Chanukah Blessings From Congregation Beth Israel
1336 Hemlock Street  By Shlomo Phillips

As we make our way into December we renew our dedication to HaShem, even as our ancestors cleansed and renewed the Beit HaMikdash in Yerushalayim (i.e. the Jerusalem Temple). Accordingly, this month we recall the courage of the Maccabees and we are inspired by their example. Chanukah, the eight-day “Festival of Light,” begins on the eve of the 25th of the Jewish month of Kislev (this year, December 6). Chanukah celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, of purity over adulteration, of spirituality over materialism. Although considered a minor holiday, its timeless message is as relevant today as it has ever been.

More than twenty-one centuries ago, Eretz Y’srael was ruled by the Greek King, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, (Greek: “God Manifest”). He was also known as Antiochus Epimanes, or “the Mad.” Antiochus was born c. 215 BCE and died in Tabae, Iran in 164 BCE. Under his reign the Seleucids (Syrian-Greeks) sought to force the Jews to assimilate through a process known as Hellenization. While most complied, the Maccabees, a small band of faithful Jews, refused to bend the knee. With HaShem’s blessings they defeated one of the mightiest armies then on earth. These Jews successfully reclaimed the Holy Temple for HaShem and restored the worship of the G-d of Israel. Chanukah recalls their victory and the re-dedication of the Jewish people and the Holy Temple. Chanukah therefore calls each of us to renewed teshuvah (repentance) and tikkun olam (active service to “repair the world”) through emuna (active faith) in HaShem.

According to Tradition, after securing the Beit HaMikdash, the Maccabees discovered that only a single cruse of olive oil had escaped contamination by the idolatrous Seleucids. Miraculously, this one-day supply of oil burned in the Temple’s menorah (i.e. the traditional seven branched candelabrum) for eight days, until new oil could be prepared under the strict requirements of ritual purity. In perpetual memory of this miracle the sages instituted the festival of Chanukah.

For over two thousand years the main ritual observance of the festival has been the nightly lighting of the family chanukiah (the special nine branched menorah). We light a single flame on the first night, two on the second evening, and so on until the eighth night, when all eight lights are kindled. Here is the traditional blessing for lighting the candles:

Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haolam asher kidshanu bemitzvotav v’tzivanu lehadlik ner shel Hanukkah. (Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe whose commandments add holiness to our lives and who gave us the commandment to kindle light for Chanukah.)

Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haolam sh’asa nisim la’avoteinu bayamim hahem bazman hazeh (Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe who accomplished miracles for our ancestors in ancient days and in our times.)

On the first night we also add:

Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu Melekh haolam shehehiyanu v’kiyemanu v’higiyanu lazman hazeh (Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe for granting us life, for sustaining us, and for enabling us to reach this day.)

THE CBI SILENT AUCTION IS COMING SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5 AT 6:30—8:30 PM 14TH AND HEMLOCK STREETS, CHICO (for more see page 2)

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The CBI Silent Auction is Coming on Saturday, December 5 at 6:30 – 8:30 PM
14th and Hemlock Streets, Chico
It is Our Biggest Fundraiser of the Year And We Need Donated Items

You can help:

- Gather merchandise for the Auction
- Put aside new or newer items that you don’t need or use
- Ask local businesses you patronize to donate items, certificates, or vouchers
- Think about preparing a special dinner to be bid on
- Have you a particular skill that is valuable?
- Do you have a vacation home that folks might wish to bid on?

The more items to bid on the better our chances of a successful Auction

Introduction letters and charitable tax deduction information for donors are available from Irv Schiffman:
ischiffman@csuchico.edu

Items can be stored at Irv and Nitsa’s: ischiffman@csuchico.edu

AND DEFINITELY PLAN TO ATTEND
During Chanukah we also add the Hallel and Al HaNissim to our daily prayers in order to offer praise and thanksgiving to HaShem for “delivering the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few... the wicked into the hands of the righteous.”

Chanukah customs include eating fried food like latkes (potato pancakes) and sufganiot (doughnuts); playing with the dreidel (a spinning top on which are inscribed the Hebrew letters nun, gimmel, hei and shin, an acronym for Nes Gadol Hayah Sham, “a great miracle happened there” – note that in Israel the fourth Hebrew letter is changed to read “a great miracle happened HERE!” – and the giving of Chanukah gelt, gifts of real or chocolate money, to children.

A traditional Chanukah song called Ma’oz Tzur (Rock of Ages) describes the enduring Chanukah hope:

“Rock of Ages, let our song praise Thy saving power!
Thou amidst the raging foes wast our sheltering tower.
Furious they assailed us, but Thine arm availed us. And thy Word broke their sword, when our own strength failed us!”

