

The Star

Bi-monthly newsletter from
Congregation Beth Elohim
in Acton, Massachusetts



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July/August 2025 • Tammuz/Av/Elul 5785

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In this issue...

It can get pretty quiet around CBE in July. In fact, we thought that this might be a very very light issue. But, then we remembered -- we have a new president to introduce. And what about the rest of the board — some of whom are just starting their volunteer board stints? We introduce them all! And what says "summer" like a garden? We have two -- and we tell you about them both. Last but not least, it's been a spring of simchas -- and we invite you to kvell with our families. Now, read up and then jump in the pool!

Message from Our President

On July 1 we welcome long-time CBE member Linda Minkoff as our new board president. Linda has been behind the scenes for years but many may not know her full history with CBE. She has obliged us with a wonderful re-introduction to herself and her vision for the future.



Fellow congregants –

In 2009 I was given the great honor of becoming president of our congregation, a role I held for four years, and now that honor has come again. I may serve briefly as an “interim” president until one of the many more worthy individuals feels ready to assume the role. I was happy to assume the role again as I truly loved the job the first time around!

Some of you may remember my earlier four years as a time of transition. The JCC, our tenant of ten years and the operators of a preschool at our facility, decided to close their school. The major expansion of our synagogue was largely dependent on the rent from the JCC, and we could not manage without that continued revenue. It was on the JCC’s recommendation, and with their help and encouragement, that we decided to create our own preschool. For over ten years it has continued to grow and has been a resounding success!

Every CBE president and board of directors face challenges of one form or another, and the past several years have had more than their share of staff transitions among clergy, education and preschool directors, and synagogue administrators. Each change has been met with professionalism and a minimum of disruption to the community. You, the congregation, have all supported your leaders as they face and resolve the difficult decisions inherent in running a successful organization.

For those of you who do not know me, I have served on the board in a variety of roles for almost thirty years. I became involved with CBE as a new Acton resident, a non-Jewish new bride and expectant mother, and a member of the then ‘new’ Interfaith Group, led by Rabbi Mintz. I converted to Judaism 36 years ago, just before the birth of my first child, and continued as a member of the IFF (Interfaith Families) for many years, because even though conversion made me Jewish, it did not magically erase all the confusion and unease associated with trying to “belong” in my chosen new community. It is for this reason that I heartily endorse the creation or expansion of an Interfaith Families Group so that the many CBE families with a non-Jewish member can experience this wonderfully welcoming

community as I did so many years ago.

Have a happy summer! See you all at High Holydays!

Linda

And The Rest of Our Board!

Every May, we vote in a board slate, and terms start on July 1. Terms are for two years, so many are continuing but some are new. But how many of us even remember who we voted for back in May or what their titles are? Below is a quick rundown of all of the wonderful volunteer board members who are helping the doors open at CBE.



Danya Bloomstone

Position: VP Jewish Life & Learning

What you're responsible for: Ritual, Adult Education, Programming, Na'aseh

New or continuing. New to this role but previously served on the board as VP Education and Member at Large. Also co-led the Rabbi Search Committee.

When joined CBE: 1996



Stacey Briggs

Position: VP Membership Engagement

What you're responsible for: Membership, Brotherhood, Sisterhood, Social, and Chesed

New or continuing. Continuing

When joined CBE: 2008



Rachel Gwaltney

Position: VP of Development

What you're responsible for: CBE's fundraising efforts.

Communications, Fundraising committees

New or continuing. I'm continuing into my second term, after sharing the role with my father, Les Kramer, for the past two years.

When joined CBE: My family joined CBE in the late 1970's and I grew up in this community. My husband and I moved back to the area and joined in 2017.



Mark Kahan

Shalom, CBE! Together with Alan (Weiss) I'm continuing in my role as one of our co-VPs of Governance. This function reports to the CBE (Co-) President(s) & our Task is to help CBE fill in the gaps in the documentation of our various organizational and HR policies - especially following the approval of our new CBE by-laws and constitution. Our family has been a member of CBE for ~ 55 years, starting back in the days of Maynard's Rodoff Shalom Synagogue.



Laura Kelmar

Position: Immediate Past President and Acting VP of Operations
What you're responsible for: Operations (including Security and IT)
New or continuing. Continuing
When joined CBE: Around 1996



David Leers

Position: Treasurer
What you're responsible for: managing CBE's finances and financial health; chair Finance Committee, comprised of the following positions, all reporting to the Treasurer: Controller, Financial Secretary, Bookkeeper/Accountant, and ELC Treasurer
New or continuing. New – but this is my second stint as Treasurer. Previously I was Treasurer from (I think) 2014–2019
When joined CBE: 2001



Lindsay Rosenman

Board position: Immediate Past President
New or incoming? New to this role but have been on the board on and off (mostly on) since 2013. Will be helping with whatever projects come up and leading the nominating committee, also developing a Future Leaders workshop for after High Holidays
When joined CBE: about 14 years years ago

Shelley Sherman

Position: Executive Secretary
New or continuing. New



When joined CBE: 1997



Alan Weiss

Position: Co-VP of Governance (with Mark Kahan)

What you're responsible for: The VP of Governance is a new Board position. The VP of Governance is charged with helping to create and document policies to describe how CBE operates and how it makes decisions. No committees report to the VP of Governance.

