



Congregation Beth El

A seasonal, egalitarian synagogue affiliated with the Conservative Movement

Founded in 1947

32 Gorton Avenue • Old thColony Beach • Old Lyme, CT • 06371

website: www.synagogueoldlyme.org

Nissan/Iyar 5785

March/April 2025

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*z"l May their memory be for a blessing



Shalom Congregation Beth El members and friends!

Passover is just a few weeks away and, before you know it, Memorial Day will be upon us. Congregation Beth El will be back in business for its 78th season of offering summer programs.

A few of our intrepid Board members have been working during the winter to share the news from our membership. If you know of someone who might enjoy becoming part of our congregation, please speak with a Board member and we will reach out to them.

Our Programming Chair, Jacob Samuels, who brought the fun to our Ice Cream Socials (badminton anyone?), has lined up an excellent summer schedule. We will send out the information as soon as details have been finalized, so that you can add these events to your calendars!

On behalf of our Board members, I wish you a *Chag Pesach Sameach!*

Am Yisrael Chai!

Lisa



Why your vote for MERCAZ matters! See page 8

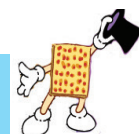
The Talmud states that, "in every generation each of us is obligated to regard ourselves as if we personally left Egypt." Yet today, none of us have ever been trapped in Egypt, nor have we experienced actual slavery.



The rabbis tell us that Egypt is not only a geographical location, but also a state of mind. The Hebrew name for Egypt is Mitzrayim, similar to the word, m'tzarim, meaning "straits or limitations." Our personal exodus from Egypt involves lifting ourselves beyond the narrow straits of financial or health constraints, psychological burdens or physical boundaries.

"Egypt" is relevant long after Passover is over. We must strive to break free and express the potential of our limitless selves!

A Zissen Pesach to all! Chag Pesach Kasher v'Sameach!





Phil Rischall and Family - In memory of Neal Rubinfeld.
 Marian & Rick Hyne - In memory of Neal Rubinfeld.
 Ruth & Andy Spitz and Sharon & Preston Waxenbaum - *Mazal tov* to the Hyne Family on the engagement of Rebecca and Jake.
 The Spitz and Waxenbaum Families - Wishing Mandy Hambly a *refuah sheleimah*, a speedy and complete recovery.
 The Spitz and Waxenbaum Families - *Mazal tov* to Charlotte Lewis on being chosen to play on the Region 1 team in the USA Softball All American Games tournament.
 The Spitz and Waxenbaum Families - *Mazal tov* on the birth of Claire's and Brian's granddaughter, Emma.

Milestones & Mazal Tovs

Charlotte Lewis, daughter of Sarah & Steve Lewis and granddaughter of Carol & Larry Bojarski, was one of 15 players chosen to represent the Northeast Region 1 Stars team to participate in the 2025 USA Softball All-American Games. Their tournament competition will be held in Oklahoma City this August.

Mazal tov to Marian & Rick Hyne on the engagement of their daughter, Rebecca, to Jake Elmetts. Jake is the son of Ronni & Steven Elmetts of Princeton, New Jersey.

Claire Sookman & Brian Cutler celebrated the birth of their granddaughter, Emma Guillon, on January 25, 2025. Her proud parents are Penny & Steven Guillon.

Shabbat and Passover Candle Lighting Times

Shabbat	Friday	April 4	7:21 pm
Shabbat	Friday	April 11	7:24 pm
1 st Seder	Saturday	April 12	8:18 pm
2 nd Seder	Sunday	April 13	8:18 pm
Shabbat	Friday	April 18	7:28 pm
Eve 7 th Day	Sunday	April 19	7:28 pm

Passover Schedule 2025/5785

Thursday	April 10	Search for <i>chametz</i>	evening
Friday	April 11	<i>Chametz</i> burned	10:30 am
	April 12	Stop eating <i>chametz</i>	10:43 am
Saturday	April 12	1 st Seder	8:15 pm
Tuesday	April 13	2 nd Seder	8:16 pm
Sunday	April 20	Holiday ends	8:24 pm
		<i>Chametz</i> may be eaten	9:24 pm



Congregation Beth El's

Tree
of
Life

If you are looking for a meaningful way to remember a loved one, or to commemorate a happy event, mark the occasion by adding a leaf or stone to our CBE Tree of Life! Please speak with **Mindy Jason** at **860-559-7557** or email her at **mindysjason@gmail.com** to arrange the wording and to place your order.

