



Scroll

CONGREGATION BETH EL

April 23, 2004

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Volume 53

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Inside

Sisterhood News	2
Men's Club News	3
Message from the President	4
Set the Table with Torah	6
Youth Department	12

Events

Rhythm, Roast, and Ruach	5
Kavod Awards	7
Day School Shabbat Dinner	9
Religious School Open House	13
Beit Cafe	17

Message from Rabbi Harris



Judaism maintains a deep appreciation for the fragility of life. Upon waking in the morning, one recites מודה אני לפניך *I am grateful to You, living enduring Sovereign, for restoring my soul to me...* Our tradition believed the soul would leave the body at night and return in the morning. For most, it is uncomfortable to discuss the inevitable – our own death. We use many euphemisms – passing, decline, and moving-on. I am writing this to prompt an appropriate and constructive discussion about something very important, maintaining an “Advance Medical Directives,” also known as a “Living Will.”

“Advance Medical Directives” (AMD) is a general term that refers to your oral and written instructions about your future medical care in the event you become incapacitated and unable to speak for yourself. Too often, I have been at someone’s hospital bed and the family had only general ideas about the extent of medical intervention the ill person wanted. I can assure you that the greatest fear families have in making medical decisions for others is going against the loved one’s unspoken desires. Creating an AMD is a blessing for those who may be charged with making decision on your behalf. By not completing an AMD, we are placing our loved ones in an even more difficult position.

Continued on Page 3

Shabbat Services

Friday, April 23

6:30 pm Friday Evening Service - BR

Saturday, April 24

Tazria-M'tzora: Leviticus 12:1-15:33

7:30 & 9:15 am Shabbat Services

9:15 am Aliza Bran Bat Mitzvah

9:15 am Alyssa Stein Bat Mitzvah

10:00 am Jr. Congregation-BR

10:30 am Nitzanim - APR

11:00 am USY Shabbat - Rm. 209

Friday, April 30

6:30 pm Friday Evening Service - BR

Saturday, May 1

Aharci Mot-K'doshim: Leviticus 16:1-20:27

7:30 & 9:15 am Shabbat Services

9:15 am Joel Levitt Bar Mitzvah

9:15 am Matthew Griff Bar Mitzvah

10:00 am Family Jr. Congregation - BR

10:00 am Learners' Minyan - APR

10:30 am Gan Shabbat - MR

11:00 am Shitufim - Rm. 209

Friday, May 7

6:30 pm Friday Evening Service - BR

7:30 pm Beth El Sings - Shir Ha-K'hilah

Saturday, May 8

Emor: Leviticus 21:1-24:23

7:30 & 9:15 am Shabbat Services

9:15 am Feld Lecture

10:00 am Jr. Congregation-BR

10:30 am Nitzanim - APR

Friday, May 14

6:30 pm Friday Evening Service - BR

8:00 pm Family Shabbat Service - APR

Saturday, May 15

B'har-B'hukkotai: Leviticus 25:1-27:34

7:30 & 9:15 am Shabbat Services

9:15 am Ross Bender Bar Mitzvah

9:30 am Minyan Chaverim - APR

10:00 am Jr. Congregation-BR

10:30 am Gan Shabbat - MR

11:00 am Shitufim - Rm. 209

Annual Congregational Meeting - Tuesday, May 18, 2004, at 8:15 p.m. Members must be current in dues and tuition in order to vote.

Sisterhood News

Tallit Workshop

The Tallit Workshop for this year has ended with another group of creative women making beautiful tallitot. These tallitot were made for a Bat Mitzvah, a granddaughter, and a husband/son-in-law (made by a mother/daughter team) as well as for some of the women themselves.

For the first time this year, a session was devoted to discussing and demonstrating various ways of decorating the atarah. Guest presenters included **Barbara Friedman** on needlepoint, **Evelyn Karson** and **Bernice Breslau** on embroidery, and **Susan Kitt** on fabric painting.