Throughout our generations the Torah has inspired and empowered the Jewish people. This month we will be exploring the following Parshat haShavuah (“Weekly Torah Portions”):

December 5  Va’yeishev “And he settled”
Genesis 37:1 - 40:23

December 12  Miketz “At the end of”
Genesis 41:1 - 44:17

December 19  Va’yigash “And he drew near”
Genesis 44:18 - 47:27

December 26  Va’yechi “And he lived”
Genesis 47:28 - 50:26

Join us for the CBI Chanukah Party

Our annual Chanukah Party will be held on December 12th beginning at 5 PM. Everyone is welcome.

Among the events:
The Shul School Children’s Chanukah presentation.
Live music.
Great food and wonderful friends.

Buy At CBI!

The CBI Gift Shop will be open during Religious School on the following Dates; Tues. Dec. 1st and 8th.

It will also be open during the Silent Auction on Sat. Dec. 5th and during the Chanukah Party.

If you can’t make it any of those times, please call Fran Halimi at 521-4238.
As we continue our search for a permanent rabbi, our interim rabbi, David Zaslow, will be with us one weekend a month. On the following weekends he will lead our regular services. If needed, you can contact him at shalomrav@aol.com and make arrangements to speak with him by phone or Skype. His CBI schedule is as follows:

December 10 – 13 (Hanukkah)
January 21 – 24 (Shabbat Shira)
February 25 – 28
March 24 – 27
April 28 – May 1 (Pesach)
May 12 – 15 or June 23-26

(* Dates subject to change, check the weekly emails and/or the CBI website for updated times and events.)

** See our Community Calendar below for more details on this month’s activities and be sure to check the weekly emails for updates.

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**Sponsor a Kiddush:**

Consider bringing or sponsoring an Oneg on Friday night or a Kiddush on Saturday morning! If you don’t have the time to make and bring an Oneg or Kiddush, you can easily sponsor one by donating to the Kiddush Fund (a minimum of $36 for an Oneg or $54 for a Kiddush).

Contact Cheryl Jackson for more details.

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**Help send Chico State students to Israel**

Help a team of Chico State students go back to Israel! Jewish National Fund is sending these students to Israel to help build inviting and exciting communities in the Negev. JNF pays for the students transportation and accommodations while there but they need to raise $950 to participate. No donation is too small. View our page to learn more and donate!

http://support.jnf.org/site/TR/Events/SecurePages?team_id=8980&pg=team&fr_id=1980

Hillel at Chico State is a great way for Jewish college students to connect for friendship, fun outings, Jewish education, and much more!

For information visit facebook.com/chico.hillel or call (530) 879-0870.
Shul School

Shul School students will be performing their Chanukah play December 12th at the CBI Chanukah party. This will be an event not to be missed!

Shul School will have a small class Chanukah celebration on December 8th.

Our youngest students can sing the Aleph Bet Song now and are learning about being a mensch, Chanukah stories, games and rituals.

Our older students learn a new blessing every couple of weeks and are becoming phenomenal Hebrew readers and amazing menschen.

There will be NO CLASSES during the winter break. See ya in 2016!

January preview: Tot Shabbat, Shabbat Dinner and Mishpachah Shabbat on January 8th.

Confirmation Class

In the study of Jewish history from late 19th century to the present, we’re learning about our roots and Jerusalem’s history specifically, considering our connection to people of different faiths who live in Jerusalem.

“Put on your yamaka, it’s time for Hanukkah, So much fun-akkah…”

(The Hanukkah Song Lyrics Adam Sandler)

Join us for our annual Congregation Beth Israel Hanukkah Party, at 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m., Saturday, December 12th, at CBI. We will serve a delicious traditional dinner featuring potato latkes, applesauce, salads and homemade sufganiyots (jelly donuts)!

Live music by our CBI band, dancing, games, Hanukkah treasures to purchase from the Gift Shop, and much more! Bring your menorah and candles to light; it will be the 7th night of Hanukkah. Cost for the evening (including dinner) is $10 for adults, $6 for children 12 and under for CBI members, and $15 for adults and $10 for children under 12 for nonmembers. There will be a maximum cost of $25.00 for a family and children under 2 are free. For more information please call 342-6146.

The CBI Tikkun Olam Torres Shelter Project

CBI’s October Torres Shelter meal for 110 people went very smoothly thanks to a great volunteer team of cooks and servers: Carol Sanger, Cheryl Jackson, Wendy and Calley Marsters, Ahuva Phillips and Nancy Evens.

If you haven’t volunteered for this mitzvah before, please consider giving it a try. We will be returning to the Torres Shelter on December 23rd and would love to see you there.