Jewish Websites of the Month



<https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/holidays/pesach-guide-2025>

The Rabbinical Assembly Pesach Guide, found on this site, provides an outline of the policies and procedures relevant to the preparation of a kosher for Passover home.



The Congregation and Board of Trustees offer their deepest condolences to the following:

Barry Rubinfeld - On the loss of his father, Neal Rubinfeld, on December 2, 2024.

*Zichronam livrocha,
May the memory of the righteous be for a blessing.*

One of the most widely observed Jewish rituals is the lighting of a candle and saying the Mourner's Kaddish on the *yahrzeit* of a loved one. Though the literal translation of the Yiddish word *yahrzeit* means "time of year," it is understood to refer to the anniversary, on the Hebrew calendar, of an individual's death.



Remembering is an essential Jewish value. Honoring those who have been part of our lives, the beauty and struggles that they lived, and the hopes and dreams they imparted to us, are part of our own journeys.

In Jewish tradition, giving *tzedakah* on the occasion of a *yahrzeit* is a way to honor their memory by performing a good deed in their name.

To honor a loved one please contact Carol Bojarski at cbojo9@hotmail.com.

Ruth Spitz and Sharon Waxenbaum - In memory of our grandmother, Freda Wiener, at the time of her *yahrzeit*.

Ruth Spitz and Sharon Waxenbaum - In memory of our grandmother, Grace Snyder, at the time of her *yahrzeit*.

Ruth Spitz and Sharon Waxenbaum - In memory of our mother, Adelle Wiener, at the time of her *yahrzeit*.

Congregation Beth El Note Cards



CBE stationery is now available! Blank inside, these 4.25 x 5.5 inch cards are great for a handwritten thank you or for dropping a quick note!

4 cards for \$18
10 cards for \$36

Please contact Carol Bojarski at cbojo9@hotmail.com.

Mail checks made payable to Congregation Beth El to Rick Hyne, 19 Danielle Drive, Wayne, NJ 07470 or Venmo: Congregation-Bethel.

HAPPY
PASSOVER



www.synagogueoldlyme.org

CBE has a website!

Browse through our photo gallery!
Look through past newsletters for holiday recipes, music and books!

Bedikat Chametz - Or Why is a Search for Chametz Conducted on the Night Before the First Seder?

With regard to *Pesach*, it is written in the Torah: *Throughout the seven days unleavened shall be eaten: no leavened bread shall be found with you and no leaven shall be found in all of your territory. And you shall explain to your children on that day, saying: It is because of what the Lord did for us when we went free from Egypt.*"

The *Bedikat Chametz* custom has evolved that, once your home has been thoroughly cleaned for the holiday, the process of removing all *chametz* (leavened food), seen or unseen, concludes with a symbolic search for any last trace of it. This takes place after sundown on the 12th day of *Nissan*, which falls this year on **Thursday, April 10th**.

To make sure that the search is successful, it has become a tradition for adults to hide several pieces of bread/crackers throughout the house to be found and collected by the children. While this is done to engage our children in holiday preparations, all adults, even single women and men living in their own homes, are obligated to carry out this ceremony.



Using a candle (although a flashlight is a safer alternative), those present go from room to room to locate the errant crumbs, which are then swept with a feather onto a wooden spoon. The candle, feather and spoon, and the *chametz*, are placed in a paper bag (or small can) and burned by 10:30 am on Friday morning. While there are a variety of customs as to the number of *chametz* pieces used, just be sure to keep track of how many have been hidden to avoid an unfortunate mid-*Pesach* surprise!

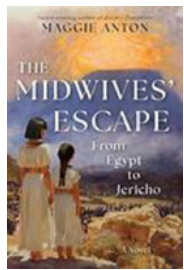
Before the actual search begins, recite this blessing:

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'Olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al bi'ur chametz.

Praised are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has made us holy with mitzvot and instructed us to remove the leaven.



Read...
Relax...
Renew!