Once again, **Amanda Ford** led this enjoyable and very successful workshop. **Audrey Griff** and **Holly Stein** assisted Amanda.



Melissa Zissman models the tallit she designed and wore for her Bat Mitzvah.



Michele Herman and Ann Herman Fletcher with tallit they designed together.

Rainbow Shelter

Sisterhood would like to thank **Barbara Eisenstein** for organizing the group of volunteers who cooked meals for the Rainbow Shelter during its months of operations this year. The volunteers who participated include

Barbara Friedman
Anita Lieb
Jill Posin
Marcia Kalman
Susan King
Gail Fribush
Rita Kopin
Esther Wilner
Joan Simon
Barbara Eisenstein

Jackie Levine
Barbara Spitzer
Julia Copperman
Sabrina Weinberg
Gail Ross
Pat Danoff
Susan Kitt
Adeen Postar
Evelyn Karson

The coordinator at the shelter is always pleased with our contributions.

Sisterhood's Women's Seder

On Sunday, March 21, about 160 women gathered to celebrate a Seder for Women at Pesach. We read an original Sisterhood Haggadah that had the beautiful

theme of our five senses as perceived and interpreted by the Haggadah Committee. The Women's Seder involved the hard work and long-term dedication of more Sisterhood members than any other Sisterhood event.

The planning and execution of this festive and joyous event was directed by a Seder Committee chaired by **Deborah Leibowitz**, Vice President, Ritual, **Leslie Dellon**, Sisterhood President, **Amanda Ford**, Executive Vice President, and **Karen Lipkind**, Executive Vice President.

Vital to everyone was the Catering Committee headed by the incredible team of **Margie Litman** and **Barbara Friedman**. These women designed and planned the dinner, ordered the ingredients and did much of the cooking for the "Pesadikah" gourmet meal we all enjoyed. It began with plentiful, unusual, and delightful Moroccan appetizers that we noshed upon during the reading of the Haggadah. The meal itself featured a delicious and unusual grilled Chilean sea bass with preserved lemons along with incredible side dishes. Many rich and fabulous desserts followed that. Those recipes were given to each guest, formatted for insertion in the Sisterhood Cook Book. Margie and Barbara attracted a large cadre of helpers who worked anywhere from one hour to three days, including **Kay Klass**, **Pat Danoff**, **Amanda Ford**, **Evelyn Margolis**, **Rhonda Zahler**, **Bea Golfer**, **Barbara Klein**, **Janice Liebowitz**, **Emily Goldman**, **Anita Lieb**, **Alisa Lipkind**, **Karen Lipkind**, **Jackie Levine**, **Rita Kahn**, **Holly Stein**, **Judy Futterman**, **Marilyn Shevin-Coetzee**, **Dora Weinstein**, **Leslie Dellon**, **Jodi Krame**, **Deborah Liebowitz**, **Esther Wilner**, **Lucy Ozarin**, **Janet Getz**, **Evelyn Bitterbaum**, **Judy Goldman**, **Ivy Fields**, **Gabriela Bechick**, and **Toby Rodman**.

The original Haggadah was prepared by a committee that included the Haggadah Chair and chief writer/editor, **Deborah Liebowitz**, with the creative and very able assistance of **Amanda Ford**, co-writer and creator of the wine cup dedicated to the sense of smell; **Sheila Smallberg Cohen**, music coordinator and creative idea-generator; **Evelyn Margolis**, creator of the cup dedicated to the sense of taste; **Karen Lipkind**, creator of the cup dedicated to the sense of hearing as well as publicity for the whole Women's Seder; and **Nancy Rosenthal** co-leader of the Seder with **Holly Stein**, who was also creator of the cup dedicated to the sense of sight.

Barbara Eisenstein, Tzedakah Coordinator, collected \$400 in "Wheat Money" to feed the hungry, donated in Tzedakah boxes on each table. In addition, we also collected toiletries for homeless women. **Janice Liebowitz** collected the 18 shopping bags of donated toiletries and delivered them to the Women's Shelter.

