



CONGREGATION BETH EL

SCROLL

DECEMBER 2025 • KISLEV - TEVET 5786

VOL. 74 NO. 4

TABLE OF CONTENTS

From the Clergy • 1
Service Information • 2
Monthly Programming • 3
Beth El Gala • 4
Giving Tuesday • 5
Celebrating Hanukkah with Beth El • 5
Honoring a Family Lost to the Holocaust in Muiderberg • 6
Hanukkah Books and More at the Library • 6
Israel in Focus • 7
Beth El in Photos • 8
Books & Beyond • 9
Men's Club • 10
Women of Beth El • 10
Beth El Preschool • 11
Beth El Religious School • 12
Community Announcements • 12
Contributions • 13
Bulletin Board • 14

When viewing the digital version of the Scroll, click on any of the items in the Table of Contents above to be taken directly to that page.

From the Beth El Clergy

GREAT MIRACLES HAPPEN HERE

BY RABBI GREG HARRIS



Dreidel trivia: According to the *Guinness Book of World Records*, the most dreidels spinning simultaneously for at least 10 seconds is 820. The longest dreidel spin is one minute, 29.93 seconds. And the galactic record for longest dreidel spin is held by Jeff Hoffman, a NASA astronaut, when he spun his dreidel on a space shuttle mission. His dreidel spun for over an hour as his dreidel was barely affected by the friction from gravity.

I must admit that I have a rabbinic dream of Beth El setting the new Guinness record for most dreidels spinning. Can you imagine the Bender Social Hall filled with hundreds of people of all ages... spinning dreidels? Maybe we would need an even bigger space to celebrate and share our pride in Jewish living. It is a dream that makes me smile each time I think of it.

The dreidel recalls the miracles of Hanukkah through its letters: *Nun/Gimmel/Hey/Shin*. It is an acronym for the sentence: *Nes Gadol Haya Sham* – “A Great Miracle Happened There.” It refers to the dual miracles of Hanukkah – the lasting oil and the Maccabees’ victory.

In Israel, the dreidel changes the *Shin* for a *Pey* – adjusting “A Great Mir-

acle Happened There,” which we say in the Diaspora, to “A Great Miracle Happened Here.” I have always loved how Israel remains the geographic center of our hopes, prayers, and even our games well before the modern State of Israel existed.

But miracles do not only happen *Sham*, there.

Rabbi Shalom Noach Berezovsky was known as the Slonimer Rebbe (1911-2000). His most well-known book is called *Netivot Shalom*. He writes, “The essence of the Greek war to destroy the Jews was by means of darkening the eyes of Israel. The Greeks knew that they would not be able to successfully defeat the Jews by military means – rather only by darkening their eyes...”

The Slonimer Rebbe teaches that the defeat of the Jewish People is only possible if we let the light of Jewish pride, joy, and miracle be extinguished within ourselves. We are in a moment when many people feel deflated and concerned about serious issues of the Jewish community. This Hanukkah though, I am going to spin the dreidel with a *Pey* to affirm for myself that Great Miracles Happen Here as well. Our eyes will not be darkened and our spirits will shine bright as a community. We need each other for that to be true so I look forward to eating a latke together, spinning a dreidel, and caring for each other beaming with pride. ■



SCROLL

8215 OLD GEORGETOWN ROAD
BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20814-1451
PHONE 301-652-2606 FAX 301-907-8559
Web www.bethelmc.org

*Affiliated with United Synagogue
of Conservative Judaism*

SENIOR RABBI

Gregory Harris gharris@bethelmc.org

ASSOCIATE RABBI

Deborah Megdal dmegdal@bethelmc.org

HAZZAN

Asa Fradkin afradkin@bethelmc.org

CLERGY EMERITI

Rabbi Samuel Scolnic z"l

Rabbi William Rudolph z"l

Hazzan Abraham Lubin salubin1@verizon.net

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Heather Garrett hgarrett@bethelmc.org

EDUCATION DIRECTOR

Elisha Frumkin efrumkin@bethelmc.org

PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR

Lauren Hirt lhirt@bethelmc.org

PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM DIRECTOR

Ali Lackey alackey@bethelmc.org

DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Lisa Zimmerman lzimmerman@bethelmc.org

ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

Mira Kahn mkahn@bethelmc.org

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Tiarra Joslyn tjoslyn@bethelmc.org

BETH EL BOARD

PRESIDENT

Sam Boxerman president@bethelmc.org

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Jennifer Hirsch jenniferbhirsch@gmail.com

ADMINISTRATIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Jim Gelb jamesmgelb@gmail.com

COMMUNICATIONS VICE PRESIDENT

Liliana López lilianalopez8@gmail.com

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT VICE PRESIDENT

Alison Baraf alisonbaraf@gmail.com

DEVELOPMENT VICE PRESIDENT

Fran Katz Watson fran@katzwatsongroup.com

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING VICE PRESIDENT

Josh Rosenstein joshua.rosenstein@gmail.com

TIKKUN OLAM VICE PRESIDENT

David Rifkind david.rifkind@stinson.com

WORSHIP AND SPIRITUALITY VICE PRESIDENT

Reuben Silberman reuben.silberman@gmail.com

TREASURER

Jeff Grill jeffrey.grill@pillsburylaw.com

SECRETARY

Rebecca Schilleci rebecca.schilleci@gmail.com

For a full list of clergy, staff, and board members,
visit bethelmc.org.

SCROLL COMMITTEE scroll@bethelmc.org

Julie Kennon, *editor*. Sheila Bellack, Karen Benezra,
Heather Garrett, Davida Kales, Liliana López, Janet
Meyers, Larry Sidman, and Donna Vogel.

Art director: Tiarra Joslyn

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 (December 25).

**Evening Minyan is at 8:20 pm on Wednesdays when the Scolnic Institute is in session. Evening Minyan on December 24 and 25 will be via Zoom only.