Please contact Maureen Knowlton if you can help on the 23rd at mknowltonjersey@gmail.com or leave a message at 896-0931. No training is necessary. Children are welcome. It’s pretty fun.

The ever higher numbers at the shelter mean higher costs. Please consider giving whatever you can. Write checks to CBI noting “Tikkun Olam/Torres Shelter” in the memo section.
Getting Ready For The Big Day  By Aaron Arnold

Ever since I left Los Angeles life has been different. Right now my family is one of the very few Jewish families in Redding, California. In fact, we don’t even live in Redding, we live in Palo Cedro, which is just outside of Redding. As for me, I am the only person in my whole school who is Jewish. This was quite the contrary back in Los Angeles, where I used to live. The school I went to, Kadima, was basically 100% made up of Jews, student and staff. There were many Jewish families around. The temple we went to, Temple Aliyah, was huge! It was so big that the temple located in Redding could fit twice in the parking lot. This whole deal was a major change in lifestyle; not only the transition from big city to small country town, but also going from just being another Jew in the crowd to being the only Jew in the school.

Even though the change was dramatic, it was really no big deal. Everyone I deal with regularly at school is fine with my being Jewish, and so am I. Sometimes people ask questions about the religion, like, “So why can’t you eat pork?” My answer to this is “I don’t know... because God told me not to!” It’s nice that everyone is open enough to ask questions, and I am always happy to answer them. It never bothers me when someone is curious about my unique religion.

I am very happy that my family found Congregation Beth Israel, and I am sure that my parents are as well. Everyone there is very kind and supportive to new people, as they have been to us. CBI meets every Friday and Saturday, and that is perfect for my family to fit some dedicated time for God into our lives. The congregation also has been very helpful to me as I prepare for my Bar Mitzvah. They are always giving me honors such as going to the bimah to help lead prayers, and more recently, I have gotten to actually lead the services as practice for the big day. I’m thankful for everything that everyone has done, especially Steven Margolin, who has done extensive work to help me get ready. I also can’t forget about my main Hebrew tutor, Yair Nardi, who was the one tutor I had to keep my Hebrew up and eventually start my Bar Mitzvah training since I moved to Redding.

I have been through a large change in my life, but that is behind me now. I am very happy with where I am today, with my friends at school, at CBI, and with my religion.
My name is Mia and I’m having my Bat Mitzvah at CBI on January 2. I’m 12 and I’m in 7th grade. I was born in Chico and I lived there for nine years. I was only ten months old when I joined CBI. From kindergarten to 3rd grade, I went to Rosedale Elementary School, in the bi-lingual Immersion Program. In fourth grade I moved to El Cerrito and now I go to Tehiyah Day School, a Jewish Day School. My family goes to Netivot Shalom Synagogue in Berkeley. I’ve been studying for my bat mitzvah in the Amitim class there. I’m having my bat mitzvah in Chico because that’s where I grew up and because I love the CBI community. I like the smaller, homey feeling at CBI.

For my mitzvah project, I’m collecting clothes and putting together outfits for children in need of good clothes. I’m donating the outfits to the Esplanade House. You can help by donating clothes and accessories in kid’s sizes. If you have questions or you want to donate, you can email me. My email address is miairenerappaport@gmail.com.

I like writing and when I grow up, I want to be a writer. I currently like writing fanficition (Once Upon a Time, Glee) and I post a lot of it on Wattpad. I like reading (John Green, J.K. Rowling, Rick Riordan, Jesse Andrews) and playing with my dog Lola. I also like to make my own clothes by cutting and re-designing them and using fabric transfer paper. Another thing that I like to do is bake desserts.

My parsha is Shemot. I like this parsha because it’s a really important one. In Shemot, Moses is born and raised in the palace and he sees the burning bush and God tells him to go back to Egypt and free the Hebrew slaves.

I’m really looking forward to my Bat Mitzvah and I hope you can join me on January 2!

Photos: top left, Mia leading the Torah service during Tefillah at Tehiyah Day School; bottom left, Mia with Rabbi Julie at her naming ceremony; right Mia in Santa Monica, August 2015.
Thanks to Irv Schiffman for submitting the article, “Window on Death and Dying.”

Thanks to Jonathan and Fabrice King-Cretôt for sharing your wedding joys with us.

Thanks to Aaron Arnold and your family for sharing your bar mitzvah with us.

Thanks to Mia Rappaport for sharing information on your upcoming bat mitzvah.

Thanks to Irv Shiftman for teaching the NJAP Hebrew course. Great job! We’d love more of this.

Thanks to Steve Margolin for... well, for everything you do for our community!

Thanks to the Hemlock Street Klezmer Band for the awesome music at Aaron’s bar mitzvah.

Thanks to David Frankel for his wonderful guitar music and vocals at our services and special events.