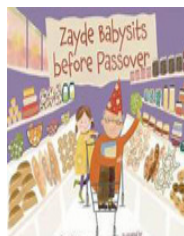
The Midwives' Escape
by Maggie Anton

As Passover approaches, our attention returns to the story of the Exodus. This story focuses on female characters who have often been sidelined in traditional Jewish texts. The author imagines the Exodus through the eyes of an Egyptian mother and daughter, giving the author leeway for interpretation and exploration.



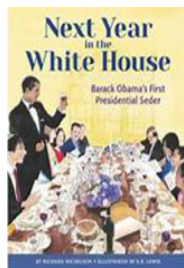
My Matzah
Ann Diamant Koffsky
Ages Baby-2

Young kids will be delighted to share a young koala's excitement as the toddler searches its house for the *afikomen*. The eager joey searches everywhere, even turns upside down, but still needs a little help from Papa to find the missing matzah.



Zayde Babysits Before Passover
by Jane Sutton/illus. by Kate Chappell
Ages 4-8

Ruthie is excited because her grandfather is going to babysit all day while her mother and Bubbe prepare for that night's Seder. This lively, brightly illustrated story is full of zany fun, ending with the family Seder, when Ruthie proudly recites the Four Questions.



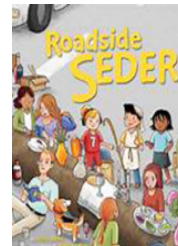
**Next Year in the White House:
Barack Obama's First Presidential Seder**
by Richard Michaelson/illus. by E.B. Lewis
Ages 4-8

In the spring of 2009, President Barack Obama became the first sitting president to attend a Passover Seder at the White House. He was joined by First Lady Michelle Obama, their daughters, Malia and Sasha, and a trio of Jewish White House staffers (who threw together an impromptu Seder the year before while campaigning with Obama). This is a fascinating story of how a Seder inspired a president.



Happy Passover, Edie Rose
by Joy Preble/illus. by Valeria Cis
Ages 4-9

Mia lives with her family in a big city apartment. Every year she looks forward to celebrating the Seder at the home of Edie Rose, a vivacious woman who invites her neighbors from all backgrounds for the festive meal. When Edie Rose breaks her arm baking macaroons, Mia is determined to bring the Seder to her. All the neighbors pitch in with homemade Passover foods. The heart-warming, cross-generational, multicultural story highlights the Seder's theme of welcoming all.



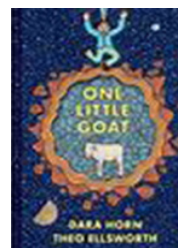
Roadside Seder
by Anna Levine/illus. by Naama Lahav
Ages 5-10

When a huge log falls across a major Israeli highway on the eve of Passover, the traffic jam threatens to upend the Seder plans for scores of families. Determined to have a Seder, Beni transforms the log into a Passover table and asks others to share the foods they have packed in their cars. Lahav's animated illustrations convey the Seder's spirit as Beni realizes it takes a community to solve a problem.



Passover on Everest
by Rachelle Burk/illus. by Craig Orback
Ages 5-10

When Niki Bart was a young girl on a family vacation in Israel, she and her mother hiked to the top of Masada, the ancient hilltop fortress overlooking the Dead Sea. Years later, the mother-daughter team set out to reach the summit of Mount Everest. It's just before the start of Passover and along the way, Nikki tells their Tibetan Buddhist guides that she would miss her family on the holiday. Inspired by the Barts' actual hike, read about the surprise Seder that the Sherpas prepare for her and her multicultural climbing companions.



**One Little Goat:
A Passover Catastrophe**
by Dara Horn/illus. by Theo Ellsworth
Ages 8-up

In this wildly imagined, time-travel graphic novel, a family's Seder drags on for six months. The weary family is stuck in time because a teenager's toddler sister tossed the *afikomen* into a rip in time and the Seder cannot end until it is found. In a nod to *Chad Gadya*, the action starts when a wise-cracking goat appears at their door to escort the teen on his journey, traveling back through Seders of the past, all the way to the original biblical Exodus night. The teen returns to his family's Seder with a renewed appreciation for the endurance of the Jewish people.

BOOKS MAKE GREAT AFIKOMEN REWARDS!



Mushroom Jalapeno Matzah Ball Soup

Mushrooms and jalapenos add a flavorful and festive spin to this comforting soup.

