

OUR SHIR SHALOM

Congregation Shir Shalom of Westchester and Fairfield Counties

Early Spring 2023 / Adar-Nisan-Iyyar 5783

Join Us for A Very Special Beatles Purim!

Celebrate Purim with our ECC and B'Yachad families.
Members of the community are all welcome!

Sunday, March 5th

10:00 AM to 12:30 PM

11:30 AM -12:00 PM Purim spiel & Megillah reading

\$10 per child/ \$20 for 2 or more

Come in Costume!

**Games, Activities, Costume Parade, Snacks,
Spiel, Megillah Reading and more.
No reservation required!**

Enjoy our Bake Sale in support of a local charity (cash only)!

**We need donations to give for Prom outfits!
(Dresses and tuxedos, accessories,
make-up, and more!)**

OUR WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Join us in-person or via Zoom for all worship services throughout the year.
Zoom links are made available through our weekly congregant eblast.

MARCH - APRIL WORSHIP AND PROGRAM SCHEDULE

March 3	5:45 p.m. 6:45 p.m.	Shir Shalom Cafe <i>Shabbat Across America</i>	April 1	10:30 a.m.	<i>Shabbat Morning Worship, Bar Mitzvah, Nathan Gershner</i>
March 4	9:00 a.m.	Torah 101	April 5	8:30 a.m.	Feast/Fast of the First Born Service
March 5	10:00 a.m. 11:30 a.m.	Purim Carnival Spiel and <i>Megillah</i> Reading (in person and on Zoom)	April 6	9:30 a.m. 5:00 p.m.	<i>Passover Morning Worship</i> Second Night <i>Passover Seder</i>
March 10	5:30 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Tot <i>Shabbat</i> <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Worship	April 7	6:00 p.m.	<i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Worship
March 11	5:00 p.m.	<i>Shabbat</i> Afternoon Worship, <i>Bar Mitzvah</i> , Ben Berman	April 8	9:00 a.m.	Torah 101
March 12	3:00 p.m.	Concert with Julian Schwarz and Marika Bournaki	April 12	6:00 p.m.	<i>Passover</i> Concluding Worship with <i>Yizkor</i>
March 17	6:00 p.m.	4th and 5th grade <i>Shabbat</i> / <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Worship	April 14	7:30 p.m.	<i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Worship
March 24	7:30 p.m.	<i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Worship with special guest Beth Styles	April 21	5:30 p.m. 7:30 p.m.	Tot <i>Shabbat</i> /K and 1st Grade <i>Shabbat</i> <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Worship
March 25	9:00 a.m. 10:30 a.m.	Torah 101 <i>Shabbat</i> Morning Worship, <i>Bat Mitzvah</i> , Lily Zezula	April 29	9:00 a.m. 10:30 a.m.	Torah 101 <i>Shabbat</i> Morning Worship, <i>Bar Mitzvah</i> , Leon Antista
March 31	7:30 p.m.	<i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Worship			

Please join us in-person or online for Shabbat, holiday and festival Services!



TO OUR NEWEST CONGREGANTS

Jeremy Kawaller and Ted Ackerman (Ridgefield, CT)

Pauline Scherer (Danbury, CT)

Steven Axel (Ridgefield, CT)

CONGREGATION SHIR SHALOM OF WESTCHESTER AND FAIRFIELD COUNTIES

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OFFICE HOURS / SHABBAT AND HOLIDAY EMAILS

Our office is generally open Monday-Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and by appointment. If you are unable to visit during our office hours, there is a clear plastic bin on the porch by our main entry door. *Yahrtzeit* candles, prayer books, Jewish calendars and seasonal items are available for home use. Our clergy and staff are eager to connect by email or telephone and (consistent with our Jewish values) our practice is not to check or respond to e-mail on *Shabbat* or other Jewish holy days, festivals or secular Federal holidays, except in the case of a life-cycle emergency. We ask that you refrain from emailing or texting our clergy or staff during those times. We'll be happy to communicate you upon their conclusion. Thank you.

FROM THE RABBI'S DESK

Rabbi David Reiner



My *Purim* column in 2019 declared that Congregation Shir Shalom was going embark on an ambitious project to transform our

Pavilion into an ice arena. At the time there was a heated debate in town over the construction of a private outdoor Winter Club on Peaceable Street in Ridgefield. Many neighbors put up yard signs reflecting their support or condemnation of the plan (a proposal withdrawn long ago). The column may have been a little too realistic, too well written (if I can make that claim!), and too soon/timely, and I may have received a few polite but unhappy email and voicemail messages from congregants, neighbors, and town officials who had clearly not read my explanation of the custom of practical jokes in celebration of *Purim*.

As our Pavilion, dance floor, and Sanctuary resemble a construction zone following significant damage caused by a burst sprinkler pipe in late December, I wonder what could have been! And while I find myself especially busy helping Ashley, changing newborn Gabriel's diapers, and helping Samson and Asher adjust to their new little brother, I thought it would be worthwhile to save myself a little time and resubmit what I hope will be an amusing Rabbi's column. As in 2019, this is fiction. Hopefully the reprinting will

not elicit the same angry calls from congregants and certified letters from town officials!

I am thrilled to share some exciting news...In the midst of prolonged conversations about building a Winter club and outdoor ice rink on Peaceable Street, Congregation Shir Shalom was approached by a local developer to discuss the possibility of constructing an ice arena on our property...

Since the construction of the Pavilion addition in 2006, our congregation has been exploring opportunities for increased revenue with flexible mixed use space that is mostly unused on weekdays...

"Wishing you a Chag Purim Sameach – a Happy and Fun-Filled Purim."

The Pavilion may not appear large enough for an ice rink because the walls are often closed or the room is filled with chairs and tables. From the back wall of the sanctuary to the opposite side of the dance floor is approximately 200 feet, and side to side the Pavilion is 90 feet wide. A standard NHL rink is 200 feet by 85 feet. USA Hockey (Rule 102) states that the recommended dimensions of a "regulation rink" begin at 185x85. Our proposed rink will be a little smaller (to fit inside the current footprint of our building, building around and above the bookcases and hallway outside the Sanctuary, to make room for team benches and some spectator seating), at 175x80, meaning that we will not be able to host any regional playoffs or national

championships. Our rink will be large enough for teams to practice and play, and larger than the other proposed ice rink on Peaceable Street.

