa** and **Ken Handelman** on the death of Lisa's mother, **Phyllis Loeb**. Phyllis was the grandmother of **Josh Handelman (Sydnie)**, **Elana Somers (Cam)**, **Aaron Handelman (Yarden)**, and **Dalia Handelman**.

**Ian Rothman** and **Kimberly Shires**, on the death of Ian's father, **Howard Rothman**. Howard was the husband of **Gena Rothman** and father of **Dean Rothman**.

**Laura Nadel** on the death of her father, **Eugene Nadel**. Eugene was the grandfather of **Josh** and **Eliot Eisen**.

**Suzanne Strauss** on the death of her husband, **Bruce Strauss**.

To the family of **Hilda Getz** on her death. Hilda was the mother of **Sid (Janet)** and **Andy (Steve)**, grandmother of **Daniel**, **Ronni**, **Gabe**, **Caleb**, and **Zach**, and sister of **Max (Michelle)**.

**Arthur Popper**, on the death of his wife, **Helen Popper**. Helen was the mother of **Michelle (Roman) Levit** and **Melissa (Jeff) Levinsohn**, and grandmother of **Emma**, **Ethan**, and **Sophie**.

**Candice** and **Alan Goldstein**, on the death of Candice's beloved family member, **Sylvia Cohen**. Sylvia was married to Candice's father, **Malcolm Cohen**. She was the mother of four, grandmother of nine, and great-grandmother of three.

**Lawrence Eisen** on the death of his father, **Abraham "Ab" Eisen**. Ab was the grandfather of **Joshua** and **Eliot Eisen**.

**Stephen** and **Susan Sherman** on the death of Stephen's father, **Robert Sherman**. Robert was the grandfather of **Ryan** and **Rebecca Sherman**.

## CHAI SOCIETY 60+

**Senior Caucus Coffee with the Clergy on Tuesday, February 17 from 2:00 to 3:00 pm.** This every-other-month gathering is an informal time to catch up with fellow congregants, hear updates about what is happening at Beth El and in the news, enjoy light refreshments, and do some Jewish learning together. Rabbi Harris will lead a discussion about the month of Adar (which begins the next day) and fresh thoughts on Purim. The program will also be available on Zoom. Please [click here](#) to register to attend in person or to receive the Zoom link. Or you can contact Ricardo at [rmunster@bethelmc.org](mailto:rmunster@bethelmc.org) or 301-652-2606. Requested registration deadline is noon on Monday, February 16.

JOIN CHAI SOCIETY AT THE EDCJCC FOR

# NANI Vazana

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NANI VAZANA

**Sunday, February 15 at 12:00 pm Nani Vazana Concert at EDCJCC.** Join us at the EDCJCC for a performance by Nani Vazana. With a ship's-horn power voice and irresistible stage presence, Eurovision winner Nani Vazana breathes life into the endangered Ladino Language. Chai Society 60+ is cosponsoring this event but all are welcome. Transportation on your own - we'll all meet up at the J. Purchase your tickets at [bethelmc.org/concert-0215](https://bethelmc.org/concert-0215).

# Downsizing & Decluttering Part 2



Sunday, March 8, 3:00 pm at Beth El

**Downsizing & Decluttering - Part 2 on Sunday, March 8 3:00-5:00 pm, sponsored by Beyond BEENs.** We hope you can join us for a presentation by Jodi Eisner, MSW and Certified Professional Organizer, to discuss challenges and tips for downsizing and decluttering. The presentation will be followed by a panel of Beth El congregants who have successfully survived the process. There is no charge for the program. [Click here](#) to register by March 5.