Ingredients

- 1 cup matzah ball mix
- 2 Tbsp parsley, finely chopped
- ¼ tsp grated nutmeg
- ¾ tsp kosher or coarse sea salt, or to taste
- 4 large eggs
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 1 Tbsp sparkling water (optional)
- 2 Tbsp vegetable oil
- ½ cup white onion, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- 2 jalapeño chiles finely chopped, seeded optional, more or less to taste
- ½ lb white mushrooms, wiped clean with cloth, sliced
- ¾ tsp kosher or sea salt or to taste
- 8-10 cups chicken broth

Instructions

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine the matzah ball mix, parsley, nutmeg and 1 tsp salt.
2. In another small bowl, lightly beat the eggs with 1/3 cup of vegetable oil.
3. Fold in the beaten eggs to the matzah ball mixture with a spatula. (Add the sparkling water if you want the matzah balls fluffy, and mix well until well combine.)
4. Cover the mix and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.
5. Bring about 12 cups of salted water to a rolling boil in a large soup pot.
6. Bring heat down to medium and keep at a steady simmer.
7. With wet hands, make about 1-inch balls out of the matzah ball mix and gently drop them into the water.
8. Cover and simmer for about 25-30 minutes.
9. Meanwhile, heat a couple of tablespoons of oil over medium heat in a large cooking pot.
10. Add the onion, garlic, chiles and sauté for 4-5 minutes until they have softened.
11. Incorporate the sliced mushrooms, sprinkle the salt, stir and cover with a lid. Steam the mushrooms for about 6-8 minutes.
12. Remove the lid and pour the chicken broth over the mushroom base.
13. Once it is simmering, incorporate the already cooked matzah balls, without their cooking liquid, and serve.



Fruit Soup Smoothie

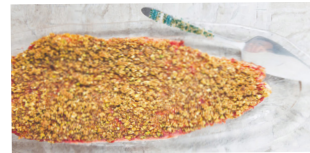
It's nice to have an addition to your holiday meal that is so simple to make and so good for you, too. And, it can be made in advance and frozen!

Ingredients

- 3 cups fresh or frozen cherries, pitted
- 3 ½ cups fresh or frozen blueberries
- 10 cups fresh or frozen strawberries
- 6 cups fresh or frozen chunked mango
- 1 ½ cups no-sugar-added peach juice
- 1 ½ cups no-sugar-added mango juice (not nectar)
- Greek vanilla yogurt, for garnishing (optional)

Instructions

1. Place all fruit and juice into a large pot and cook until fruit is soft, approximately 30 - 40 minutes.
2. Using an immersion blender, puree soup until thoroughly blended. If you like a bit of a chunkier texture, you can puree it less, but then it won't be a smoothie.
3. If desired, you can swirl in a dollop of Greek vanilla yogurt.



Pistachio Crusted Salmon

The salty nuts, the sweetness of the sugar and the kick of the horseradish make this recipe a perfect combination for a quick, easy and incredibly delicious fish.

Ingredients

- ¼ cup horseradish
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup shelled salted pistachios
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp lemon Juice
- 1 whole side salmon (about 2 lbs) or 6-8 slices

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Set aside.
2. Mix the horseradish and mayonnaise together in a bowl.
3. Place the salmon on the prepared baking sheet. Spread horseradish mixture on top and set aside.
4. Crush the nuts in a food processor until they are coarsely ground, but not too fine. Add the brown sugar and lemon juice. Pulse until the mixture looks like wet sand.
5. Pat nut mixture onto salmon, covering the entire surface.
6. Bake for 25 minutes, until the center flakes when pierced with a fork.

Fish & Chips' Surprising Jewish History

You may be surprised to learn that fish & chips was actually a specialty of the Portuguese Sephardic Jews



who fled the Inquisition in the 16th century and found refuge in the British Isles. Celebrity Chef Jamie Oliver referred to this recent New York Times article, adding that, "Dishes evolve, impacted by trade, war, famine and a hundred other forces."

Among those "other forces" are dishes born of religious ritual. For observant Jews, fish is *pareve*, therefore an easy way to avoid *treyf* and possibly include dairy in the same meal. It was especially important for Marranos (crypto-Jews who pretended to be Christian during the Inquisition). They ate fish on Fridays, when meat was forbidden by the Church, and also saved some to eat cold the next day at lunch, to avoid cooking on *Shabbat*.