The hours of an ice arena generally fit with hours when our building is not in use: most days the rink would open at 5:00 a.m. for practice and remain open throughout the day. The rink would not be available on Friday evenings or Saturday mornings (or if a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* is scheduled), or on Sunday mornings during Hebrew school. We already have ample parking and appropriate lighting in our parking lot.

The rink will be retrofitted inside our current building and footprint, and will include replacement and upgrades to some of our current features. Because no exterior construction is necessary, there is no requirement for a public hearing or debate on our construction plans—the process is no different than if we were to replace an interior wall or renovate a kitchen. Additionally, because Congregation Shir Shalom already has a special use permit from the Ridgefield Planning and Zoning Commission and is an exempt institution, we will not be subjected to the same process and controversy that has hindered and delayed the proposed Ridgefield Winter Club. We are, of course, reaching out to our neighbors for input on our proposed plans.

The rink will be constructed atop our existing foundation and there will be a movable floor that lays on top of the rink when we need to use the

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FROM THE RABBI'S DESK (CONT'D)

Pavilion for other programs (*Shabbat* dinners, *Oneg Shabbat*, High Holy Days, Private events, etc.). The side walls of the rink ("boards") will be removable and lock into place as needed, and will be available for advertising (generating additional revenue, and Congregation Shir Shalom will have final say on any content). The wall pockets that currently house the tracked, moveable divider walls that separate the Pavilion sections will become benches for the players and score keepers (and penalty boxes). The tracked divider walls will be replaced with either a pocket wall or a ceiling mounted vertical wall (like a garage door). The new wall will also help with temperature regulation...We will also be able to rent smaller sections of the rink for a birthday party or multiple concurrent games of broomball.

The exterior walls of the Pavilion will be replaced with tracked glass walls that can be opened. There will be comfortable (but temporary) spectator benches/bleachers on our patio (where we build our Sukkah)...The new glass walls will be more secure and also add natural light and I anticipate that it will change the feel of worship on the High Holy Days, for those who sit in the Pavilion...The wall between the dance floor and the library will be replaced with glass (the library can be used as an additional spectator area)...

A new, gigantic ceiling mounted, drop down LCD monitor will be installed by the Sanctuary. In addition to use as a scoreboard and for replays, the screen can be used for screening movies and presentations. Several

high definition cameras will be installed around the Pavilion (to record games and practices and help with skill development). The developer has also offered to install cameras in the Sanctuary – these will enable us to record worship services and to simulcast services on monitors around the Pavilion and the rest of our synagogue. Congregants who typically sit in the back of the Pavilion will feel much closer to the *bimah* and congregants who get a little restless during services will be able to stretch or check on children upstairs, without missing a prayer. We will also be able to live streaming services and programs (homebound congregants will be able to participate in worship remotely).

Similar to the proposed Ridgefield Winter Club, our rink will operate like a private club. Annual membership will be available to area residents and will include a "Fair Share" fulfillment of Congregation Shir Shalom community commitment (each club member will generate about four thousand dollars of revenue for Congregation Shir Shalom). While club members will have priority, the rink will also be available to the general public for rental, with a portion of revenue going to Congregation Shir Shalom. Members of Congregation Shir Shalom will be able to rent or use the rink at a significant discount. Please consider holding your ice skating birthday party at our ice rink on Peaceable, or an ice skating *B Mitzvah* celebration! Snacks prepared in our upgraded commercial grade kitchen will be available for purchase, generating additional revenue. The developer

has agreed to pay all renovation costs as well as incidental costs (including increases in our utility and maintenance costs and insurance premiums). The rink will technically belong to Congregation Shir Shalom (if the rink was viewed as a tenant, we would need to pay taxes on the generated revenue/rental fees). The developer's company will be contracted to manage the rink and their compensation will be based upon rink memberships and rentals at no financial risk to Congregation Shir Shalom.

Wishing you a Chag Purim Sameach – a Happy and Fun-Filled Purim,

Rabbi David L. Reiner



Join Rabbi Reiner on select Saturday mornings at 9:00 a.m. for Torah 101, *Shabbat* morning study.

We hope you'll join us as we learn together through the study of our sacred texts. Check our weekly eblast and calendar for dates and Zoom information.

MY BUDAPEST JOURNEY

Cantor Deborah Katchko-Gray



I received an invitation to present workshops and master classes on my grandfather's music for a European Cantors Association

convention in Budapest, a few months ago. On many levels, this was exciting, meaningful, emotional, and validating. Budapest was always a bucket list/ dream to visit, with family and cantorial history, as well as the tragic Holocaust history to explore. As an American Jew, I learned much about Hannah Senesh, heroine and martyr as well as Theodore Herzl, founder of Zionism; both from Budapest. There is also Raul Wallenberg and as I discovered, Carl Lutz who played a big role in rescuing Jews during the desperate years of the Holocaust in Budapest.

The family connection to Budapest always intrigued me. My grandfather, Cantor Adolph Katchko, (Aron Kaczka) studied as a cantorial apprentice to the Chief Cantor of Hungary Cantor Lazarus at the grand Doheny Synagogue in Budapest sometime between 1918-1921. At some point my grandfather was the Chief Cantor of the 20th District of Vienna, and of Warsaw at another point. My aunt Helen was born in Budapest May 23, 1915. Their last address was in Sombathelly, Hungary. I also had an uncle, Cantor Josef Kaczka who was a cantor in Debrecin, Hungary, 1920's-1940's.

I was eager to walk in their footsteps

and find any information about their lives while I was in Budapest. My husband and I arrived four days before the conference so we could tour and explore the area. All that the historians could find for me about my grandfather in Budapest was an advertisement for a film he was in, 'The Voice of Israel' that was showed in 1936 in Budapest. By then, he was safely in New York City, keeping his family alive and away from the madness that would arrive with Hitler.

"There are moments in life that just fill your heart to overflowing."