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Friday, December 5

6:00 pm [Young Family Shabbat](#) with BEPS and Nitzanim

6:30 pm Friday Evening Service

Saturday, December 6

7:30 am Early Shabbat Service

9:15 am Main Shabbat Service - Levi Brenner B-Mitzvah

9:30 am Junior Congregation

12:30 pm Support After Loss

Friday, December 12

6:00 pm [Shir Yachad](#) Light Dinner

7:00 pm Shir Yachad Friday Evening Musical Service followed by oneg

Saturday, December 13

7:30 am Early Shabbat Service

9:15 am Main Shabbat Service - Audrey Klein and Daniella Mathison B'not Mitzvah

9:30 am Junior Congregation

Friday, December 19

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

6:30 pm Yedid Nefesh Friday Evening Service

Saturday, December 20

7:30 am Early Shabbat Service

9:15 am Main Shabbat Service with Minyan Chaverim

9:30 am Junior Congregation

Friday, December 26

6:30 pm Friday Evening Service

Saturday, December 27

7:30 am Early Shabbat Service

9:15 am Main Shabbat Service

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

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

December Events at Beth El

Connect

Dec. 4
7:30 pm
Hearing Men's Voices
Howard Stein leads "Where Have You Found Spirituality?" in person or via Zoom.



Dec. 5
10:30 am
Schmooze & Schmear
Join WBE for coffee, a nosh, and conversation.



Dec. 6
12:30 pm
Support After Loss
Gather for a brief teaching and discussion about loss led by Rabbi Megdal.



Dec. 7
7:00 pm
Chug Kriah
Discuss the book *Im Yesh Gan Eden (Beaufort)* by Ron Leshem in Hebrew.



Dec. 11
7:30 pm
Kesher Nashim
Women's cancer support group for cancer patients and survivors, via Zoom.



Dec. 12
12:00 pm
Let's Do Lunch
WBE will meet at Chop't in the Wildwood Shopping Center for lunch.



Dec. 13
12:30 pm
Shabbat Mahj
Get your Mahj fix on Shabbat!



Dec. 14
12:00 pm
Tzelem LGBT+ Teen Group
A safe space for Jewish teens to talk about the issues in their lives.



Dec. 17
2:00 pm
Coffee with the Clergy
Join Senior Caucus and Hazzan Fradkin for schmoozing and snacks.



Dec. 17
7:00 pm
Jews & Brews
Meet Rabbi Harris at Clear Skies Meadery for schmoozing and casual learning.



Dec. 21
11:45 am
Rosh Hodesh Group
6th grade girls meet to build friendships and explore Jewish values.



Dec. 21
6:30 pm
Let There Be Light
Bring your hanukiah to Beth El for a community Hanukkah candle lighting.



Engage

Dec. 2
7:00 pm
College Parents Packing Party
Come schmooze and help pack care packages for our college-age kids.



Dec. 4
7:00 pm
Mosaic Tile Coaster Workshop
Learn to make fun and festive mosaic tile coasters with Women of Beth El.



Dec. 6
7:00 pm
Film Screening: Rebound
We will screen the documentary Rebound at Yeshiva University Basketball.



Dec. 11
8:30 am
Mental Health Professionals
Mental Health Professionals are invited to join us for breakfast and study.



Dec. 14
2:15 pm
Hamantaschen Bake
Help bake hamantaschen to serve after the Latke-Hamantasch Debate.



Dec. 16
7:00 pm
Latke-Hamantasch Debate
Come cheer on your favorite as Upper School students debate the best delicacy.



Dec. 18
7:00 pm
Volunteering at Manna Food
Volunteers ages 11+ needed to help with this food-sorting tikkun olam project.



Pray

Dec. 5
6:00 pm
Young Family Shabbat
Shabbat songs and prayers, followed by dinner, for families with children 0-6.



Dec. 12
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.



Dec. 19
6:00 pm
Shabbat Together
Join us for a joyful Shabbat experience for children grades K-5 and their families.



Dec. 19
6:30 pm
Yedid Nefesh Friday Night Service
Join us for this Friday night musical service led by Rabbi Deborah Megdal.



Find out more and sign up to participate at
bethelmc.org/events

With Joy and Gratitude: Join Us for Beth El's 2026 Annual Gala

BY LISA ZIMMERMAN

We are overjoyed to invite members, family, and friends to A Night Out, Beth El's 2026 Gala, on Saturday, January 24, at 7:30 pm. Come join our vibrant community for an evening full of connection, entertainment, and spirit.

The night begins with hors d'oeuvres and cocktails, offering a relaxed and festive atmosphere to mix and mingle. Then, come hungry to enjoy a variety of international tapas (small plate) chef stations.

Our Night Out will feature a lively performance by Felix and Fingers Dueling Pianos, known for their world-class interactive shows. Guests will have the opportunity to request songs and help shape the evening's playlist – so start thinking about your favorite tunes!

After our main event, the night will transition into a Tel Aviv Night Club-style after party in the Zahler Social Hall, as we celebrate our joyful ties to Israel. The Bender Social Hall will also remain open for those who want to continue to schmooze in a relaxed, jazzy lounge atmosphere.

SILENT AUCTION

We're excited to bring back our Silent Auction, featuring a wide variety of items and experiences generously donated by members and local businesses.

From vacation home stays in Vail, to math tutoring sessions, to culinary experiences, to a District Winery tasting for two – there's something for everyone! And of course, we will be featuring some of last year's favorites such as Jill Rider's mandel bread. Despite this amazing array of items, there is always room for more! If you'd like to contribute an item or service, please contact Lisa Zimmerman, Development Manager, at lizimmerman@bethelmc.org.

Let's come together for a night of joy, generosity, and celebration. Your support is critical in sustaining Beth El's meaningful programming and strong community for generations to come. We look forward to you joining us for A Night Out!

Tickets for the Gala begin at \$180. Registration is required to attend. Register online at bethelmc.org/gala. ■

CONGREGATION BETH EL

ANNUAL GALA

SILENT AUCTION
DONATIONS WANTED!

 VACATION HOMES
  GIFT CARDS

 TRAVEL PACKAGES
  EVENT TICKETS

 DINING EXPERIENCES
  PRIVATE LESSONS

EMAIL [LZIMMERMAN@BETHELMC.ORG](mailto:lzimmerman@bethelmc.org) TO DONATE!

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE
CONGREGATION BETH EL

ANNUAL GALA

JANUARY 24, 2026
7:30 PM

TAPAS, DRINKS, AND DESSERTS,
DUELING PIANOS,
NIGHT CLUB,
SILENT AUCTION,
AND MORE!