Thanks to Cheryl Jackson for your awesome kitchen mitzvot.

Thanks to the volunteers who assembled and disassembled the sukkah (Oh how we miss Tim Carter!)

Thanks to all the CBI board members and other volunteers for your tireless service.

Thanks to Carla and Nelda for your awesome help with the newsletter.

Thanks to you all for reading and for being part of our ever-developing community!

Amazon.com sales

CBI is participating in the Smiles Amazon.com program. It’s easy to sign up from Amazon.com’s main page. We get a small percentage of your sale, and you get to do a Mitzvah! After you sign up, just start at http://smile.amazon.com whenever you shop on Amazon.
Haverot Happenings

We have had a busy year so far and hope you're enjoying the various events and activities to date.

I want to thank Pam Dakof for hosting our Women's Issues gathering and opening her home to us; and to everyone who helped with food and thought. I am so sorry that I couldn't be there (the first that I have missed) but we were in So. California at a family wedding and a much needed vacation.

December promises to be another great active month. First, don’t forget CBI’s annual Silent Auction on December 5th (a Saturday, beginning at 6:30 PM at CBI). Please, go to your favorite place and ask for an auction item. On Friday, December 4 bring all your donations to the synagogue so we can get them checked in and priced. You can also call Irv Schiffman or Karen Rogers to let them know about your donations and if you need any help in getting them to the synagogue.

December 20th at 2 PM is our Haverot Get Together Potluck. Bring your favorite recipe, make your favorite recipe to share with others, and/or just share time and great conversation with friends of Sisterhood.

January 22 is the annual Women's Shabbat. All interested in participating please contact anyone on the Board. This is a very special and meaningful event. We hope many of you will join us for this heartfelt Shabbat.

Don’t forget that Chanukah is coming and Haverot has the perfect gift for you such as our great Haverot Cookbooks filled with tried-and-true recipes, t-shirts and aprons that will delight any recipient. Please contact Karen Rogers 343-7570 or any of our Board members for pricing and information.

Also, contact Pam Dakof if interested in Mahjong; Maureen Knowlton for our Book Group, and Pam Schneider for crafts. If you have an interest and would like to form a group, please let us know. We will bring the idea to the board and send sign-up invitations to our membership.

Hope everyone had a Fabulous Thanksgiving with family and friends and were thankful for all the wonderful times that are shared with those close to you.

I would just like to take a few lines to express how much we will miss Chelsea Thornton from Sisterhood and being our fabulous secretary. Her husband, Grant, just got a new position and they had to relocate. They now live in Yuba City which is where Chelsea teaches. It is more centrally situated to her husband’s work. I know she will be coming back periodically for visits but we do miss her and her enthusiasm, contributions, and everything she has done to make Haverot a success.

See you in December, Karen Rogers, President
The CBI Newsletter

The Congregation Beth Israel monthly newsletter is a great way to connect us all together. Our congregational newsletter shares scheduling information, words of wisdom from our interim, and, eventually permanent, rabbis, congregational leaders, and from members who contribute to it. Here we share local Jewish events, births, anniversaries, graduations, photographs, bar and bat mitzvot, awards received and bestowed, other joys, historic recollections, and much more. We sincerely encourage YOUR submissions and input.

Please email submissions to cbi@allfaith.com and cc admin@cbichico.org

When possible submissions for the newsletter should be received by the 15th of each month for publication in the next month’s edition to insure inclusion. An accompanying head shot photo is requested but not required when posting articles.

For submissions or questions please contact Shlomo at cbi@allfaith.com.
CBI and the Jews of Butte County  by Shlomo Phillips

Part Two: Go West Young Mensch!

As described in part one of this series, the first Jews to come to the Americas were Sephardim (i.e. Jews from primarily Spain, Portugal, North Africa, and the Middle East). These Jews settled and mostly remained along the Eastern Seaboard. Rosaline Levenson* of Chico State University explains that because so much of Jewish practice and tradition is dependent on communal participation, the Sephardim mainly settled in areas where their friends and relatives from the Old World had already developed communities. This gave them access to synagogues, rabbis, kosher foods, and established services. They were thus able to continue their practice of Judaism in the New World without much difficulty.

As word of the California Gold Rush spread far and wide, many of the Ashkenazim (i.e. Jews from the Rhine River in northern France and western Germany – the center of Ashkenazi life later spread to Poland-Lithuania) began making their way to the New World. Rather than settle in the established communities of the Eastern US, many of them pushed onward into the Wild West.

For frontier Jews of the 19th century, traditional Torah observance was difficult to maintain for the reasons stated above. Because of the lack of established Jewish communities in the Gold Country, coupled with their dreams of quick wealth, the settler Jews were generally not focusing on Old World customs and traditions. Torah still mattered to them of course, but they had more immediate concerns. It was frequently difficult for these Jews to assemble a minyan for their services and traditional rites were all the more uncommon.