Frying was natural for Jewish home cooks - think of *latkes* and *sufganiyot* - and as the Jewish community began to flourish in England, it spurred a taste for its beloved fried, battered fish throughout the country. According to Claudia Roden's *The Book of Jewish Food*, Thomas Jefferson tried some on a trip to London and noted that he ate "fish in the Jewish fashion" during his visit.

The official pairing of fish & chips didn't happen until a few years later. Although there are some who dispute it, most authorities say that it is thanks to a Jewish cook, a young Ashkenazi immigrant named Joseph Malin, who opened the first British chippy (fish & chip shop), in London in 1863. The shop was so successful it remained in business until the 1970s.

Who could foresee that fearful Jewish immigrants hiding their true religion and practicing in secret would be responsible for creating one of the most iconic dishes in the United Kingdom. The down-home dish that Winston Churchill claimed help the British defeat the Nazis was the comfort food that George Orwell said helped keep the masses happy and "averted revolution." The dish was among the only foods that was never rationed during wartime because the British government believed that preserving access to it was a way of keeping up morale.

These days, some restaurants are putting a new spin on fish & chips: almond crusted, baked instead of fried, quinoa-coated (**great for Passover!**) and sweet potato fries instead of regular. And those are all fine, Oliver says, "Dishes evolve." But plain old fish & chips endures and probably always will.

Thanks to Ronnie Fein, The Noshier 10.30.19

Congregation Beth El Recycles!

It's time for a little spring-cleaning!



CBE is collecting gently used paperbacks hardcover books, CDs and puzzles (with all the pieces!) to be donated for sale at our Ice Cream Socials/Bookfairs.



They will be gratefully accepted by:
Ruth Spitz at rspz123@yahoo.com

or



Sharon Waxenbaum at shanaaviv@gmail.com
beginning in mid-May.



CBE offers Venmo!

Congregation Beth El
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venmo



Scan QR Code for payment

Donations to CBE by check should be made out to Congregation Beth El and mailed to:



**Rick Hyne 19 Danielle Drive,
Wayne, New Jersey 07470**

Please do not mail donations to our street address of 32 Gorton Avenue, Old Lyme.

VOTE

MERCAZ

2025 U.S. ELECTION

WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS



The 2025 World Zionist Congress election is open and the stakes could not be higher.

Just as Queen Esther’s courageous actions influenced the fate of our people, our votes in the World Zionist Congress election play a vital role in shaping the future of Zionism.

The World Zionist Organization (WZO) provides millions of dollars in funding and support of the programs that enrich your community and Jewish life in the USA. This funding includes Israel education at Ramah summer camps, programming at your congregation and critical philanthropy objectives supporting hostage families, the global diaspora and more.

It’s critical that we don’t let extremist voices limit the voice of the **Conservative Movement**, including our work on environmental and climate initiatives at the WZO here and in Israel.

Vote today at **votemercazusa.org** and encourage your friends, family and neighbors to do the same! Together, we can realize the Conservative Movement’s vision of a safe, secure, Jewish and democratic Israel that serves as a home for every Jew. Any Jewish adult over 18 who lives permanently in the U.S. (and didn’t vote in the last Knesset election) can vote for **MERCAZ USA (Slate 17)** in these elections.



TO VOTE GO TO:

votemercazusa.org

The United States election for the World Zionist Congress is administrated by the American Zionist Movement.

There is a \$5.00 registration fee which covers the administrative costs of running the election.

Voting ends on May 4th



“MERCAZ USA STANDS FOR A PLURALISTIC ISRAEL — ONE THAT UPHOLDS THE RIGHTS OF ALL JEWS TO PRACTICE THEIR FAITH ACCORDING TO THE TEACHINGS AND TRADITIONS OF THEIR COMMUNITY. OUR MOVEMENT EMBRACES A ZIONISM THAT IS INCLUSIVE, DEMOCRATIC, AND COMMITTED TO JEWISH UNITY.”



Rabbi Jacob Blumenthal
CEO of the Rabbinical Assembly
CEO of United Synagogue
of Conservative Judaism (USCJ)

5 Strategies to Interrupt Antisemitism in Everyday Conversation

We all have a responsibility to remember the atrocities of the Holocaust and combat present-day antisemitism to fulfill our promise of "Never Again." Below you will find five strategies to implement in conversations to interrupt all forms of bias. Practice them with friends and families so you are prepared to use them should the need arise.