[BETHELMC.ORG/GALA](https://bethelmc.org/gala)



FEATURED ENTERTAINMENT

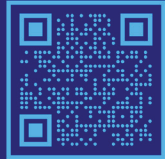
The evening will feature Dueling Pianos by Felix and Fingers, a dynamic, interactive performance where two master pianists take the stage to battle it out, trading songs, riffs, and witty banter as the audience calls the tunes. Enjoy crowd favorites, spontaneous sing-alongs, and incredible musical talent that will have you singing, clapping, and dancing all night long.



TEL AVIV NIGHTCLUB

After our featured entertainment, the evening will transition into a Tel Aviv Night Club-style after party in the Zahler Social Hall as we celebrate our joyful ties to Israel. The Bender Social Hall will also remain open for those who want to continue to schmooze in a relaxed, jazzy lounge atmosphere.

REGISTER ONLINE
bethelmc.org/gala



SILENT AUCTION
bethelmc.org/auction



FIND COMPLETE DETAILS ABOUT THE EVENT AT
[BETHELMC.ORG/GALA](https://bethelmc.org/gala)

GALA CO-CHAIRS
Rebecca & Aaron Schilleci

Fun Cocktail or Night Out Attire Invited
Complimentary Valet Parking

From the Beth El Board

Giving Tuesday: Education for All Ages at Beth El

BY SAM BOXERMAN, BOARD PRESIDENT

"When we give, we create bonds of belonging. We make a community out of strangers, and a society that cares."
– Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Thanksgiving is a time for family, friends, food, and football – but it is also a time to give thanks. In that spirit, I am reminded of Rabbi Sacks' powerful teaching: that it is our acts of giving that transform us from individuals into a true community.

Giving Tuesday is a global movement dedicated to giving back to the institutions important to us. This year on Sunday November 30, and Tuesday, December 2, volunteers will be reaching out to ask you to join this movement by making a donation to Beth El. Our goal is to have more donors in one day for Beth El than ever before. So please say "Hineni!" and give to our Annual Campaign. Your gift will directly support Education for All Ages at Beth El – to ensure we have the resources to continue to build a Jewish future for our children.

Together, we have created a vibrant, welcoming shul.

GIVING TUESDAY



SCAN ME

From Beth El Preschool to our Senior Caucus – our Religious School and the Scolnic Institute – Shabbat morning and musical Friday nights – programs, trips, and engaging in Ahavat Yisrael – and movies, lectures, Family Camp, and our upcoming Gala – there are so many ways that we pray, learn, connect and celebrate together as a Beth El community.

Beth El continues to thrive and enrich each of our lives because of the generosity and commitment of each of you. But now more than ever we need your support. Together, we can ensure that our Beth El remains a place of inspiration, belonging, and Jewish life for generations to come.

To see our Giving Tuesday (and Sunday) website and make your donation, scan the QR code or go to onecau.se/_d8xtm1. You can also make your contribution by texting BethElGiving to 44834. For questions, please contact Lisa Zimmerman, development manager, at lzimmerman@bethelmc.org. ■

Celebrating Hanukkah with Beth El

BY TIARRA JOSLYN

Hanukkah begins on the evening of Sunday, December 14, and Beth El has a variety of ways to celebrate together this year.

Hanukkah Gift Packing & Social for Parents of College Students: Tuesday, December 2, 7:00 pm. Join us to assemble Hanukkah care packages for our college students to send them some Hanukkah spirit. Come ready to pack the boxes, and we'll provide the holiday drinks and a bit of fun. Please email the College Outreach Committee at bethelmccollegeoutreach@gmail.com to register and sign up to bring snacks for the packages. (If you are the parent of a college-age student and aren't already a part of their mailing list, you can also ask to join the list by contacting the email above.)

Latke-Hamantasch Debate: Next Gen: Tuesday, December 16, 7:00 pm. The entire Beth El community is invited to join us as our Religious School Upper School students tackle the timeless question: Which is better? The latke or the hamantasch? Come cheer on our teen debaters – who are already hard at work preparing their cases – and show support for your favorite of the two delicacies. Stick around after the debate to enjoy some delicious samples made by some of our best teen bakers – be-

cause every great debate deserves a tasty ending! RSVP at bethelmc.org/latke-hamantasch.

Volunteer bakers are also needed to help make hamantaschen for the post-debate snack. If you enjoy baking and want to help and are available on Sunday, December 14, at 2:15 pm, please contact our Religious School program coordinator, Allison Brown, at abrown@bethelmc.org.



with Congregation Beth El

Senior Caucus Coffee with the Clergy: Wednesday, December 17, 2:00 pm. Hazzan Asa Fradkin

will join us to present a fun Hanukkah-themed program that all are welcome to attend. This month, we will be offering a hybrid option for those who can't make it into the building but still want to join in on the schmoozing and fun. RSVP at bethelmc.org/coffee-1217.

Let There Be Light: Sunday, December 21, 6:30 pm. Our popular community candle lighting is back again this year. Bring your hanukkah and join us on the last night of Hanukkah as we come together in the lobby for a night filled with light, laughter, and connection for all ages. Plus, enjoy live music with our shaliach, Yoel Gleizer. Our lights shine brighter when they shine together! RSVP at bethelmc.org/light-1221. ■

Honoring a Family Lost to the Holocaust in Muiderberg

BY ROBERT TEITEL

In early November, I and members of my family – my wife Ginger, and daughters Miriam Teitel Zarin and Adriana Teitel – traveled to the Netherlands for the placing of a *stolpersteine* in front of the house in the small village of Muiderberg, near Amsterdam, where my parents and I lived in 1941/1942 during World War II.

[A “*stolpersteine*,” or stumbling block, is a concrete block with a brass plaque placed in front of houses occupied by Jews before they were sent to concentration camps and murdered during the Holocaust. The blocks are intended to cause persons walking by to stumble, not in a physical sense, but to reflect on what it symbolizes.]

My father came to the attention of the Gestapo in 1935 when he went from the Netherlands to Wuppertal, Germany, to support workers arrested and tried for treason for protesting Nazi policies. He was interrogated by the Gestapo and released, but a surveillance file was started on him.