Judy Goldman edited the Haggadah. **Joanne** and **Alisa Lipkind** were our computer consultants. **Eitan**

Sayag, Debbie Leibowitz's ten-year-old grandson, taught her to use Davka, the Hebrew computer program.

The beautiful music set the stage for the Seder and brought ruach and a true sense of spiritual connectedness to all who attended. It was provided by **Sheila Smallberg Cohen** and her Sisters-in-Song and instrument, **Debbie Fink** on violin, **Debbie Glick**, **Sandy Lederman** on piano, and **Barbara Cohen** on guitar.

The Ritual Committee provided beautiful versions of the traditional Seder essentials such as the Seder Plates and the Covers for the Matzah and the Afikomen. **Mimi Tygier** and **Judy Goldman**, the Committee Chairs, were ably assisted by **Gabriela Bebhick**, **Ivy Fields**, and **Toby Rodman**. All those who came noticed the lovely color combinations they created.

With a keen eye for detail, **Pat Danoff** undertook the huge task of setting up the Seder in the Social Hall. She was assisted by **Emily Goldman**, **Rhonda Zahler**, **Karen Lipkind**, **Alisa Lipkind**, **Joanne Lipkind**, **Leslie Dellon**, **Jackie Levine**, **Nancy Rosenthal**, **Evelyn Bitterbaum**, **Gale Dutcher**, and **Deborah Leibowitz**.

Joanne and **Alisa Lipkind** handled reservations. They also greeted the arriving guests with beautifully designed nametags. They were assisted by their mother, **Karen Lipkind**.

The positive reviews have been coming in ever since. If you were there, you know how great it all was. If you missed it, well, better luck next time!

SISTERHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

Put on a Happy Face

Personal Makeovers and Beauty Tips

Faye Mendelsohn Make Up Artist;
Faye Mendelsohn and Associates

Sunday, April 25, 2004

9:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Men's Club News

On Sunday mornings, Minyan is at 9:00 a.m. followed by breakfast at 9:30 a.m. Programs begin at 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, April 25: In honor of Israel's Independence Day (Yom Ha'Atzmaut, April 26), this program is co-sponsored with the Israel Action Committee. **Ambassador Richard Shifter**, retired U.S. Ambassador and Assistant Secretary of State, will speak on "Israel and the U.N."

Sunday, May 2: Annual Men's Club board meeting.

Sunday, May 9: "The Holocaust in Romania," **Dr. Jean Ancel**.

Thursday, May 13, 8:15 p.m.: Hearing Men's Voices, our ongoing monthly discussion group for men only. The topic each month is picked by the person facilitating that month's discussion. Men are invited to attend at any time – there is no requirement for attendance at previous sessions.

Saturday, May 22 – 7:30 p.m. Monthly Shabbat Mincha, Seudah Shilshit, Maariv, and Havdalah Service.

Message from the Rabbi Harris *continued*

When I was a chaplain at Beth Israel Hospital in New York, I was assigned to the surgical intensive care unit. One patient I cared for, Jon, was a young man in his 40s who was in fine general health. Jon's family was devastated when he unexpectedly had a heart attack and could not communicate. Jon's family struggled with the decisions on his behalf. The most difficult part was the uncertainty between his wife and siblings who had different ideas of what Jon would have wanted. An AMD would have given important guidance and assurance to Jon's family. They had wrongly assumed an AMD was for "old" people.

These family discussions and completion of the forms should not wait until someone is sick or in the hospital. You can learn more about AMDs at www.partnershipforcaring.org and from the Conservative Movement at www.rabassembly.org. All the clergy and your personal doctor are available to discuss this as well.

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Message from the President

The "Taste of Beth El" was a remarkable event. The congregation owes special thanks to **Linda Herman, Barbara Klein, Helene Weisz, Barbara Friedman,** and **Vice President Phyllis Solomon** for their extraordinary contributions to its success as well as to all of the organizers, cooks, hosts, schmoozers, and decorators who gave so much of their time and personal resources. The nearly 200 people who attended went home remarking about the exceptional warmth of our synagogue community, the unique opportunity to meet many new people in a relaxed setting, and, of course, the delicious food.