SPEAK UP.

- "Let's pause the conversation here to reflect on something that was just said."
- "That sort of language/behavior is not acceptable here."
- "Ouch! Let's talk about that a bit more."
- "What I just heard was not OK."

CIRCLE BACK.

- "Something you just said doesn't sit right with me. I need some time to think about it before we continue this conversation."

EXPLAIN IMPACT.

- "Do you know how that symbol makes some people feel?"
- "When you say that, it is really damaging to an entire group of people."
- "Statements like that have a long history of causing pain and fear for entire communities."

ASK QUESTIONS.

- "What do you mean?"
- "What do you know about the history of the language you just used?"
- "Do you mean everyone who is _____, or are you speaking of someone in particular?"

CONNECT TO A HISTORICAL CONTEXT.

- "What you said feeds into an old stereotype. Let's talk about where that comes from..."
- "You may not realize it, but that language has a long history of disrespect, violence and oppression..."
- "Let me explain how that language was historically used to talk about people..."



ADL, FJMC, WLCJ, and USCJ remember the six million Jews whose lives were cut too short by the Nazi regime and their collaborators during the Holocaust.

ADL
FIGHTING HATE FOR GOOD

fjmc
Leadership. Inclusion. Community.



We are Women's League
The National Council of Jewish Women

“New-ish” Jewish Holidays

While Passover is said to be the most observed holiday throughout the Jewish diaspora, the 20th century has brought four modern holidays into our ongoing and developing traditions.



Yom HaShoah - Holocaust Memorial Day

Wednesday evening, April 23/26 Nissan

In 1959, Israeli Knesset designated the 27th day of Nissan as the official day of mourning and memorial for the victims of the Holocaust. It was on that date, in April 1943, that the Warsaw Ghetto uprising began.

Yom HaZicaron - Remembrance Day

Tuesday evening, April 29/2 Iyar



The day before Independence Day is a solemn day of memorial for those who gave their lives to preserve the State of Israel. This was established in 1963.



Yom HaAtzmaut - Israel Independence Day

Wednesday evening, April 30/3 Iyar

Israel became a modern nation on May 14, 1948, 5 Iyar 5708. The official name of the country is *Medinat Yisrael*, *medinat* meaning state or nation.

Yom Yerushalayim - Jerusalem Day

Sunday evening, May 25/28 Iyar



This day marks the unification of Jerusalem after the Six Day War in June 1967.



Yom HaShoah

Sunday Evening May 25th

One valuable aspect of our many Jewish holidays is that they help us remember the history of our people. Events, such as our Exodus from Egypt and the victory of the Maccabees, are recalled with wonder and joy. Others have been tragic and we remember them with great sadness. Yet, we still observe such holidays to keep our memory of them alive.

Less than a week after we conclude our Passover celebration, we observe *Yom HaShoah*, “Day of the Whirlwind.” It is a time set aside to recall the Holocaust and the incredible disaster that befell the Jewish people and others who were murdered.

This year, *Yom HaShoah* begins on the evening of Wednesday, April 23rd. Many synagogues and organizations hold special services and educational programs at that time or the next day. Zoom or streaming information for such programs can be found online.

It is a tradition to light a *yahrzeit* candle, a memorial candle, at sunset that evening and to recite *Kaddish*, the mourner’s prayer, or other appropriate readings such as this one:

*God, full of mercy, this Yom HaShoah, we remember
the six million Jews and the five million other people
murdered by the Nazis’ attempts to
exterminate those who were different,
those who were the other.*

*May their souls forever be sheltered
beneath the wings of Your Divine Presence.*

*Their deaths teach us the grave dangers of
moral failing and indifference to evil.*

*May we honor their memories by
standing up to hatred in our midst today.*

*This Yom HaShoah, we pay tribute to
the righteous ones amongst the nations who
sheltered Jews during the Holocaust,
risking their own lives to save those in danger.*

*Today, as we remember, may we commit ourselves to
building a world free from hatred and persecution,
a world where all may live freely and with dignity.*

(HIAS Yom HaShoah reading)

Place the candle in your window to remind our children and the world that the Holocaust did happen.