Traditionally a minyan is a quorum of 10 Jewish men. In the difficult environment of the Old West of the 1800’s, getting 10 men together for services was often problematic. In part because of this, in 1845 the Breslau convention of the newly created Reform movement began including women in many of its minyanim (over 80% of Conservative congregations now count women as well, while the Orthodox continue to count only men**). Frontier women were of necessity tough and independent minded. It is no surprise therefore that the minhag or tradition of counting women in local minyanim gradually became common practice throughout the West.

I have not managed to find specific evidence that the original Jews of Butte County were consciously embracing the Aufklärung*** (i.e. the philosophical European “Enlightenment” of the 1650s to the 1780s), nor the subsequent uniquely Jewish Haskalah*** movement, sometimes called the Jewish Enlightenment, that ran from approximately the 1770s to the 1880s. However these Ashkenazim definitely demonstrated this essential spirit of their times. Haskalah paved the way for the Reform Movement which is by far the largest Jewish movement in the United States. While CBI is non-aligned and quite diverse, it embraces the essential reform paradigm of its predecessors.

As with most reform movements, originally there was no thought of creating a separate form of Judaism. German Jews such as Israel Jacobson, Abraham Geiger, Samuel Holdheim and Leopold Zunz, sought to fundamentally reform or modernize Jewish belief and practice for all Jews. The leaders of Haskalah assumed that all Jews would welcome their reforms and the new intellectual and personal freedoms they offered. These ‘modern Jews’ could not understand why so many of the traditional or ‘orthodox Jews’ did not join them in their new found freedom. Why did so many of their peers cling to shtetl life (i.e. isolated, predominantly Jewish town life) and what the reformers considered to be ‘outdated’ halachah (i.e. Jewish law) when the Gentiles had finally opened the doors to Jewish equality? For the Orthodox however, this new form of the religion was seen as dangerous assimilation and the two camps began to divide one from the other.

These philosophical differences eventually lead to the creation of the Reform and Orthodox Movements. East Coast Jews, Sephardim and Ashkenazim alike, 

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CBI and the Jews of Butte County  continued from p.11

especially in and around New York, tended to be more traditional/orthodox while the West Coast Jews tended to embrace the Reform worldview. This is, of course an over-simplification. The Jews of Butte County have historically been open to a more personal and accepting form of Judaism, as exemplified by CBI.

To be continued.

References consulted:

* Diggin’s, by the Butte County Historical Society and Professor Rosaline Levenson of Chico State University, 1985, vol.29, no. 3 & 4

** http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/conservative-judaism-in-united-states


http://Jewishvirtuallibrary.org

Some of the early settler families remain within the community and I sincerely invite those with information on our shared history to submit articles for this series, or to share information with me on the topic, including any corrections you notice.

Jonathan and Fabrice King-Cretôt
On their wedding day, October, 9, 2015
On November 21, 2015 Aaron Arnold had his bar mitzvah here at CBI. His mom and dad, brother and sister, uncle and grandparents, along with many other well wishers gathered to celebrate his big day. As Aaron and his family shared with the congregation everyone present was struck by the obvious love that this wonderful family feels one for the other. They were all inspiring!

For those who may not know the Arnolds, here is an brief introduction.

Jerry and Michelle moved their family from Los Angeles to Redding in 2009. Over the first couple of years the Arnolds visited CBI a few times, but did not really plug into the community. As Aaron began approaching bar mitzvah age, they decided they wanted the family to become more spiritually active. After considering the limited options in the area, they decided that CBI was the best fit for them.

Back in Los Angeles, the Arnolds had been involved in a large Conservative Jewish congregation. Aaron’s LA school was completely Jewish, including the staff. Once in Redding, their prior active connection to the greater Jewish community declined. The transition to small town life was difficult for them at first, but the family adjusted. Once in Redding they began a Maaco auto-body shop, a business that was new to them, but one they quickly took to. Michelle works the front desk while Jerry works “in the back with the guys,” an arrangement that works well for them both. Aaron has always been attracted to automotive engendering and plans to pursue a career in it.

Jerry told me that after visiting the few local synagogues, they felt most comfortable at CBI. They all liked Rabbi Julie, our previous rabbi, and felt accepted by the CBI community. They do miss the more traditional approach of their previous congregation however.

Michelle and Jerry met in LA at the home of a mutual friend during a party in 1997. As they discussed these memories, their eyes lit up with fond recollections. At the time neither of them were Jewish. Prior to converting they had two wonderful children, Crystal and Jared. Both were quite young when their parents entered the Covenant.