As we count the omer and the days get longer, we're approaching the end of the synagogue's fiscal year. You can honor Rabbi Rudolph and also support Beth El financially by attending "Rhythm, Roast, and Ruach" on May 8. And please join us on May 18 for the Annual Meeting, which will include discussion of the 2004-05 budget, a construction update, and elections.

B'shalom, Brent

Governance at Beth El Update

Last year, as part of the Atid process, a Governance Committee was set up to pursue a new approach to governance at Beth El. Based on discussions with current and past leaders, a large number of congregants not in leadership positions, professional staff, and an external consultant, the Committee identified a number of issues that were impeding open and communicative governance. Among the major issues identified were a lack of leadership training for individuals who want to pursue future leadership roles at Beth El, and having a Board that had become so large that it was impossible for it to be effective.

Accordingly, the Committee and Beth El leadership developed a new plan that puts Beth El at the forefront of synagogue governance (many of the problems we identified at Beth El are found in synagogues all over). Under the leadership of President **Brent Berger**, the Board was reduced in size to include only elected officers and trustees and representatives of the auxiliaries listed in the Constitution. This has resulted in a Board that is much more efficient, effective, and able to better concentrate on policy issues than in the past.

Beth El also set up its first Leadership Development Program under the guidance of **Michael Feinstein**. This attracted over 20 participants and the initial "classroom" phase of the program has been extremely well received. You will be getting a report on that Leadership Development Program in a forthcoming edition of the *Scroll*.

One of the critical issues in governance was to ensure that all Beth El committees could be easily heard by the Board and leadership and that committees with parallel interests could interact, share ideas, and develop new ideas

that might cut across existing groups. To accomplish this, we created six Centers, each under the leadership of a Vice President and one or two Trustees. Each Center pursues specific goals relevant to the Center's core mission. In addition, the Center facilitates communication between the large number of active Beth El committees and the Board.

We started the new governance plan in September 2003. In December, the Governance Committee (chaired by Trustee **Sid Getz**) decided to do a survey of all people who are involved in the new governance procedure (officers, trustees, committee chairs) to determine if the plans we had put in place were working and how we might improve the process. The Committee got excellent responses from those surveyed, and a number of results became apparent. Most notably, we found that although certain aspects of the plan are working effectively, others are not. We found that the newly constructed Board is far more effective than the older larger Board and that some Centers are very active, pursuing the activities of their participant committees, sharing ideas, and developing new ideas that transcend the interests of individual groups.

The survey also clearly showed that the new governance process had not achieved two important goals – communication between the Beth El committees and the Board and the full engagement of all Center VPs, committee chairs, and trustees. We also found that we still need to clearly define specific roles for Trustees in the governance process of Beth El.

At the same time, everyone surveyed agreed that the general construct of the governance plan is excellent and that what we need to do now is "tweak" the plan, provide better training for participants, and enhance communication among all levels of governance from the highest levels of leadership to committee members and from the committee members back up to the leadership. To this end, a 45-day plan will be implemented to address the immediate issues raised by the survey.

So, we are now at the point where we are optimistic that we have the right general governance plan in place and that we have sufficient data from the survey to make appropriate adjustments in the plan and prepare Beth El leadership for its undertaking. We are sharing what we have learned with the Constitution Committee (**Norman Eule**, Chair) so that this committee can use our information to help revise the Constitution so that it is more in line with the governance plan that we have developed.

Finally, the Governance Committee plans to survey the same people in about six months to see if the plan has been improved on the basis of what we have now learned.

We are greatly indebted to the survey participants who provided the information we needed to ensure the success of Beth El's new governance structure.

Arthur N. Popper



Please join us for
Rhythm, Roast, and Ruach

An Evening of Celebration in Honor of

Rabbi Rudolph's 20 Years at Beth El

Saturday, May 8, 2004

at

8:30 p.m.