Budapest is a magnificent city; dare I say more beautiful than Paris? My husband and I thought so. Large, elegant boulevards lined with mansions and grand buildings – each one a jewel. The Jewish Quarter was alive with cafes and restaurant, teeming with young people, walking by restored synagogues more magnificent than I imagined. The mix of colors and artistic woodwork, the detail and magnificence of the restored synagogues in the Jewish Quarter is reason alone to visit Budapest. Specifically, the Doheny, Rumbach, and Kacinczy Synagogues are just incredible. Each one full of tragic history, desecrated by the Nazis and now rebuilt to splendor and beauty.

We were interested in the Jewish history so we took three Jewish tours – some overlap but we wanted to keep learning as much as we could. There is so much to absorb, much

was worth repeating.

The most moving of all was the exhibit "Shoes on the Danube". Even walking towards it I was overcome with emotion. Jews were marched to their death, past elegant apartment buildings with balconies and mansions lining the street. How could people watch them being marched and brutally shot into the river? 20,000 Jews were shot over a short period of time into the Danube. How can anyone look at that river and not feel something? The bronzed shoes of varying types, number 60 as symbolic of the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust.

Gazing at the shoes I thought my family would have ended up there if my grandfather had not left in 1921. His brother Josef in Hungary and his family perished as did the rest of the family, totaling 70 members or more. This outdoor



exhibit on the banks of the Danube is a popular one. It is very close to the enormous Parliament building, one of the largest and grandest buildings

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MY BUDAPEST JOURNEY (CONT'D)



in all of Europe. To think these horrors took place near grand buildings and homes; not that many years ago, makes our support of Israel even with its issues, crucial. We can never be vulnerable to genocide as long as there is a Jewish home.

I had read about people taking “sexy” selfies at Holocaust monuments, and I saw it happening in front of me. I was horrified, but also didn’t know the selfie takers connection to the site. There was the child who took the stones people left on the shoes as we leave stones on a gravestone; and threw them in the river. The mother was clueless. The grinning girl who put her Doc Martin next to an old boot that was similar in the exhibit and smiled for the Instagram moment, was sickening. It was hard not to react, but I controlled myself. One never knows the whole story – it was disturbing to see I must admit.

Surprising also, to see the monuments for Hannah Senesh and Raul Wallenberg far from the touristy areas, and out of the way considering

how high they are regarded in our history. Hannah Senesh has a small park, and another memorial in a suburban area, across from the old Nazi prison where she was tortured. We wanted to see anything associated with her, and our guide made a special trip so we could see this. The monument was only a week old! I was shocked it took this long for it to be done!

Raul Wallenberg, also a giant in our history of rescuers, had a monument in an overgrown park, in the middle of a suburban area, no one would be able to find unless you asked. It was shocking to see it not in the Jewish Quarter where walking tours take you to all the important sites. The Russians reluctantly put it up when Hungary was in their control, and it was purposely placed in a faraway location.

So much to think about, and so many questions!

We saw a synagogue that was built inside of apartment buildings, so it would be safer from anti-semitism



in the 1920’s. It was surrounded by apartment buildings and the back of it faced the Danube. The Frankel Synagogue was beautiful inside, a hidden gem literally,

Another very moving visit was to the Glass House, where Carl Lutz,



a Swedish diplomat helped save thousands of Jews. At one point 3,000 Jews lived in this complex of small buildings, meant to be a glass factory. There are books written about this incredible story of bravery and tragedy.

After four days of intense touring and Jewish history, mostly tragic, we had the joy of being in the Rumbach restored synagogue which was rebuilt to be a performance center as well. It is only a few blocks from the Doheny Synagogue which is another essay and lecture.

The Doheny was a bit too liberal with its organ, so the Rumbach was built as a more traditional synagogue. What was amazing was the multi-million-dollar restoration, totally modern, with a museum on the top

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MY BUDAPEST JOURNEY (CONT'D)



floor, modern conference rooms, lockers, Broadway sized restrooms, and a center bima that lowered into the floor!

I was so delighted and honored to be part of this traditional group of cantors from all over Europe, Israel, Canada, and UK. They were completely accepting of me as a woman cantor and showed the greatest respect for my teaching

and singing traditional music of my grandfather's. I gave my first master class and two very talented singers shared pieces of my grandfather's. One a cantor from Israel, and the other a women rabbi from Berlin. Both had incredible voices and souls.

There were two panel discussions "Is Nusach Still Important in the 21st Century?" and "What Has Lockdown Taught Us?". I loved being part of both. There were concerts of course, and I loved singing a Yiddish Theater Medley in one, and the new David *Broza L'cha Dodi* and my father's favorite *Yivarechecha* in the other.

To look out at this restored synagogue, knowing my grandfather sang and studied at the Doheny nearby, and bless this group of traditional cantors from all over the world with a prayer my father sang all his life, was a dream come true. Had my grandfather not left in 1921, my father would not have been born in NYC and I would not be here as well.



There are moments in life that just fill your heart to overflowing.

That's how I felt in Budapest.

Cantor Debbie



CURRENT COVID-19 POLICY

With the winter months upon us, we are spending more time indoors and are seeing Covid-19 infection rates rise again this year, though the intensity of the illness has likely been mitigated for many by vaccine and booster shots. In response to continued and expected infection rates in our area during these months, along with the prevalence of seasonal influenza and ongoing RSV on the advice of our medical advisors, we continue to recommend and encourage masking at Congregation Shir Shalom. This recommendation extends to all visitors, guests, students and staff. Masks are available at our entrance for any visits, including before services and other programs and events.

**Cafe
Shir Shalom
Lite Dinner for
All @5:45 p.m.**

**Craft for Young
Children!**

**Join us
in welcoming
our newest
congregants and
reconnect with all
in our sacred
community!**

**Shabbat
Across
America
Service
@6:45 p.m.**

SHABBAT ACROSS AMERICA

Friday, March 3

Congregation Shir Shalom is joining with hundreds of locations throughout North America in sponsoring this year's annual "Shabbat Across America," a nationwide effort coordinated by NJOP to share the beauty of Shabbat.

Join us in welcoming our newest congregants while reconnecting with all members of our sacred community at our meet and greet lite dinner with a children's craft at 5:45 p.m. The service will begin at 6:45 p.m. and will be followed by a special Shabbat Across America oneg. We invite you to bake or bring a favorite dessert for everyone to enjoy!