He was arrested in June 1942, when I was not yet one year old, and executed in the Mauthausen concentration camp the day after he arrived in October 1942. He was just 29 years old.

My mother and I went into hiding both together and separately in and around Amsterdam for the rest of the war, but she died in 1946. I spent the next five years in foster homes and an orphanage in Amsterdam. I came to the United States in 1951 to live with paternal grandparents in New York City.

This past April, Miriam and I went to Wuppertal where

I gave a talk about my father as part of that city's 80th liberation ceremony. After that talk, we were escorted to the Netherlands for four days to visit family addresses and relevant places such as the prison where my father

was incarcerated before being sent to Mauthausen and the cemetery where my mother is buried.

I traveled to Wuppertal again in late November – after the *stolpersteine* ceremony – to give another talk about my father and his activities at the 90th remembrance of the treason trials in 1935.

Miriam and I have collected a large amount of historical material about my family during the 20th century, and last year, I gave an extensive slide presentation about that history at a Sunday meeting of the Beth El Men's Club. That presentation is being updated with material from the April and November trips.

I have spoken frequently about my family's experiences for local Holocaust remembrances, genealogical societies, and school groups. Many presentations are part of my role as a volunteer with the United States Holocaust



TOP: ROBERT AND HIS DAUGHTER MIRIAM IN WUPPERTAL, GERMANY WITH DR. STEPHAN STRACKE AND EDDA GERLACH; STRACKE INVITED ROBERT TO SPEAK IN WUPPERTAL AND CAME TO THE NETHERLANDS FOR THE STOLPERSTEINE CEREMONY.

BOTTOM: THE THREE STOLPERSTEINES FOR ROBERT AND HIS PARENTS AFTER THEIR INSTALLATION OUTSIDE OF BRINK 25 IN MUIDERBERG.

Memorial Museum.

The Holocaust Memorial Museum has released an hour-long interview with me about my family, currently available on YouTube at [youtube.com/watch?v=2JP3rnxlCQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JP3rnxlCQ) or by searching for “First Person Teitel.” ■

Robert and his wife, Ginger, are longtime members of Beth El, having joined the congregation in 1995.

Hanukkah Books and More at Beth El Library

Beth El Library's [online catalog](#) identifies all books – including holiday books – that may be found on our library shelves. Or you may browse our shelves and new book display in person any time the building is open. Check out books by following instructions on the librarian's desk. After reading a book in the library, leave it on the table for shelving by volunteers.

The Beth El library has approximately 5,000 books for adults and children about or concerning Jews and Judaism. For reading in the library only, the library also has reference books, newspapers, and periodicals, including *The Jerusalem Post*, *Commentary*, *Biblical Times*, and *Moment*. The Library Committee is always open to recommendations for books and print newspaper and

periodicals to add to the library collections.

Our online catalog includes all texts in our library collections except periodicals. Nevertheless, you may find that not all catalogued books are available. Many are currently circulating and not returned yet, and others have not been checked out and are not on the shelves. Library Committee volunteers are in the process of identifying missing books, which may have been borrowed without being checked out.

At your home, please look for Beth El library books. If you have finished reading a Beth El library book or have forgotten to return it, please drop it in the marked box outside the library so others may enjoy reading it. Thank you for using our library, and chag sameach. ■

Israel in Focus

A Very Special Hanukkah

BY LARRY SIDMAN

As we look forward to the celebration of Hanukkah, three words tend to dominate: gifts, lights, and miracles. We search for presents for our children and grandchildren. We clean our menorahs, restock our supply of Hanukkah candles, and rehearse the blessings upon lighting the candles. We retell the miracle of Hanukkah, when oil necessary for the rededication of the Temple seemingly sufficient to last only one day lasted eight.

This Hanukkah, these three words take on special meaning. We celebrate the gift of the return of all the living hostages who were kidnapped by Hamas during its barbaric invasion of Israel on October 7, 2023. We celebrate their emergence from the darkness of the tunnel networks in Gaza to the bright light of their physical embrace by their families and their virtual embrace by all Jews. We celebrate the miracle of their survival, for some longer than two years, a testament to their remarkable courage and resilience. The return of the hostages wraps these three words into one unique package that lasts far longer than eight days of Hanukkah holiday cheer. It fills us with gratitude, determination, and hope.

Hanukkah also is special because it highlights the intertwined nature of the religious, historical, and cultural experience of the Jewish people. We observe Hanukkah as a religious holiday, albeit not one mentioned in the Torah or even in the entire Tanach. However, it is intimately linked to Jewish religion because it commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. The Maccabean rebellion was initiated by a Jewish priest, Mattityahu, in response to the decrees of King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, prohibiting Jewish religious practices. Antiochus ordered that a statue of the Greek god, Zeus, be erected on the Temple altar and forbade circumcision of Jewish children. The Maccabees purified the desecrated Second Temple and rededicated it as a holy space where Jews once again could freely practice their religion.

Although the revolt by the Maccabees had distinctly religious objectives, it also had remarkable historical and national significance for the Jewish people. At that time, Judea was ruled by the Seleucid Empire, an offshoot of the most powerful empire of that period, the Greek empire founded by Alexander the Great. Vastly outnumbered and overmatched militarily by the Seleucids, the Maccabees overcame all odds to defeat Antiochus IV and regain control of Judea, Eretz Yisrael. Thus, not only did they regain their religious freedom, but they also regained control of their sovereign territory. They proved that the Jewish people could set aside deep divisions and summon the courage and creativity to defeat an imperialist aggressor and achieve autonomous rule.

They established the Hasmonean Kingdom that endured for approximately 100 years until the Roman annexation of Judea.

Today, Hanukkah endures as a religious and nationalist holiday and as a cultural centerpiece of the Jewish experience, especially in the Diaspora. We gather the family to light the candles in the hanukkiah. We exchange presents, play dreidel games, sing songs of merriment and national victory and strength, and eat sufganiot, jelly doughnuts, and latkes. The faces of our children and grandchildren radiate almost as much brightness as the flaming candles. We display the hanukkiah in our window, signifying that we want to share our happiness with others and that we are not afraid to identify as Jews.