Havdalah Service

Tribute to Rabbi Bill Rudolph

Champagne, dessert reception, and dancing

Congregation Beth El of Montgomery County
8215 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda, Maryland 20814

Tickets: \$75 per person (\$50 tax-deductible)

Sponsor: \$500 (two tickets, \$450 tax-deductible)

Supporter: \$1000 (two tickets, \$950 tax-deductible)

Benefactor: \$2500 (four tickets, \$2400 tax-deductible)

Hatikvah Circle: \$5000 (four tickets, \$4900 tax-deductible)

See your invitation for details, or call 301-652-2606

The Celebration Begins...

Friday, May 7, at 7:00 p.m.

Welcome Shabbat at a Musical Service

Beth El Sings - Shir Ha-K'hilah

featuring the participation of
Shir Atid, Ahavat Shir, and the Beth El Band

followed by

Oneg Shabbat

Tribute Book

Remember to submit a reminiscence to Rabbi Rudolph's Tribute Book,
The deadline is Wednesday, April 28. See flyer outside the synagogue office for details.

Set the Table with Torah

By Sarah Leventhal Roark

April 24: Tazria-M'tzora

Tazria-M'tzora describes in great detail who is ritually clean and who is ritually unclean. The main explanation for impurity in these portions is the disease of leprosy. The priest was to diagnose the condition and decide how it was to be treated. "Malicious speech" (*Lashon Hara*) was considered the cause of the disease in Biblical times.

Many different types of speech fall into the category of *Lashon Hara*.

■ Talking about another person when what you are saying is true, but not something anyone else needs to know.

■ Saying something true about someone in order to get that person in trouble or hurt their feelings.

■ Telling a lie about another person.

■ Telling a lie about another person in order to get that person in trouble or hurt their feelings.

Are there times this week when you have done any of the things above? Why do you think people like to talk about each other so much? How would you feel if you overheard someone talking about you? A good rule to try to follow to avoid *Lashon Hara* is to never say anything about someone who isn't there that you wouldn't say in front of them. Can you think of any other rules to help your family avoid *Lashon Hara*?

May 1: Aharei Mot-K'doshim

Paraphrased from *Family Shabbat Table Talk* by Barbara Binder Kadden; Copyright © 1999, Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The text: "You shall each revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I Adonai am your God." (Leviticus 19:3) This line is among the section of Torah often referred to as the "Holiness Code."

INTERPRETATION

In the Ten Commandments, we read, "Honor your father and your mother." This is the fifth commandment. In this week's Torah portion, there are two distinct differences in the wording of this commandment. In this version, the word "mother" is written first followed by "father." Perhaps the Torah contained both these versions of this commandment in order to show that we need to treat our parents equally, that neither mother or father should come first in our honor or reverence for them.

The verb used in this second version of the fifth commandment is "to revere" - "yarey" - is in place of "to honor" - "kibud." The Hebrew word "yarey" is somewhat difficult to translate. There are various meanings that we can attach to it including to fear, to respect, to show awe, or to revere. Using each of the

translations, describe how you would relate to your parents in ways that would reflect that translation. What word would you use to describe the ideal relationship between a child and a parent? Why do you think the Torah does not use the word "love"?

May 8: Emor

SUMMARY By Faye Tillis Lewy

This week's parasha begins with God telling Moses "Emor el hakohanim" ("Speak to the priests") to instruct them in the various rules for the priesthood. The first part of the parasha includes rules that prohibit the kohanim from coming into contact with dead people and setting forth who kohanim may marry. The Torah states that kohanim must be free of physical defects and must not perform any of their duties if they are in a state of uncleanness. The portion continues with instruction about who may eat the food that is brought as offerings and about certain physical defects of animals that would make them unfit for sacrifice. The second part of the parasha lists the major holidays and festivals of the Jewish calendar and how they are to be observed: Shabbat - a day of complete rest; Passover - the Feast of Unleavened Bread; Shavuot - the harvest offering of the first fruits; Rosh Hashanah - a day of rest commemorated by blasts of the shofar; Yom Kippur - a day of self-denial, rest and atonement; and Sukkot the Feast of Booths. The third part of the parasha contains commandments to Aaron regarding things that should take place at the Tent of Meeting - Aaron must light the lamps with clear olive oil brought by the people as well as place twelve loaves of bread each Shabbat on a table as an offering to God. Punishments are described for those who kill or maim people or beasts and for those who take God's name in vain.