Can't be here for Shabbat? Create and share your own Shabbat Across America experience at home or wherever you may be on Friday night.



**CONGREGATION
SHIR SHALOM**
of Westchester and Fairfield Counties

There Is No Charge For Dinner!
Register at www.ourshirshalom.org

CO-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Larry Brooks



In our last Shir Shalom newsletter Jeff Gorelick shared a summary of our president's report from the 2022 annual meeting. This included

highlighting our efforts to replace the synagogue's boiler, applying and receiving funds from the government's Employee Retention Credit (ERC), upgrading our AV equipment, and most importantly, conducting a successful ATID campaign to strengthen our sacred community.

We are now well into 2023 and I'd like to highlight our key priorities for the year. Our first priority is to document a long term strategic plan. This plan will build on the existing key investment areas within ATID and provide a roadmap for how we will pursue our vision and goals. These goals include driving greater retention of congregants, building

a sense of community, increasing engagement, and ensuring we are an inclusive community where everyone feels a genuine sense of belonging. Secondly, we have been blessed to have Cantor Debbie's tremendous service to our community for almost 25 years, but she shared her intent to retire in June 2024. Additionally, as she shared, her vocal cords are in need of rehabilitation for an extended amount of time. Therefore,

"2023 is about building a stronger present and future Congregation Shir Shalom."

this year we will pursue both short term help as well as initiate a cantorial search committee. We wish Cantor Debbie can continue in her current capacity with us indefinitely, but know she has many moments of joy ahead of her in retirement. Lastly, to create a greater sense of community and engagement (in other words, have fun!), we are creating an annual gala in May 2023.

If you are interested in donating your time to plan the event or would like to sponsor the gala, please let Jeff or I know. More to come in the coming weeks.

These three priorities will remain our focus in 2023, however we acknowledge that other things will arise, and they unfortunately did in January. Our sprinkler system malfunctioned, and the building flooded, causing significant damage.

Thanks to Executive Director Mark Block, and several additional staff members and volunteers, we are well into restoring the building.

2023 is about building a stronger present and future Congregation Shir Shalom. I thank all our clergy, staff and volunteers for putting in the hard work to make this a reality!

Larry Brooks

The Reiner Family Continues to Grow!

Rabbi David Reiner, Ashley Heller, Samson, Asher, and Pancake are excited to announce the birth of their son and brother Gabriel (Gavi). Gavi arrived in the evening on Thursday, December 29th, 9lbs, 7.5oz! Ashley and Gavi are doing well and the entire family's hearts are filled with excitement and joy.

We wish them a hearty Mazal Tov on the newest member of their family!



TRANSFORMING FOR THE FUTURE

Mark Block, Executive Director, FSA



I talk with colleagues of mine around the country who ask if transforming a synagogue can work in the 21st century.

Is it possible through the process of transformation to retain the traditions, heritage, and comfort that come from a synagogue's history? While there is no hard data, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence to suggest that the congregation can benefit by looking inward with a critical eye to the future. It can also energize congregants and force the synagogue to re-examine itself.

One example given is by Rabbi Shawn Zevit, a spokesman for the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, who says, "existing members have become more deeply involved in congregational life thanks to transformation initiatives."

Jerome Epstein, former executive vice president of the United Jewish Synagogue of Conservative Judaism says, "The goal of a synagogue is not simply to get people to use it, although that may be the initial goal, the ultimate goal is to affect change in the person and the congregation".

The success rate of synagogues that have gone through a transformative process is varied and those who seek a quick fix generally have limited success. Synagogues that have taken the path of developing a careful, well-thought out strategic and forward focused plan and work to implement

it are more likely to become the vibrant institutions of the next twenty years. At Shir Shalom we will begin the process of developing a strategic plan in the weeks ahead so that we ensure the successes of tomorrow. Shir Shalom does not need to be radically transformed. We do so many things well and our sacred community has been noted for its creativity, active congregant involvement and outstanding clerical presence. But, there is always room for improvement to prevent stagnation. By pursuing long-lasting change rather than just adding

"We should reflect on what we want out of our own personal synagogue experience."

new programs and activities we can seek to institute an approach that will become rooted in the congregation's culture so that we will survive the ups and downs of congregant affiliation, health emergencies and the good and bad economic days we will no doubt continue to experience.

We need to meet the rising expectations we have of ourselves. The synagogue leadership has been talking more about this among themselves these past few months which is what is leading us into a strategic planning process. While it will be difficult at times, the experience of self reflection can create a climate of change that is not one of complacency, but of needed change—and the congregation as a whole will better for it.

However we define our own transformative approach to

congregational thinking and decision-making it remains hard to do, and we still have plenty to learn about how to do it. What is essential for Shir Shalom's growth is to continue doing the best of what we already offer in worship and rituals, education and operations, programming and *Tikkun Olam*—and be sure we do it in a quality way while always striving to do it better.

Let me suggest we all begin to think about the way we can look in the future, and though it may not seem different to today on its surface, through our efforts at Shir

Shalom will set ourselves up for success that will be truly transformative in the months ahead. I suggest that our growth and transformation can involve five core Jewish values:

Enriching spirituality, lifelong learning, enhanced social action, Jewish continuity, and maybe most important of all, engaging community. Every new synagogue program, event or service should exemplify one of these values. We cannot leave it up to a few or hope that it will thrive by the voice of our clergy, lay leadership or professional staff alone. We should reflect on what we want out of our own personal synagogue experience, both spiritual and otherwise. When we are able to take our core competencies, match them to programs, services and engagement, while listening to our congregant's needs, we will experience true growth and a transformation that will carry us well into the future.

B'Shalom,

Mark Block

Join us at Congregation Shir Shalom for a



Passover **SECOND** Seder

We'll Retell the Story of the Exodus and the Relevance of the Seder Traditions Together!

THURSDAY, APRIL 6 @ 5:00 pm

46 Peaceable Street, Ridgefield, CT

ENJOY A DELICIOUS CATERED COMMUNITY SEDER DINNER WITH FAMILY AND CONGREGATIONAL FRIENDS!