Like many CBI members, Michelle and Jerry chose Judaism after investing considerable time searching for a spiritual home. Their path to Judaism took many interesting turns as they sought for a religion in which to raise their blossoming family. Eventually they converted through the conservative University of Judaism in LA.

Michelle was raised in a strict Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) family in Korea. Many of her family members are/have been pastors in that Christian denomination. The assumption was that she would remain an Adventist for life, she even attended an Adventist university in Korea. As she matured however, the many restrictions imposed by the SDA and the frequent threats of divine punishment for even minor infractions, made Michelle feel that something vital was missing. This produced doubt and doubt led her out of the Church. She still believed in God, but not in what she had been taught.

Michelle never knew any Jews in Korea and assumed that none were there. All she knew about Judaism was what she had learned through the doctrinal filters of the SDA Church. Once she and Jerry met she began to wonder about the Jews and their beliefs. Once in the US, she found work in the garment district in LA, an industry with a large Jewish presence. Having separated herself from the SDA, she now felt free to ask them questions and to observe their lifestyles first hand. Once she and Jerry were together and seeking a new religious path, the idea of considering Judaism began to appeal to her more and more.

Jerry’s father was Jewish, but he was not raised in a religious household. His birth family was mainly Secular with some connections to the Unitarian...
Meet the Arnold Family  continued from p.13

denomination. Religion therefore did not play a major role in his life, and yet he had long sensed a need for it.

As they spoke of love and marriage, Jerry and Michelle both agreed about the importance of religion. Coming from such different backgrounds religiously, they were open to discovering a tradition that would work for them both, and in which, they could confidently raise their family.

Through their studies of Judaism they both found what they had been missing. Michelle became proficient in Hebrew. With the help of his tutor Yair Nardi, who has been helping him since the third grade, Aaron is progressing wonderfully with his Hebrew fluency and understanding of the religion as well – as we all witnessed at his bar mitzvah. The pride that Jerry feels for Michelle and Aaron’s Hebrew literacy is evident in his voice as he discusses it. Jerry is now studying Hebrew as well and is progressing nicely.

One day Michelle said to Jerry, “What about Judaism?”

“What about Christmas?” was his first thought, but still they pursued Judaism as an option. Learning Judaism is not as easy as learning the distinctive Christian beliefs, and so they enrolled in the University of Judaism. They were far from alone. The first day of class around 80 students were present. The instructor, Rabbi Neil Wineberg, explained that out of those present only about four or five would proceed and actually convert. The rest would take the class, learn a lot, but would decide not to convert for reasons of their own. And that was fine, knowledge is always good. Typically around 5% of those who begin conversion classes will hear something or feel something that they inwardly know to be true. It is as if HaShem were calling them Home. These few “know” that Judaism is for them. About half way through the class Jerry and Michelle agreed that this was the path they would follow and bequeath to their descendants.

As their studies at the University of Judaism progressed, Michelle came to understand that the heart of Judaism is doing the right things, trying to be a better person every day. Rather than fearing divine punishments for sins, she found Judaism to be inspiring and freeing. These teachings empowered her to bless those around her, to try and make the world a better place. She and Jerry had found their niche.

Aaron was the first of their children to be born into the eternal Jewish Covenant. On November 21st he had his bar mitzvah at CBI with Rabbi Zaslow. Aaron says that he is so glad his parents converted and gave him this wonderful gift of Jewishness. Although he is the only Jewish person in his school now, this is a Tradition that Aaron is happy to carry forward. He loves the Jewish values like the way Judaism is open to people of all religions and that it encourages respect for everyone regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or other factors. You can be assured that Jerry, Michelle, Jared, Crystal, and his uncle and grandparents, were all thrilled as they watched Aaron read his Torah portion from the large scroll on the CBI bimah. So were we all.

We are all truly blessed to have this wonderful family as part of the CBI community.

Mazel tov to the Arnolds!
For Jewish Students, Field Trip Is Window on Death and Dying

Excerpted from the NY Times November 13, 2015

BOCA RATON, Fla. — Two yellow buses pulled away from Yeshiva High School here with a couple of class periods still left and the 77 seniors aboard giddy with the words “field trip.” They texted. They posed for selfies. They sent up clouds of chatter about weekend plans.

Then, less than a half-hour later, they walked into a cool, tiled room at the Gutterman Warheit Memorial Chapel and stared at the pine coffins and the inclined metal table used for cleaning a corpse.

“I thought I was cool about death,” one girl whispered to a classmate. “But this ——”

“This” meant more than the contents of the room, which is used at the Jewish funeral home for the body-washing ritual called tahara. It connoted the entire mini-course that she, along with the rest of Yeshiva High School’s graduating class, is taking about the Judaic practices and traditions surrounding death, dying and grief.