Table Talk:

1. Both Emor and Kedushim deal with holiness. If being "kadosh" implies acting morally in all your affairs according to the mitzvot, give some examples of ways you could act "kadosh"

a. in your social relations.

b. in your family.

c. in your school or occupation.

2. Leviticus Rabbah notes that "all sevenths are favored in the world" (29:11). Among the favored sevenths, the Midrash includes Moses (the seventh patriarch after Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram), David (the seventh son of Jesse), Asa (the seventh King of Judah), and the Sabbatical (seventh) year. Skim chapter XXIII and see how many more sevens are in this passage. See how many other Torah sevens your group can think of.

Success for Taste of Beth El

What's the recipe for a successful community building event at Beth El? If you attended the March 27 "Taste of Beth El" progressive dinner, you would surely know! We used only the finest ingredients: one award winning idea; 75 stupendous cooks and a bevy of Beth El's best bakers led by **Barbara Friedman**; Sisterhood's *Dor Va' Dor* Cookbook as the exclusive resource for all the recipes; 12 world-class schmoozers to help break the ice and keep the event on schedule; designers and decorators whose creations were feasts for our eyes; and 12 generous hosts, willing to open their homes and their arms to 200 attendees, all of whom came with adventurous attitudes and very large smiles.

Our secret ingredient ensuring the success of the evening, however, was the Taste of Beth El Committee, chaired by **Linda Herman, Barbara Klein, and Helene Weisz**, without whom this spectacular event would have remained only an ambitious idea. Members of the Committee are **Lori Amsellem, Brenda Bregman, Debbie Fink, Gail Fribush, Janet Goldhill, Susan Kitt, Kay Klass, Toby Rodman, Gail Ross, Tricia Sachs, and Janyse Weisz**.



Barbara Klein and Barry Pupkin were among several hosts who opened their homes and offered hospitality and an exquisite dining experience to 200 members during the "Taste of Beth El."



Rachelle Solkowitz, Maria Kaye, and Helene Weisz, in the kitchen (where else!) during the Taste of Beth El event

31st Annual Kavod Awards Sunday, May 23, 2004

Please join the Congregation Beth El Men's Club in honoring these members of our Congregation for their extensive volunteer activities in the following areas:

Darryl Sherman,
Service to Congregation Beth El
Daniel Mann,
Service to the Jewish Community
Bert King,
Service to the Entire Community

Breakfast – 9:30 a.m.
Ceremony – 10:00 a.m.

Cost – \$10 per person

For further information contact
Herb Wiser at 301-530-2615

Please reserve _____ seats for me for the Kavod Award Breakfast and Ceremony. I have attached a check for _____.

Send to:
Congregation Beth El Men's Club
8215 Old Georgetown Road
Bethesda, MD 20814

Transportation for Rabbi Rudolph Tribute on May 8

We recognize that there are several congregants who don't drive, yet very much wish to attend *Rhythm, Roast and Ruach*, the tribute to Rabbi Rudolph on May 8. If you would like us to arrange for someone to pick you up, please contact Sheila Bellack at shellack@bethelmc.org or ext. 306.

And if you are able to provide transportation, please contact Sheila Bellack as well. It will be much appreciated.

Holiday Moments

This is a new section to the *Scroll* giving information about holiday and ritual practices. For further information, look at *The Jewish Holidays* by Rabbi Michael Strassfeld or www.myjewishlearning.com.