Cost: \$52/Adult, \$18/Children, Under 6 Free

Kosher Wine Will Be Available For Seder Blessings. Please Bring Your Favorite Wine To Enjoy With Dinner.
Financial Assistance is Available if Needed. Contact Mark at mblock@ourshirshalom.org.

TO REGISTER FOR THE SEDER VISIT OURSHIRSHALOM.ORG

RITUAL COMMITTEE

There is a lull of religious celebrations between *Chanukah* and *Purim*. A subdued holiday about a month before Purim is Tu B'Shevat, a holiday connected to the agricultural cycle in the Land of Israel. It is often celebrated by eating various fruits and grains grown in Israel. A *Tu B'Shevat Seder* consists of seasonal fruits, vegetables, and grains and usually include grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, dates, wheat and barley. The holiday lends itself to a vegetarian meal. Planting trees is also traditional on *Tu B'Shevat*.

The festivities in March begin with *Shabbat Across America* on Friday the 3rd at 5:45 p.m. Join us in welcoming our newest congregants and reconnect with all in our "Café Shir Shalom" for a "lite dinner."

Crafts for young children will be provided. At 6:45 p.m. services will start followed by a special *Shabbat Across America Oneg Shabbat*. We invite you to bake or bring in a favorite dessert or fruits for everyone to enjoy. If you can't join in person, join us from home or wherever you may be on Friday night. There is no charge for the "lite dinner."

Shir Shalom's *Purim* celebrations start on Sunday March 5th during religious school. The *Purim* carnival will follow. A congregational *Purim* celebration and reading of the *Megillah* is planned for 12:30. Please bring your noisemakers/groggers and join in the fun.

Upcoming events include the



Second Night *Seder* on April 6th. Registration flyer is in this bulletin.

We welcome congregants with ideas and thoughts on how to celebrate the holidays and events to join the Ritual Committee. We would love your input on how to create meaningful experiences for you and your family.

*Michael Salpeter and
Laurie Dubin*

SISTERHOOD NEWS

During the winter months Sisterhood's activities that meet regularly continued strong with wonderful groups of women. Canasta and mah jongg meet weekly on Tuesday and Thursday evenings respectively while the knitting circle meets every other Thursday morning and on the occasional Sunday. In February the knitting circle met in Mount Kisco for lunch and a visit to a local knitting store called Pick Up Every Stitch. Suzanne Sunday and Serafima Dashevskaya run the knitting circle and love sharing their passion for knitting with knitters of all levels.

Sisterhood and friends look forward to our next event which is a pre-

show reception and block of seats together to see Rock of Ages on March 5th at ACT of CT. That same day Sisterhood is thrilled to be



asked to be a part of the Purim Carnival by providing baked goods to raise money for charity. The *Purim* Carnival will also kick off the Sisterhood Prom Drive. Please

take a look through your closets for gently used formalwear (short and long dresses, tuxedos, bow ties, cummerbunds, shoes, clutches and handbags as well as jewelry and hair accessories). These items will be donated to the Community Center of Northern Westchester for high school students in need who are excited to find their perfect prom outfit.

*Margie Gorelick,
Christina Gogish and
Laurie Wolkin*

ADULT PROGRAMMING NEWS

We recently held two very interesting programs.

On January 31st we had a Lunch & Learn session at virtual "Café Israel" with Ofek Moscovich, the Israeli Emissary for our Federation in Fairfield County. We learned a lot about the Israeli Political system and current events in Israel. This is what Ofek wrote in his Federation Newsletter about our event:

"The people who joined me at CSS had a lot of knowledge about Israel and we continued to discuss current events and I answered questions from the crowd.

Everyone brought their own lunch and I tried one of the best Kugel I ever ate and amazing Baba ganoush that reminded me of my home in Israel."

This said, we always try to have food/snacks/desserts that are somehow related to an event theme.

On February 5th, we had an author talk (on Zoom) with Benedetta Jasmine Guetta. Benedetta talked about her new culinary book, *Cooking alla Giudia: A Celebration of the Jewish Food of Italy*. Benedetta's presentation included history of Jews in Italy and how Jewish food was incorporated into some Italian staple foods. We also learned about specific Jewish Italian dishes by geographic regions of Italy. Cantor Debbie was moderating questions. Participants rushed to Amazon.com to reserve a copy of the book so they can start exploring culinary secrets of Jewish Italian food.

On Sunday, March 19th, Ofek will be back at Shir Shalom with a program called "Hummus" – we will taste hummus prepared by Ofek and watch a movie about hummus titled "Hummus the Movie".

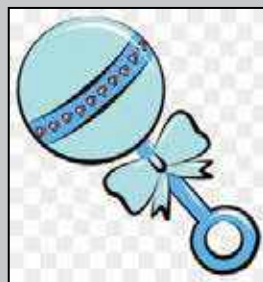
On Sunday, April 16, we are

planning a field trip to New York City. Brad Shaw, an experienced and licensed tour guide, will lead a tour of synagogues of the Lower East Side.

If you wish to join Adult Programming committee please email to adultprogramming@ourshirshalom.org.



WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST CONGREGANT



We are happy to share that the Deutsch family welcomed baby Griffin Deutsch on January 14, 2023. Congratulations Jillian and Michael along with proud big brothers Landon and Austin!



Our ECC became very familiar with the Tu B'Shevat holiday, the Jewish new year for trees. Their creativity, regardless of the holiday is always exciting to see!

BROTHERHOOD UPDATE



We will be breathing new life into the Shir Shalom Brotherhood in 2023 and hope you can join us in a few recreational and service oriented activities this year!