Thinking about Hanukkah holistically through an integrated religious, historical, and cultural lens may provide relevant insights into how American Jews might confront the frightening surge in antisemitism/antizionism from

both the political right and left and how Israeli Jews might address remaining existential threats, albeit from weakened foes. As much, if not more than any other Jewish holiday, Hanukkah reminds us that we are one people sharing a religious, historical, and cultural experience that has evolved and endured for millennia. Eretz Yisrael, where the Maccabees fought to secure their religious freedom and their national self-determination, remains the center of our struggle for true freedom as a people, just as it was 2,200 years ago.

Despite deep differences about a wide range of political and religious issues among and between American and Israeli Jews, we all came together as one people, *am ehad*, in welcoming back to Israel our heroic hostages. We could give ourselves a wonderful Hanukkah present by maintaining that sense of unity and empathetic understanding as we rebuild the kibbutzim and economy ravaged by the protracted Gaza war and reimagine our position as Jews in a less welcoming United States. ■



UPCOMING ISRAEL PROGRAMS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 7:00 PM Film Screening: *Rebound*. Join us for a screening of the documentary *Rebound*. *Rebound* is the story of a basketball team and season unlike any other – an intimate look at the NCAA's only all-Jewish team, as they navigate a year of pain and sorrow post-October 7. With the eyes of the Jewish world upon them, the Yeshiva University Maccabees set out on a mission: to win a championship and bring light to their people in a time of darkness. RSVP at bethelmc.org/rebound-1206.

Beth El in Photos



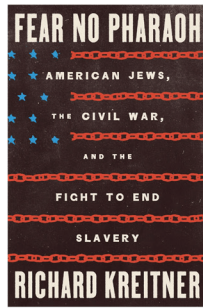
Books & Beyond

Fear No Pharaoh: American Jews and the Civil War

BY ROBIN JACOBSON

In 1860, there were 150,000 Jews living in the United States. How did this small minority, comprised mostly of recent immigrants, react to the fierce national debate over slavery? Richard Kreitner explores this question in his excellent and engrossing book, *Fear No Pharaoh: American Jews, The Civil War, and the Fight to End Slavery*.

Kreitner profiles six American Jewish immigrants to illuminate a spectrum of political and religious views. Three of the six are rabbis, described below. The other three are secular public figures – Ernestine Rose, a powerful orator, who argued for the emancipation of both women and slaves; August Bondi, who joined abolitionist John Brown to fight against slavery in Kansas; and Judah Benjamin, the Confederacy's Secretary of State.

**THREE RABBIS – THREE OPINIONS**

Following Abraham Lincoln's election in November 1860, South Carolina seceded from the Union. Everyone expected that other southern states would follow. In this time of crisis, outgoing President James Buchanan designated January 4, 1861, as a National Day of Prayer.

From his New York City pulpit, Orthodox Rabbi Morris Jacob Raphall proclaimed that the Hebrew Bible endorsed slavery. Moreover, he declared, any abolitionist who called slaveholding a sin was "guilty of something very little short of blasphemy." Raphall acknowledged, however, that the Bible saw a slave as "a person" with "rights" whereas the South "reduces the slave to a thing," subject to abuse.

New York City had strong business ties to the South. Kreitner suggests that Raphall may have intended his sermon as a "last-minute peace proposal." Perhaps the rabbi hoped that the North would tolerate slaveholding if the South committed to more humane treatment of enslaved persons.

From Baltimore, Reform Rabbi David Einhorn denounced Raphall's sermon, calling it a "profanation of God's name" and a betrayal of the Torah's core ethical principles. Einhorn could not fathom how a rabbi who "praises the Lord daily for the deliverance out of [the] Egyptian yoke of slavery, undertook to defend slavery." Two months later, Einhorn was forced to flee Maryland, a slave state, to escape a violent mob angered by his views.

In Cincinnati, situated on the border between the free state of Ohio and the slave state of Kentucky, Reform Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise responded to Raphall and Einhorn's dueling sermons by advocating for a third approach. In his *Israelite* newspaper, Wise published an editorial titled, "Silence Our Policy." He urged Jews to

remain quiet about the bitter North-South conflict, as his newspaper did throughout the war.

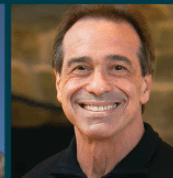
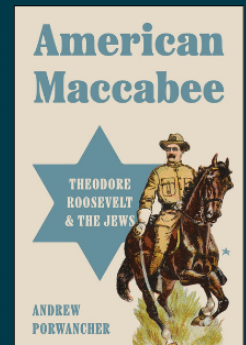
WHY WEREN'T ALL JEWS ABOLITIONISTS?

Like other Americans during the Civil War, Jews divided largely along geographic lines. Approximately 3,000 southern Jews fought for the Confederacy, and approximately 7,000 northern Jews fought for the Union.

Nonetheless, it is hard to understand why American Jews did not uniformly condemn slavery. Many had personally experienced oppression in Europe. Even more, the Exodus liberation-from-slavery story is central in Jewish tradition.

According to Kreitner, Jews who were complicit in or silent about slavery had a variety of motives – financial self-interest, gratitude for acceptance in their new communities, and/or fear of retribution if they criticized a long-established institution. Moreover, abolitionist organizations were hostile to Jews. Anti-slavery societies tended to be fervently Christian, anti-Jewish, and sometimes anti-immigrant.

Feeling vulnerable in their tumultuous times, some Jews made choices that felt prudent to them, if disappointing to Jews of today. Their caution, however, only underscores the boldness and bravery of other Jews, like Rabbi Einhorn, who risked his life to argue for the human rights of enslaved Blacks. ■

**American Maccabee:
Theodore Roosevelt
and the Jews**Dr. Andrew Porwancher
Author of *American Maccabee*Michael Zeldin
Political and Legal Analyst

Sunday, January 11, 11:00 am Eastern via Zoom

Join us on Sunday, January 11, 11:00 am via Zoom as Andrew Porwancher, author of *American Maccabee: Theodore Roosevelt and the Jews*, will be in conversation with TV political and legal analyst Michael Zeldin, host of the public affairs podcast "That Said with Michael Zeldin." Find out more information and RSVP at bethelmc.org/american-maccabee-0111.