Few subjects run more powerfully counter to an American teenager’s innate sense of immortality than a confrontation with the reality of life’s end. The study of death became more common at the college level with the publication of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross’s influential book, On Death and Dying, in 1969. But it is rare that the subject is discussed at the high school level, particularly with an approach that includes fairly explicit instruction in caring for a cadaver.

“As a senior, you’re thinking about going to college, and as a teenager you have this feeling of invincibility,” Daniel Feldan, 17, said the morning after the visit to the funeral home on Tuesday. “I’ve never had that other feeling — of mortality, that life might end soon.”

The 10-hour, eight-session course, titled “The Final Journey: How Judaism Dignifies the Final Passage,” aims for sensitivity even as it provokes a certain degree of shock. Besides going to the funeral home, where they received detailed explanations of washing and dressing a corpse, the students have classroom lessons on topics including the history of the Jewish burial societies known as chevra kadisha, the Talmudic foundations of end-of-life practices, and issues involving autopsy and organ donation.

“When we started the program, there was a lot of hesitation and curiosity at the same time,” said Rabbi Jonathan Kroll, 45, the yeshiva’s head of school. “Jewish tradition for dealing with burial and the process of tahara is not that well known. Even for a lot of well-educated Jews, the chevra kadisha is like a secret society. But once you start talking about the values involved or the practical aspects, there’s a fascination.”

In broad ways, Jewish rituals around death and dying trace back to antiquity, and they have been central to Jewish continuity in the diaspora. The system of chevra kadisha emerged in Central Europe in the 16th century. Initially almost a social institution composed of the elite, chevra kadisha groups transformed over the centuries into an example of communal or congregational voluntarism.

With $21,000 in grants from foundations and religious organizations, a curriculum was devised. Rabbi Kroll tested it last year with half of the seniors in the class of 2015.

“We had pushback,” he recalled, “but it wasn’t serious pushback. Several parents questioned the priority: ‘Why not use the time on something more pertinent, more relevant?’ My impression is that the pushback was about their own discomfort with mortality.”

As for the first batch of students, half of them reported on evaluation forms that, as a result of the course, they would consider being in a chevra kadisha. That response was more than sufficient for Rabbi Kroll to expand the program to this year’s entire senior class. Among the 78 students, he said,
For Jewish Students, Field Trip Is Window on Death and Dying

continued from p.14

only three have had an immediate family member die. (One of those three was excused from the funeral home trip). Even those like Maya Borzak, 18, whose grandfather served in a chevra kadisha, found there was plenty to learn. In fact, the funeral home visit occurred just five days before the unveiling of that grandfather’s headstone, which in Jewish tradition takes place after a year of mourning.

“I always knew that, in general, it’s important to have a Jewish identity, that you’re born a Jew and you need to die a Jew,” Maya said. “You have a circumcision if you’re a boy, you have baby-naming if you’re a girl, and then, at the end, everyone is buried in the same way.”

“Now I know more than the sources for the processes and rituals,” she said. “I know the dignity that is supposed to be provided for everyone who dies. It’s the great equalizer. We’re all in this together.”
Birthday Blessings in December! Happy birthday to:

Heather Fisher  Tamar Lechter  Shaelyn Howard
Clara Shapiro  Isabella Naiman  Monica Zukrow
Dennis Deromedi  Zia Danielle Miller  Carolyn Sanger
Sharonne Edelman  Noah Steinmetz
Jeremy Miller  Ari Edelman
David Zeichick  Nelda Jessee
Mia Rappaport  Peter Straus
Joel Mintzes  Ari Frankel

Please Note: In order to safeguard member privacy, the newsletter will no longer include exact birth dates.

Yahrzeits in December

Jacob Shapiro.......... December 3
Remembered by Deborah Shapiro

Nathan Appel.......... December 4
Remembered by Mendel & Nadine Tochterman

Isidore Altman.......... December 5
Remembered by Michael Mulcahy & Wendy Diamond

Betty Goff.......... December 6
Remembered by Steven G. Margolin

Aaron Passovoy.......... December 6
Remembered by Michael & Carol Passovoy

Eleanor Blumenthal Wolpe.......... December 10
Remembered by Jeremy & Amy Miller

Renate Muehlmann......... December 13
Remembered by Ingeborg Johannsen

David Treston......... December 14
Remembered by Avraham & Julie Danan

Earl Wilson Jessee........ December 16
Remembered by James W. & Nelda Jessee

Fatima Barrie.......... December 20
Remembered by Cheryl Jackson

Louis Megibow.......... December 20
Remembered by Marvin & Bonnie Megibow

Eleanor Wolpe.......... December 22
Remembered by Carolyn Sanger

Rita Katzman-Stern.......... December 23
Remembered by Samuel & Carol Edelman

Dan Miller.......... December 24
Remembered by Jeremy & Amy Miller

Phillip Rubinoff.......... December 24
Remembered by Shane & Karen Rubinoff

Steven Sirmer.......... December 24
Remembered by Renee Everett

Sadie Appel.......... December 25
Remembered by Mendel & Nadine Tochterman

Sybil Breslauer.......... December 25
Remembered by Robert & Donna Greenberg

Mamie Breslauer Tochterman.......... December 26
Remembered by Mendel & Nadine Tochterman