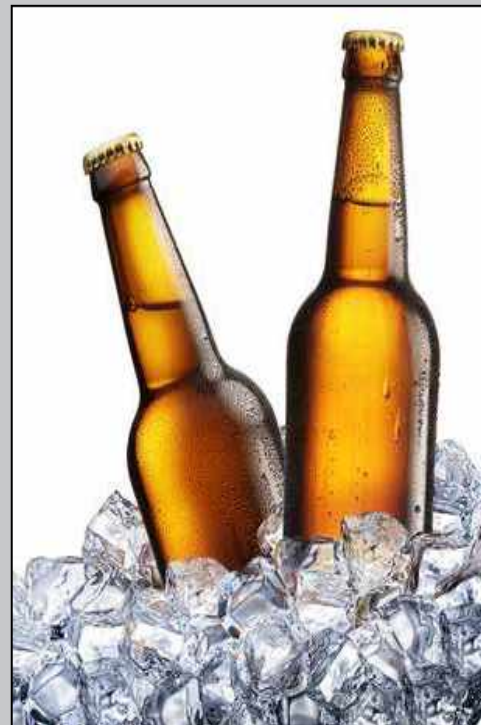
Our first event will be on opening night of Round One of the NCAA tournament, Thursday March 16th. We will have appetizers and drinks, catch up and watch the basketball

games. I've reserved the bar area at Barbarie's Grill. Be on the lookout for an email invitation shortly.

The second event, an Israeli beer tasting, will take place on Wednesday, May 10th at Shir Shalom. This will be hosted by Ofek Moscovich, the Israeli Emissary for our Federation in Fairfield County. Be sure to save the date in your calendars.

If you have any ideas for future events or would like to be involved in planning, don't hesitate to reach out via email: joshua.krellenstein@gmail.com.

Josh Krellenstein



SOCIAL ACTION

We will hold our annual Mitzvah Day event on Sunday, May 7. We would like to encourage people to volunteer to be activity leaders for the various charitable projects we will do that day. This is a community-building event where more than 100 volunteers, kids and adults, gather at the temple to participate in projects such as baking cookies for the DDHC, tying fleece blankets for the Kids in Crisis organization, braiding fleece dog toys for the SPCA, filling and decorating flower pots for the nursing homes and numerous other projects. We begin the afternoon with pizza lunch and wrap up with a make-your-own ice cream sundaes and a slide show of our activities. This is the first Mitzvah Day since the pandemic, so we hope to have a big turnout of volunteers! We would



appreciate it if the people who led activities at our previous mitzvah days would email to let us know if you would be willing to lead the activity again – at Drdebbielav@gmail.com. Or you can email us at SocialAction@OurShirShalom.org. New volunteers are greatly appreciated – this is a great way for new members to get

involved (generally very little time commitment outside of that afternoon).

Our other on-going project involves preparing a meal for the Dorothy Day Hospitality Center in Danbury. Once a quarter, Deb Gershner leads a group who purchases and prepares a meal for this vital "soup kitchen." This will be the first week in March and the first week in June. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Debrah.gershner@gmail.com. Another congregant heads up an effort to make a monthly meal for the DDHC. If interested in helping, please contact Jeff at jhubsher@comcast.net.

Hope to see you all at Mitzvah Day on Sunday, May 7!

Debbie Lavin

NEWS FROM THE B'YACHAD RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Cathy Deutchman, Director



When I speak with prospective families about having their child join *B'Yachad*, most people tell me they want

their child to have Jewish friends and to know that they're Jewish. The Purim story is rich with the importance of identity. As most of us already know, Esther eventually reveals her Jewish identity to King Achashverosh. She risks her life in doing so and is rewarded when he

saves her and her people from ruin. What a radically brave act!

Raising a child to have a strong Jewish identity is a team effort. At *B'Yachad* the teachers and *Madrachim* serve as role models as Jews who

"Raising a child to have a strong Jewish identity is a team effort. "

identify with their Jewishness. As a parent or grandparent, your relationship to Judaism also shapes your child's Jewish identity. Our actions speak volumes, and our

children watch how we celebrate, grieve, and seek moments of reflection. Working as partners, *B'Yachad* and parents will help the next generation of Jews feel proud of their heritage so they too might do what Esther did: have the courage to reveal one's Jewish identity even when it's risky.

Join us for the *Purim* Carnival and *Megillah* reading on Sunday, March 5th and show by example how to celebrate this joyful holiday!

Chag Purim Sameach/Happy Purim,

Cathy Deutchman



OUR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

Sarah Denyer, Director



Winter at the ECC hasn't been as snow-filled as we would like, but we are having fun in other ways! In

January, we

learned about Martin Luther King, Jr. and his message of kindness and wintertime topics as well. Our Pre-K studied Polar Bears and Brown Bears, including the differences between the two and how they survive the cold winter. Purple Room friends set up a teddy bear hospital to care for those who picked up winter illnesses. The Yellow Room students made pretend snow for their sensory table and had fun burying toys in the "snow".

In February we explored *Tu B'Shevat* and the importance of trees! When the students were asked what they knew about trees the responses included that trees give us syrup, shade, wind, oxygen, fruit, paper, leaves and wood. Our literature helped us investigate the parts of a tree as well as how to plant and care

"We are still hoping for some substantial snowfall in which to frolic..."

for trees. On an unseasonably warm Friday, February 10, the ECC had an outdoor *Tu B'Shevat* celebration during *Shabbat*. ECC parents joined their children for banana and chocolate roasting, creating an ECC Bead Tree, and planting parsley to hopefully use on *Seder Plates*! We

also painted rocks that we will use to decorate around the tree that was planted on our playground to honor Rabbi David some years ago. Thanks to our families for joining us for this special celebration!

Upcoming events include the ECC *Purim* celebration on Friday, March 3rd, Shir Shalom's *Purim* Carnival on Sunday, March 5th, and a special ECC *Passover* Service on Wednesday, April 5th.

We are still hoping for some substantial snowfall in which to frolic at the ECC, but these past three years have reminded us that children know how to have fun and embrace life, no matter the circumstances!