MEN'S CLUB



BETH EL MEMBERS ENJOYED A TOUR OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH MILITARY HISTORY TO COMMEMORATE VETERANS DAY. THANK YOU TO MITCHELL SOLKOWITZ FOR SUGGESTING THIS AND FOR TAKING PHOTOS.



UPCOMING MEN'S CLUB PROGRAMS

SUNDAYS, DECEMBER 7, 14, 21, AND 28, 9:30 AM Men's Club Breakfast. Join us after morning minyan every Sunday for a breakfast sponsored by Men's Club.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 7:30 PM Hearing Men's Voices. Beth El men are invited to join us in person or via Zoom as Howard Stein leads a discussion of "Where Do You Find Spirituality?" RSVP at bethelmc.org/hmv-1204.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 7:00 PM Jews and Brews. Join Rabbi Harris at Clear Skies Meadery (15201 Display Court, Rockville) for some schmoozing and casual Jewish learning. Jews & Brews is sponsored by Men's Club, but all Beth El members are welcome to attend. RSVP at bethelmc.org/jews-brews-1217.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 7:00 PM Volunteering at Manna Food Center. Help sort food at the Manna warehouse in Gaithersburg. Go to bethelmc.org/manna-1218 for more information.

WOMEN OF BETH EL

2026 MAH JONGG CARDS ARE NOW AVAILABLE!



Scan the QR code to
order by Friday,
February 6!



\$14 standard size • \$15 large

order: bethelmc.org/mahj

**SAVE THE DATE:
2026 MAH JONGG
TOURNAMENT**

March 15, 2026
at Congregation Beth El

Scan the QR code to
register by March 4!



UPCOMING WOMEN OF BETH EL PROGRAMS

MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1:00 PM AND WEDNESDAYS, DECEMBER 3 AND 17, 7:00 PM WBE Crafters. WBE Crafters is open to anyone who does any kind of crafting. We meet to have a social interaction, get help with our projects, learn something new, and to work on the service project opportunities.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 7:00 PM Mosaic Tile Coaster Workshop. Registration is now closed.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5, 10:30 AM Schmooze & Schmeat. Join Women of Beth El for coffee, a nosh, and conversation. RSVP at bethelmc.org/schmooze-1205.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12 AT 12:00 PM Let's Do Lunch with Women of Beth El. Take a break for lunch with the Women of Beth El! We're meeting up at Chop't in Wildwood Shopping Center (10307 Old Georgetown Road). Please register at bethelmc.org/wbe-lunch-1212 so that we know to save a seat at the table for you.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13 AT 2:30 PM Shabbat Mahj. Calling all mahj players...get your mahj fix on Shabbat! Please join us for once-a-month Shabbat Mahj at Beth El from 12:30 to 2:30 pm. Email Jennifer Powers at powersjams4@gmail.com with any questions. Hope to see you there! RSVP at bethelmc.org/shabbat-mahj-1213.



Beth El Preschool checks all the boxes!

- ✓ new full-day option
- ✓ play-based curriculum
- ✓ parent co-operative model
- ✓ focus on Jewish values and traditions
- ✓ classes for children ages 15 months to 5 years
- ✓ weekly Tot Shabbat for babies and toddlers
- ✓ special programming for parents and families
- ✓ small class sizes
- ✓ six-week summer camp

Contact us today to set up a personalized tour!
(301) 652-2606 ext. 107 ~ preschoolinfo@bethelmc.org
www.bethelpreschool.org



Toddler Programs at Beth El

Tot Shabbat
every Friday at 9:30 am

Celebrate Shabbat at our weekly musical baby and toddler program. This program is free of charge and open to all! No need to register.

Mazel Tots
one day/week at 9:30 am

This weekly playgroup, led by a preschool teacher, is for children ages 15+ months. Children explore art, music, stories, playtime and more! Register online.

Young Family Shabbat
one Friday/month at 6:00 pm

Welcome Shabbat with other families with young children. Our preschooler-friendly service is followed by a family-friendly dinner. Register online.

For more information or to register:
preschoolinfo@bethelmc.org ~ (301) 652-8569 ext. 107



www.bethelpreschool.org



Registration is now open for the 2026-2027 school year!

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

Visit our website to learn more about our warm and welcoming early childhood program!

bethelpreschool.org/admissions

8215 Old Georgetown Road Bethesda, MD 20814
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

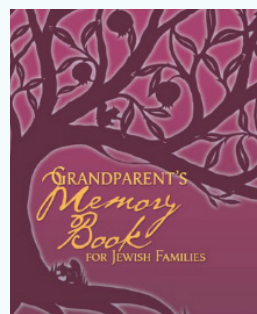


Donate An Item

www.bethelpreschool.org/thebigevent

A Great Hanukkah Gift

Take Time to Remember, Reflect, and Record



The **Grandparent's Memory Book for Jewish Families** provides a way to document and share personal and family Jewish history, values, holiday traditions, and much more. The questions in the book could also be used as prompts for grandparents to talk with grandchildren about their heritage.

The book is \$15 and can be picked up or mailed. For information or to order, visit bethelmc.org/grandparents.

Saturday, December 13

MOVIE NIGHT

Choose from 3 different movies rated G, PG, or PG 13

Kindergarten & Up



HANUKKAH IN VEGAS

AN EVENT FOR BETH EL TEENS
CASINO NIGHT WITH LIVE DJ
SATURDAY
12.06.25
7:30 PM - 10:30 PM

DRESS TO IMPRESS
THINK B-MITZVAH COCKTAIL ATTIRE

BENDER SOCIAL HALL

CLICK TO RSVP



Shabbat Together

A Family Shabbat Service
Friday, December 19, 6:00 pm

Join us for a joyful and engaging Shabbat experience designed especially for children in grades K-5 and the adults who love them. Through music, stories, and age-appropriate prayer, we welcome Shabbat together, followed by a warm, kid-friendly dinner and community gathering.

Cost: \$15 per member, \$18 non-member, \$12 for children ages 6-12, and \$8 for children ages 2-5. No charge for children under 2.

Register at bethelmc.org/shabbat-together-1219 by noon on Wednesday, December 17.



COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

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, December 11, at 7:30 pm, via Zoom. For more information, please contact Judy Spector at 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, email info@bethelmc.org, or call 301-652-2606 for more information. Available dates: December 20 and 27; January 3, 17, and 31. 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 or contact Sue Kanter at kanterdsw@aol.com.