Counting the Omer (adapted from www.myjewishlearning.com)

The special period between Passover and Shavuot is called *sefirah*, meaning “counting.” The name is derived from the practice of counting the omer, which is observed from the night of the second seder of Passover until the eve of Shavuot. The counting of seven weeks from the second day of Passover serves to connect the anniversary of the Exodus with the festival that commemorates the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

Tradition says that the Torah would be given to the Israelites 50 days after the exodus. They were so eager for the arrival of the promised day that they began to count the days, saying each time, “Now we have one day less to wait for the giving of the Torah.”

The period of counting the omer has long been observed through certain restraints, because many massacres recorded in Jewish history purportedly took place during this time, beginning with the martyrdom of Rabbi Akiva and his students and continuing through the three Crusades (1096-1192).

Other reasons for sadness have been added in modern times. While the gas chambers of the Nazis operated year round, the Israeli Parliament fixed the 27th of Nisan (day 12 of the omer) as Yom HaShoah, a memorial day for those slaughtered by the Nazis. In addition, the day before Israel Independence Day is called *Yom Hazikaron*, Memorial Day, for those who died in the War of Liberation (days 19 and 20 of the omer).

These sad events were traditionally memorialized by refraining from participation in joyous events during this period. According to the Code of Jewish Law, Orakh Hayim 493:2, no weddings should take place, and it is customary not to cut one’s hair. One interruption in this doleful period is Lag B’Omer, the 33rd day of the counting of the omer, May 9. This day is observed as a semi-holiday, and for most Jews in modern times it concludes the mourning customs. Conservative Jewish practices vary in each community, but the overall tenor of the period is maintained.

Open House

Do you know anyone seeking a warm, vibrant, and welcoming synagogue community? Then point them to Beth El on Sunday, May 2, 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. for our Perspective Members Open House. This will be an opportunity for people to learn about Beth El and meet our clergy and by leadership.

Sixth Grade Trip to New York City

By Dana Reback

It has been said that Conservative Judaism is defined by what it is not: not Orthodox, not Reform, but somewhere in between. The 6th graders of Congregation Beth El have some sense of what being Reform is like because they have a lot of contact in this area with people who belong to Reform synagogues. However, it is less common to have that much experience with people who are Orthodox. On the weekend of February 27-29, twenty-three 6th graders got a better understanding of what it is like to be Orthodox as they went to Flatbush in Brooklyn, New York and spent the weekend in the homes of Orthodox families.

In Flatbush, the students enjoyed many interesting activities, although their experiences were different because boys and girls were kept separate most of the time. For example, on Friday night, the boys had Israeli dancing while the girls went to an Oneg with some 12th grade girls. Also, at synagogue on Saturday morning, men and women sat in separate sections. In fact, the only time when the boys and girls were together during Shabbat was for the farewell dinner on Saturday night and, even then, the two groups stayed on opposite sides of the room.

Over the weekend, the 6th graders learned ways to observe Shabbat in addition to lighting candles and saying prayers. For example, lights could not be turned on or off because that is considered making a fire, which is prohibited on Shabbat because it is work. Also, the use of bar soap is not allowed because converting a solid to a liquid is also considered work. The 6th graders walked a lot, ate a lot, danced, and prayed. All in all, it was a very enjoyable Shabbat (or Shabbos, as they say in Flatbush).

On Sunday, all of the 6th graders left Flatbush and went to New York City to tour Ellis Island. It was fascinating to see where so many of our ancestors entered the United States and to get a glimpse of the Statue of Liberty from a boat as they must have done so many years ago. After Ellis Island, the group made a short stop at Ground Zero where they joined Mr. Nagel in singing Oseh Shalom. Before leaving for home, the 6th graders went to the 2nd Avenue Deli for lunch.

The trip proved to be informative and fun for the 6th graders and it seems to have impacted students in various ways. When one girl got home, she asked her mother if they could start keeping kosher. A boy who went on the trip has not removed his kippah since. Even though the trip might not have so significant an impact on everyone, it was definitely a great learning experience for all.