Sarah Denyer



MARCH YAHRTZEITS

FRIDAY, MARCH 3

Murray Darvick
husband of Elinor Darvick
Ada Dolin
grandmother of Rachel Bender
Sam Farber
father of Hildi Glicklich
Freda Manus
mother of Rhonda Manus
Nettie Miller
mother of Marilyn Lipman
Lottie Mirkin
grandmother of Judith Strom
Melvin Moss
father of David Moss
Max Schenk
stepfather of Alice Gottlieb
James Taylor
father in law of Karen Taylor,
grandfather of David Taylor
Leonard Brodnick
Felicia Israel-Mucciolo
Max Rifkin

FRIDAY, MARCH 10

Harvey Alterman
husband of Rhonda Manus
Edwin Axel
father of Steven Axel
Monte Baier
brother of Shelby White
Pauline Berkowitz
grandmother of Stephen Heit
Amy Cohen
sister of Adam Cohen
Seymour Drucker
grandfather of Janine Gordon
Albert Elkin
grandfather of Stephanie
Herbstman
Moses Fergenson
uncle of Michael Bergman
Florence Fine
grandmother of Peter Fine
Elaine Randel
mother of Susan Randel
Herman Rosenthal
grandfather of Susan Westlake
Aida Ryan
mother of Eve Siegel
Douglas Schwartz
brother of Vicki Yolen

FRIDAY, MARCH 10

Beatrice Strom
mother of Robert Strom
Charles Warton
brother of Gale Berman

FRIDAY, MARCH 17

Steven Abraham
brother of Vivian Hoffman
Alice Cohlan
mother of Rick Cohlan
Lyubov Dashevskaya
grandmother of Vladimir and
Ilya Gogish, mother of Serafima
Dashevskaya
Anne Goldfish
mother of Roy Leonard
Morris Heller
father of Paul Heller
Jerome Howard
father of Laurie Dubin
Fayge Levin-Goldberg
grandmother of Jacob Goldberg
Gloria Margolis
mother of Elise Aries
Jeanne Perrin
mother of Charles Perrin

FRIDAY, MARCH 24

Michael Davis
brother-in-law of Elyse Davis
Eva Engel
grandmother of Robin Heit
Morton Eydenberg
father of Susan Westlake
Arthur Goldfish
brother of Roy Leonard
David Adam Hagen
brother of Ellen Lipton
Francis Horvilleur
father of Laurence Furic
Milton Kamler
grandfather of Adam Rubinfeld
George Levenson
uncle of Karen Brenner
Leon Levy
husband of Shelby White
Esther Mirkin
mother of Judith Strom
Helen Pilch
mother of Alan Pilch
Tillie Schmeltzer
mother of Resa Fremed

FRIDAY, MARCH 24

Robert Sigman
friend of Michael and Gale
Berman
Richard Wood
father of Trudy Wood
Elsie Rudy

FRIDAY, MARCH 31

Barbara Gray
aunt of Scott Gray
Louis Grayson
friend of Donald Gordon
Eva Greenberg
mother of Adrienne Orlan
Kenneth Henry
father of Robert Henry
Mary E. Keleher
mother of Catherine Mishkin
Anne Petereit
grandmother of Maggie Staub
Thelma Reichenthal
mother of Sandra Rosenhouse
Louis Rubinfeld
grandfather of Adam Rubinfeld
Richard Ruo
father of Eileen Segalman
Emmy Sternberger
grandmother of Alice Gottlieb
Herman Zeitlin
father of Ianne Poushter
Bernard Benjamin
Anne Elizabeth Raynor

APRIL YAHRZEITS

FRIDAY, APRIL 7

Susan Baier
cousin of Shelby White
Jack Berkowitz
grandfather of Stephen Heit
Sarah Buchman
aunt of Donald Gordon
Isia Bursuker
husband of Veronica Bursuker
Marilyn Cohen
mother of Susannah Altman
Arnold Eydenberg
grandfather of Susan Westlake
Bernie Gerard
father of Ira Gerard
Warren Gittlen
grandfather of Franki
Zimmerman
Michael Goldberg
father of Scott Gray
Wallace Kalter
step-father of Marcia
Needleman
Meyer Katz
father of Claire Katz
Ted Krulwich
brother of Jeffrey Krulwich
Arthur Margolis
father-in-law of Robi Margolis
Mary Benjamin

FRIDAY, APRIL 14

Alan Bangser
brother of Robert Bangser
Millie Bernstein
aunt of Alan Pilch
Leah Fergenson
grandmother of Michael
Bergman
Robert Fields
uncle of Helene Karlin
Rita Katchko
mother of Cantor Deborah
Katchko-Gray
Cyril Lesser
father of Diana Friedlander
Adolph Ratner
grandfather of Judith Strom
Mary Salpeter
mother of Michael Salpeter
Beate Schmidek
grandmother of Dana Harnett

FRIDAY, APRIL 14

Mark Shapiro
husband of Naomi Shapiro
Harry Slone
father of Judith Shapiro
Ben Stern
brother of Barbara Manners
Isaac Weintraub
grandfather of Karen Gerard
Fay Goodman Weisberg
mother of Marty Weisberg
Lillian Gordon

FRIDAY, APRIL 21

Edward Carroll
father of Jim Carroll
Ruth Friedenthal
mother of Paulette Schneider
Phyllis Goldfield
mother of Laurie Wolkin
Harvey Haddon
brother of Rabbi Jon Haddon
Murray Haddon
father of Rabbi Jon Haddon
Annette Holson
grandmother of Robin Heit
Esther Oks-Ponczyk
grandmother of Jack Goldberg
Joshua Ponczyk
grandfather of Jack Goldberg
Monroe Sachs
father of David Sachs
Hilda Vendig
mother of Richard Vendig
Louis Warton
father of Gale Berman
Murray Fischberg

FRIDAY, APRIL 28

Rita Bush
mother of Richard Bush
Joan Bieber Carroll
mother of Jim Carroll
Jack Fernandes
father of Marisol Binn
Joseph Hubsher
grandfather of Jeffrey Hubsher
James Jolly
father of Robert Jolly
Lillie Landsberg
great-aunt of Karen Gerard
Ivey Meyers
granddaughter of Elinor
Darvick
Edward Joseph Modest
father of Betsy Brand
Ruth Muchnick
grandmother of Jason
Muchnick
Rose Pecker
mother of Sunnie Colen
Sol Saleem
grandfather of Kate Alvarez
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nephew of David Shapiro
Rebecca Shimkin
grandmother of Janine Gordon
Nathalie Fried Alexander

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Hal and Dawn Roberts

Andrew and Nicole Rose

Barbara Safran

Karen Taylor and David Kaminer

Michael and Emily Wein

Shelby White

Hal and Laurie Wolkin

CAFE ISRAEL



Recently I was invited to lead a lunch and learn about the Israeli political system, the situation today and the future we are expecting.