SCHOLAR IN RESIDENCE WEEKEND

Masua Sagiv
Shalom Hartman Institute

FRIDAY, JANUARY 9
6:30 PM: EREV SHABBAT SERVICE
7:30 PM: SHABBAT DINNER AND DISCUSSION WITH MASUA SAGIV

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 12:30 PM
JOIN US AFTER SERVICES FOR A DISCUSSION WITH GUEST SPEAKER MASUA SAGIV



Save the Date: Scholar in Residence Weekend

Join us on Friday, January 9, and Saturday, January 10, as we welcome Masua Sagiv from the Shalom Hartman Institute as this year's Scholar in Residence. Sagiv's scholarly work focuses on the development of contemporary Judaism in Israel, as a culture, religion, nationality, and as part of Israel's identity as a Jewish and democratic state. For more information, visit bethelmc.org/series/scholar-in-residence.

CONTRIBUTIONS

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

Donations from October 17 - November 14, 2025

BY:

Ben and Suzanne Bronheim
Jordan Silverman
Ilissa and Lon Povich and family
Lior Izen
Alexander Bogdanovsky and Elena Shtern
David and Noa Ashman
Myles Brown and Judy Garber
Joel Poznansky
Bernard and Adele Sherman
Jen and Michael Cherner
Lawrence Kaplan
Howard and Holly Stein
Judith Marcus
Jeffrey and Lynne Ganek
David Florin
Lisa Kammerman
Michael Cutler and Dale Rosenthal
Jonathan Landy and Tammy Glatz Landy
Ross and Joy Demain
Craig Mael
Burton Epstein
Jonathan and Deborah Forrest

IN HONOR OF:

Melaveh Malkah sound engineer, by Jerome and Patricia Danoff
My aliyah on the yahrzeit of Charlie Oshinsky, my father, by Bernice Breslau
Our grandchildren, by Bob and Evyann Koenig
Congregation Beth El for participating in the reciprocal High Holiday ticket program, by Barbara and Elliot Rosenthal
Jennifer Weitzner by Rita Newman
Jon Simon by Suzanne Stone
Leonard Bebchick's haftarah reading on occasion of the 80th anniversary of his bar mitzvah, by Julie and Marvin Liss, Leonard and Gabriela Bebchick
Marsha Liss by Suzanne Stone
Max Spiegel on becoming a bar mitzvah, by Sarah Roark
Michael Kieval's honor as Hatan Torah, by Donna Vogel and David Margulies
Nava Blitstein on becoming a bat mitzvah, by Sarah Roark
Rabbi Greg Harris by Adam Chaikin and Alisa Silverman, Joshua Starr
Rabbi Harris for officiating at Alex

Halpern and Allisa Newman's aufruf, by Daphne, Irwin, and Joel Halpern
Rabbi Harris, Rabbi Megdal, and Hazzan Fradkin, by Alfredo and Eugenia Winter
Rabbi Harris for officiating at the unveiling ceremony of our mother, Gloria Derkay, by Derkay family
Rabbi Megdal by Jill Ratain and Jeffrey Brown
Rabbi Sam Fishman's honor as Hatan Bereshit, by Donna Vogel and David Margulies, David and Ruth Musher
Ricardo Munster by Susan Cohen
Sammy Miller, our grandson, reading haftarah, by Elliot and Esther Wilner
Sara Greenbaum on her retirement, by Beryl Neurman, Paul Frieden, Leonard and Gabriela Bebchick, Bernard and Paula Friedman, Marta Wassertzug, Ricardo and Irene Munster
Sheila Bellack on becoming a U.S. citizen, by James Blasingame and Toby Schonfeld, Leslie and James Dellon

IN MEMORY OF:

Eugene Eisenberg, my father, by Allen Eisenberg and Constance Stromberg
Abe Wolf, beloved brother and brother-in-law, by Dotty Wolf and Sid Stahl
Anne Rosensky, mother of Sheryl Miller, by Sheila Bellack, Ninetta Feldman, Stacey Topol
Arlene Jacobs Burns on her yahrzeit, by The Burns/Raskin-Burns Family
Audrey Berger by Maureen and Carlos Pena, Rochelle and Barry Rubin, Regina Avallone, Elizabeth Giles and Stephen Simmes, Jan and Hank Pohl, Levine Chapels, Warren and Lynne Salzman
Barbara Gips, mother of Mike Gips, by Stephen and Susan Sherman, June Eichner and Barry Elman, Sheila Bellack, James Blasingame and Toby Schonfeld
Barney Krosnick by Phyllis and Jeff Lavine
Charles Plotz by Thomas Plotz and Catherine Klion
Charlotte Catz by Donna Vogel and

David Margulies
Erwin Shalowitz by Ann Dieffenbach
Frances Dellon by Jim and Leslie Dellon
Gladys Barish by Rhoda Barish and Michael Polis
Gloria Morris by Leslie and Jim Dellon
Harold Cohen, my father, by Barbara Cohen Lerman and Allen Lerman
Henry Ventura by Jack and Stephanie Ventura
Herbert Golden by Alan Golden and Nancy Grunley
Herbert Heinemann, my uncle, by Howard and Holly Stein
George Barron by Karyl Barron and Jeffrey Moak
Irvin Weiss by Rita Weiss and family
June Marcus, my mother-in-law, by Judy Marcus
Irwin Nepo by Susan and Art Bruckheim, Esther and Elliot Wilner, Helaine Nepo
Janice and Alan Perry, with love from their children and grandchildren, by Robin Finkelstein
Jessie Qiu Arnheim, our daughter-in-law, by Walter Arnheim and Marsha Rehns
Judy Eisen, mother of Lawrence Eisen, by Donna Vogel and David Margulies
Klare Heinemann, my aunt, by Howard and Holly Stein
Manuel Parris, my grandfather, by Ellen Chubin Epstein and David Epstein
Martin Senator, father of Ted Senator, by Bill, Sue and David Kanter, Donna Vogel and David Margulies, Sheila Bellack
Erika Meyerhoff, my beloved mother, by Gabriela and Leonard Bebchick
Allan Bruckheim, my brother, by Art and Susan Bruckheim
Fridl R. Schlesinger, my dear mother, by Eric Schlesinger
George Liss, my father, by Marvin and Julie Liss
Martin Lipman, my father, by Robert Lipman and Nancy Rose
Edna Routhenstein, my grandmother, by Susan Levinson