*“Let it be an act of remembrance, for that is what the victims
wanted, to be remembered, at least to be remembered.”*

Elie Wiesel

Passover Vocab



Afikomen	Greek word meaning dessert
Chametz	leavened food
Dayenu	“It would have been enough.”
Exodus	Greek word meaning “going out” at Passover it refers to “going out of Egypt”
Haggadah	the telling (of the Passover story)
Matzah	unleavened bread
Mitzrayim	Egypt
Pesach	Passover
Seder	order (as in retelling the Passover story in a specific order)

**Engaging with Torah is like yoga for the mind.
Torah study can help keep our perspectives flexible and our creativity strong.**



1. Holding Multiple Interpretations

Studying Torah is an art. When we read the stories or laws, we can interpret them in so many different ways. Maybe the story of Eve eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden is about her disobedience to Adam or maybe it's about her audacity and desire to make her own choices. Neither idea is right or wrong! Torah study is not about winning a debate. Instead, it means holding our ideas in tandem with other interpretations.

2. Beginner's Mind

Every year, the Jewish people read through the entire Torah. Come fall, it's time to finish the last chapter and start all over again at the beginning, as we've been doing for centuries. By studying this way, we practice what the Zen Buddhist tradition calls "beginner's mind." The text is not new, but we approach the text as if we are first-time students, eager to unpack the wisdom hidden within. We are challenged to set aside what we think we know and opens our mind to learn more.

3. Creative Problem Solving

Sometimes the Torah doesn't make any sense. How is it possible that Moses wrote the Torah if it continues after he dies? The rabbinic practice of *midrash* deals with this by smoothing over the pot-holed Torah with creative stories that explain the text's problems. Why was Abraham chosen to be the father of the Jewish people? Well, the writers of *Midrash* wrote stories from Abraham's youth (including the one where he smashes the idols) to explain why he was such an exceptional human.

4. Connection to World Community and Ancestry

When we read the Torah every *Shabbat*, we connect to Jews all over the world who are reading the exact

same words. When we read Torah on the prescribed schedule, we connect to Jews everywhere. When we tap into this rhythm and calendar, we synchronize with our ancestors and live in their wisdom.

5. Meaning in the Mundane

Some Torah portions are boring. Some have less narrative and more lists and lists and laws and lists. But the more boring the text, the more challenged we are to find its nuggets of meaning. While the boredom of not knowing what to do and the boredom of a Torah genealogy may not be the same, the principle still applies: allowing for boredom means allowing for creative growth.

6. Confronting the Horrible

Sometimes, Torah is dangerous. Portions of the Torah can seem to condemn LGBTQ folks or affirm slavery. Some people would have us skip it or rip it out, but most do not look to Torah for unequivocal righteousness. Instead, Torah is a harsh, but honest, reflection of our world. Studying Torah forces us to confront the ills of our world and demands that after we close our books, we practice *Tikun Olam*, work to heal all life on Earth.

7. Not a Solo Sport

Studying Torah is ideally done in a *chavruta*, small groups of 2 to 5. By studying with others, we learn how to work on a team towards a common goal of understanding the text. We practice disagreeing respectfully and try out new techniques of proposing and defending our ideas. Studying in small groups puts you in the driver seat of your own learning, with co-pilots to help you on your way.



Donations to CBE by check should be made out to Congregation Beth El and mailed to:

**Rick Hyne 19 Danielle Drive,
Wayne, New Jersey 07470**

Please do not mail donations to our street address of 32 Gorton Avenue, Old Lyme.



"The World's Most Famous Empty Space"

"Anne Frank The Exhibition" is on display at the Center for Jewish History in New York City through the end of October 2025. The show takes visitors on a journey through Anne's life, set against the rise of the Nazi regime and the backdrop of WWII.

Since 2011, Ronald Leopold has served as the Executive Director of one of the most visited museum sites in Europe, the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. He has brought this full-scale re-creation of the Annex as a "stand against antisemitism" and Holocaust denial.



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Congregation Beth El

A seasonal, egalitarian synagogue affiliated with the Conservative Movement

32 Gorton Avenue ♦ Old Colony Beach ♦ Old Lyme, CT ♦ 06371

Annual Membership Form

Welcome to our synagogue by the sea! We invite you to join our congregation!

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