The people who joined had a lot of knowledge about Israel and we discussed current events and I answered questions from the crowd.

Everyone brought their own lunch and I tried one of the best Kugel I ever ate and amazing Baba ganoush that reminded me of my home in Israel.

Thank you for inviting me. I'll be happy to join any other group for lunch and learn so reach out and let's set a date Ofek@shalomct.org.

Ofek Mosevich

Federation Israel Emissary



In Memoriam

The Memory of the Righteous is a Blessing

We extend condolences to:

Lonnie Shapiro on the death of her brother, Gary Alper, z"l

Elliot Agisim on the death of his father, Philip Agisim, z"l

Larry Brooks on the death of his aunt, Freddy Selss, z"l

May their memory be for a blessing.



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THE SPOTLIGHT'S ON...

Sophie and Lily Zezula



The following article is reprinted in full from the RIDGEFIELD PRESS

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2023

SISTERS ARE INVENTORS

They invite next generation to 'make the world a better place'

By Kaitlin Lyle

RIDGEFIELD- After nurturing a shared love of inventing since a young age, Sophie and Lily Zezula are working to inspire other youth to discover the joy of inventing.

The Connecticut Invention Convention commended the Ridgefield sisters this year for their work as inventors and in teaching others the joy of inventing.

"It's really important for kids to be inventing because kids have unique ideas – and I think they come up with a lot of solutions that ... a lot of adults wouldn't think about," Sophie Zezula said.

"Getting kids involved in inventing and making sure that they're engaged in it ... is important for the future of the world in general," the Ridgefield High School sophomore said.

Founded in 1983, the CIC focuses on invention education for K-12 student inventors and entrepreneurs. Teachers use the CIC curriculum to help students develop creative problem-solving and critical thinking skills in CIC competitions.

Zezula runs her own free program called Invention Convention at the Ridgefield Library.

"Sophie reached out to our teen services library about hosting Invention Convention here, said Ridgefield Library Director Brenda McKinley. The Invention Convention program is open to K-12 students, though most of the students are in elementary school.

The library will host an Invention Convention competition Feb. 13 with

"It's really exciting to see the next generation of kids in middle school and elementary school go through the inventing process."

students presenting their prototypes and inventions.

"It's been a fabulous collaboration," McKinley said. "The library has the space and the resources for the kids to come and work on their projects. And it's fabulous that Sophie is the driving force to make it happen."

"It's really exciting to see the next generation of kids in middle school and elementary school go through the inventing process and find a passion for it, she said.

A big part of spreading the joy of inventing, Sophie Zezula said, is "finding something you're passionate about" and taking a step toward finding a solution.

"Any little problem – you have a possibility to make it better," said her sister, Lily Zezula, a seventh grader at East Ridge Middle School. "Just because you're a kid doesn't mean you can't invent something."

Sophie Zezula, 15, said she started creating inventions in fourth grade while Lily Zezula, 13, said she began in third grade.

They were raised with awareness of environmental problems – such as the overuse of plastic – and the environment was a topic they both wanted to focus on with their

inventions for the school district's Invention Convention, Sophie Zezula said.

"I've always been into saving the world and making the world a better place," Lily Zezula said. "So when I knew the Invention Convention was at my school, I knew I had to take the opportunity to try to make the world a better place."

E-Z Energy was one of Lily Zezula's efforts in fourth grade. The idea came to her while on a car ride, when she said she realized how much fossil fuel is wasted. She said E-Z Energy is a roller that spins when cars drive over it, thereby creating energy from the cars.

Lily Zezula pursued her passion for sea turtles with her invention, the Turtle Tent, "which was featured on

(continued on page 23)

THE SPOTLIGHT'S ON... (CONT'D)

“American Ninja Warriors Junior” when she competed on the TV show in 2021.

Sea turtle eggs are temperature dependent to hatch properly, Lily Zezula said, but because of climate change, air temperatures have increased, resulting in increased temperatures in the sand where turtles lay their eggs and more female turtles than male turtles are being born.

The Turtle Tent, made out of Mylar can be placed over the sea turtle nest. Lily Zezula said, reflecting heat off the nest to regulate the male sea turtle population.

“My drive to invent started when I realized how many problems the world is going through and endangered so many animals are,” Lily Zezula said. “As I was researching, I realized I had the ability to invent something to help them. And just reading about them and researching them is going to

save them – I have to step up and invent something.”

Sophie Zezula said her “sNOw straw” invention was inspired when she saw how many plastic straws were



handed out at a restaurant. Her invention is a biodegradable drinking straw made entirely of frozen water and Sophie Zezula was also inspired to invent a machine that can mass produce the product.

In addition to demonstrating their inventions at their schools Invention Conventions and at the regional competition, Sophie and Lily Zezula have both won awards at the CIC State Finals and the Invention Convention U.S. Nationals.

Also, Sophie Zezula serves as a student member of the CIC’s Board of Directors, where she gives a teen’s insight into the inventions.

“It’s really cool because I get to see behind the scenes of the Invention Convention, and I get to see what it takes to run it and how passionate people are about kids inventing.” Sophie Zezula said.

(Sophie and Lily Zezula are the daughters of congregants Nathan and Tiffany Zezula. Tiffany is a synagogue Trustee and chair of the Education Committee.)

OUR MISSION

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

We are a vibrant and inclusive community inspired by Jewish values and traditions.

We honor the diversity of our backgrounds, experiences, and aspirations.

We celebrate our shared values: the study of Torah, participatory worship driven by music, the promotion of lifelong learning, the ongoing project of *Tikkun Olam* (Healing the World), and the work of social justice. We embrace the responsibility/task of being “a light unto the nations,” building a brighter future for our community and the world.

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Julian Schwarz and Marika Bournaki

Music that Celebrates Life!

Cello and piano duets @ 3:00 p.m.

MARCH 24

Spirited and Soulful Kabbalat Shabbat

Beth Styles @ 7:30 p.m.

MAY 19

Spirited and Soulful Kabbalat Shabbat

Beth Styles @ 7:30 p.m.

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