CONTRIBUTIONS CONTINUED

Nathan Schwartz by Michael and Faith Schwartz
 Phyllis Frank by Wynne and Ron Sitrin
 Raymond Kaufman, my beloved husband, by Rita Liebowitz
 Roberto dos Reis, father of Laura dos Reis, by Ellen and David Epstein, Alana and Greg Aronin
 Rosalind Alpert, mother of Mike Alpert, by Ellen and David Epstein
 Sally Brenner by Howard and Rhea Troffkin
 Seth Fox, brother of Samantha Bender, by Hillary and Scott Berman, Donna Vogel and David Margulies
 Sidney Stahl by Sid Stahl
 Susan Weisbord Newman by Elisha and Josh Frumkin
 Sylvia R. Chapin by Joel and Joan Simon
 Victoria "Vita" Imas-Duchovny, sister of Marta Wassertzug and aunt of Deborah Wassertzug, by Josh Rosenstein and Shayna Bloom, Ninetta Feldman, Sara Greenbaum, Tiarra Joslyn, Esther and Elliot Wilner, Bill and Sue Kanter, Michlean Amir, Donna Vogel and David Margulies, Sheila Bellack
 Virginia Sloss by Stephen and Susan Sherman, Dale Rosenthal and Michael Cutler
 Elmer Blank on his yahrzeit, by Murray and Judy Blank

MAZAL TOV TO

Avery Taicher on her bat mitzvah on October 25. Proud parents are **Rachel** and **Brad Taicher**.
Daphne and **Oliver Friedman** on their b'nai mitzvah on October 25. Proud parents are **Sarah** and **Adam Friedman**.
Luca Ashman on his bar mitzvah on November 1. Proud parents are **Noa** and **David Ashman**.
 December's Milestone Anniversaries: **Stanley** and **Judith Baldinger** (55 years), **Ben** and **Suzanne Bronheim** (55 years), **Sid** and **Janet Getz** (40 years), **Joseph** and **Judy Semo** (50 years), and **Larry Sidman** and **Jana Singer** (15 years)
 December's Milestone Birthdays: **Hattie Goodman**, **Avi Gopstein**, **Andrea Hoffman**, **Benjamin Klubes**, **Abby Miller**, **Varda Nowitz**, **Alan Parver**, **Jerry Pfeffer**, **Rachel Pomerance Berl**, **Adeen Postar**, **Barry Pupkin**, **Richard Rudman**, **Lisa Sorkin**, **Nanci Sundel**, and **Jonathan Weinberg**

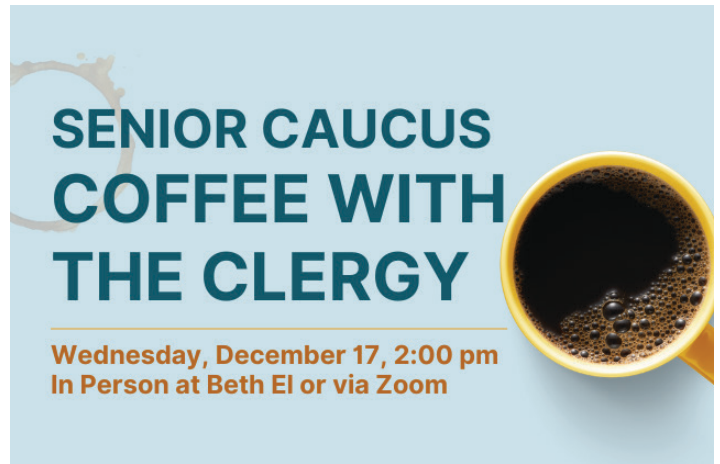
CONDOLENCES TO

Ted Senator on the death of his father, **Martin Senator**, grandfather of **Jared** and **Ethan Senator**.
Laura dos Reis and **Alejandro Guerson** on the death of Laura's father, **Roberto dos Reis**, grandfather of **Sofia** and **Ivan Guerson**.
Laurie Sloss and **Peter Lowet** on the death of Laurie's mother, **Virginia Sloss**, grandmother of **Daniel**, **Adam**, and **Elyse Lowet**.
Hellaine Nepo on the death of her husband, **Irwin Nepo**.
 Family of **Charlotte Catz** on her death.
Marta Wassertzug and **Deborah Wassertzug** and **Josh Kantro** on the death Marta's sister and Deborah's aunt, **Victoria "Vita" Imas-Duchovny**, great-aunt of

Jonah and **Abe Kantro**.

Lawrence Eisen on the death of his mother, **Judyth "Judy" Eisen**, grandmother of **Joshua** and **Eliot Eisen**.
Mike Alpert on the death of his mother, **Rosalind Alpert**, grandmother of **Megan** and **Max Alpert**.

SENIOR CONNECTIONS



Senior Caucus Coffee with the Clergy: Wednesday, December 17. 2:00-3:00 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. Hazzan Fradkin will present an interesting program live in the Family Room. The program will be available on Zoom. Go to bethelmc.org/coffee-1217 to register for in person or to receive the Zoom link, or you can contact Ricardo at rmunster@bethelmc.org or 301-652-2606.

Hanukkah Treats from Sunflower Bakery

Sunflower Bakery's Winter Menu is here starting Thursday, December 4! Enjoy a delicious array of seasonal sweets including sufganiot, the classic Israeli Hanukkah donut. Latkes will also be available through their Culinary menu. Explore all the tasty options at sunflowerbakery.org.

Order Deadlines and Pickups at Beth El: Order by Wednesday night, December 10 to pick up Friday, December 12, 10:30 am–2:30 pm. Order by Tuesday night (midnight), December 16 to pick up Thursday, December 18, 10:30 am–5:30 pm. Beth El can refrigerate Culinary orders until pickup, but all orders must be picked up by the listed end times.

Questions? Contact Sunflower Bakery at 240-361-3698 or info@sunflowerbakery.org

Find Beth El on Social Media



fb.me/congregation.beth.el



youtube.com/BethElMC



instagram.com/bethelmoco