Sharyn Marie Seymour.......... December 29
Remembered by Avraham & Julie Danan

Rabbi William Frankel.......... December 31
Remembered by David Frankel & Janice Gagerman
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<th>Sun</th>
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<td></td>
<td>3:30 pm: Shul School</td>
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<td>4:25 pm: Candle lighting</td>
<td>5:55 pm: Havdalah (72 min)</td>
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<td>7:30 pm: Kabbalat Shabbat Service</td>
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<td>6:30 pm: !! Silent Auction !!</td>
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<td>5:55 pm: Havdalah (72 min)</td>
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<td>Chanukah: 1 Candle</td>
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<td>3:30 pm: Shul School, a small class Chanukah celebration</td>
<td>6:15 pm: Confirm. class</td>
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<td>7:30 pm: Adult Ed. With Rabbi David</td>
<td>4:25 pm: Candle lighting</td>
<td>5:55 pm: Havdalah (72 min)</td>
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<td>7:30 pm: Kabbalat Shabbat Service</td>
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<td>10 am: Torah Service</td>
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<td>5 pm: CBI Hanukkah Party!</td>
<td>5:55 pm: Havdalah (72 min)</td>
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<td>Chanukah: 8 Candles</td>
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<td>3:30 pm: Shul School</td>
<td>11 am: Brunch Bunch</td>
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<td>4:27 pm: Candle lighting</td>
<td>Parashat Vayigash</td>
<td>Parashat Vayechi</td>
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<td>7:30 pm: Kabbalat Shabbat Service</td>
<td>10 am: Torah Service</td>
<td>6:01 pm: Havdalah (72 min)</td>
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<td>1 pm: Final NJOP Hebrew class</td>
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<td>5:57 pm: Havdalah (72 min)</td>
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<td>2 pm: Havurot Social Gathering</td>
<td>Asara B’Tevet</td>
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<td>No Shul School</td>
<td>No Confirm. class</td>
<td>4:30 pm: CBI at Torres Shelter</td>
<td>4:30 pm: Candle Lighting</td>
<td>Parashat Vayechi</td>
<td>6:01 pm: Havdalah (72 min)</td>
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<td>Parashat Shemot</td>
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<td>10 am: Bat Mitzvah of Mia Rappaport!</td>
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<td>5:44 pm: Havdalah (50 min)</td>
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(This information subject to change. Check weekly email or CBI website for most current information)
About Congregation Beth Israel

Congregation Beth Israel (CBI) is an independent, egalitarian Jewish community whose roots date back to 1917. The synagogue is both nondenominational and unaffiliated. Our guiding principle is Klal Y’israel: the unity of the Jewish people. True to that spirit, CBI embraces a diverse membership of Jews from all backgrounds and traditions as well as interfaith families and those exploring Judaism. We serve about 100 families in the greater Chico area with a wide range of programs for toddlers, tweens, teens, adults, and seniors. Our Shul School is very strong, and our Sisterhood is very active.

Services are generally held Friday nights at 7:30 PM and Saturday mornings at 10:00 AM. We also hold services on all major Jewish holidays, and offer occasional classes. Check the weekly e-mail or CBI website (http://www.cbichico.org) to confirm our service schedule week by week.

Whoever you are, YOU are welcome at CBI!

Our ongoing goal is to serve the Butte County Jewish community as both a house of worship and a community center. Our Jewish values include study, Torah, worship, and practice. We are committed to avodah (social action), tikkun olam (repairing the world), gemilut hasadim (acts of loving-kindness), l’dor v’dor (preparing our youth “generation to generation”), and unyielding support for Am Y’israel (i.e. both our people and our nation). Our services include an inspiring mixture of Hebrew and English, traditional and contemporary modes.

As we continue to seek our next permanent rabbi, our very competent lay leadership will be guiding us throughout this transitional period. Rabbi David Zaslow is serving as our interim rabbi and will be here one weekend a month. Be sure and check the calendar for more service times and events.

Do you have questions?
Contact us at admin@cbichico.org.

There is something for everyone at CBI!