New or continuing. Continuing

When joined CBE: 1994



Susan Welt

Board position: VP of Education

What you're responsible for and who/what groups report to you: Religious School, ELC, School committee

New or continuing. Continuing (second term)

When joined CBE: 2018

In the CBE Garden – with Gary Budiansky and Glenn Fund

Did you know that CBE has a vegetable garden? Just look up the hill, to the right of the synagogue. Originally established 15 years ago, it's currently maintained by Gary ("manager") Budiansky and Glenn ("planter and weeder") Fund.

This summer Gary and Glenn have planted tomatoes, onions, lettuce and green peppers. All are thriving, with the exception of the green peppers, which are sadly gone. It seems that the local deer had their eyes on those, too.

Gary with garlic scapes; Glenn staking tomato plants.



Gary and Glenn plan to add more plants as the summer and fall progresses. So far, only half of the garden area has been utilized. If anyone in the congregation has a desire to do some summer gardening and wants to help, please contact gbudiansky@bethelohim.org. Available garden chores are planting, watering, and harvesting. And of course, weeding!

CBE's Pollinator Garden Update – by Matt Liebman



In the first year it sleeps, in the second year it creeps, and in the third year it leaps! What does the pollinator garden do in its fourth year? Well, it leaps *gado!* You may have noticed that our pollinator garden -- and other flowers and plants in the island parking lot -- have truly expanded in the last few years.

Many of the original flowers planted in 2022 -- False Blue Indigo, Joe Pye Weed, Liatris, Bee Balm, Coreopsis (Tickseed), Veronica, Swamp Milkweed, Sweet Pepperbush, and Coneflowers, appear very healthy. In fact, some of the Joe Pye Weed are almost five feet tall. In 2023, we added some shrubs, like chokeberries (Aronia) to the mix, and they are also doing well.

To revegetate part of the parking island we also distributed a mix of native New England wildflower seeds, which included some grasses, plus partridge pea, goldenrods, asters and butterfly milkweeds. The butterfly milkweeds and some of the goldenrods appear to be spreading. In addition, the island is full of common milkweed, dogbane (a native milkweed-like plant) and purple lupines (although this lupine does not appear to be the native lupine).

Left: lupines; right (top) coreopsis (Tickseed) and (bottom) common milkweeds, butterfly milkweeds and daisies



I recently read that Jewish thinkers, such as Maimonides and Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, have asserted that biodiversity itself is an integral part of Creation, and that no individual species is frivolous. They didn't know the word *biodiversity* at the time (it was popularized by E.O. Wilson in the 1980s), but they certainly valued it. So, as you walk along the parking island on your way to the building (or visit the garden intentionally!), I hope you enjoy the burst of colors, the diversity of plants, and the habitat they provide for insects like butterflies and bees. And, as we try to counter the impact of climate change, let's also consider that we are maintaining carbon in our small plot of land.

We would like to thank the Jewish Climate Action Network for providing funding for this project, Barbara Passero of *Meadowscaping for Biodiversity* for designing the garden, and the many volunteers who helped install the plants (e.g. George Morton) or recently weeded the garden (e.g. Sarah Coletti). Also, to Gabe McCauley, who helped design and install signage. If you are interested in assisting the maintenance of this garden, and to enhance this garden or other space on our campus, please contact me at solar@bethelohim.org.

The People of Chelm Want to Know...



Illustration by Maurice Sendak.

For years the “People of Chelm” column has challenged The Star readers with questions drawn from the long and rich history of Jews and Judaism. We are delighted to continue this tradition, with abundant thanks to Bob Ferrara and Waky.

There is a very strong emphasis in Jewish writings on ethics to “do the right thing” and on the rewards of performing “a good deed”. We often hear of doing a mitzva (plural “mitzvot”) in these contexts. The first question gets at the meaning of a mitzvah. The second question applies to a very common mitzvah.

QUESTION 1:

And what is a mitzvah really? What is the literal meaning of this word and what does it ask of us? And how many mitzvot are there in all? There are quite a few, although many of them may no longer apply in our age. And for extra, extra credit, do you know how many mitzvot are prohibitions against a particular action?

QUESTION 2:

Lighting of the Sabbath candles is one of a small number of mitzvot that are traditionally reserved for women. Is this an exclusively female obligation? What if the woman of the house is away on business or visiting a sick relative? What is a husband supposed to do? Then there is the case where there is no woman at all in the house. What then? Finally, what is expected for a single male living alone (i.e. a bachelor)?

Ponder your responses – and find the answers below.

Kvell Korner — Looking for Your News!!!

We are truly blessed to share in the simchas of six of our CBE families!

Wedding of Sarah Liebman & Scott Travers

Sarah Liebman (daughter of Matt Liebman and Amy Michelson) and Scott Travers celebrated their wedding on April 19, 2025 in Black Mountain, NC, under the CBE traveling chuppah. The wedding was postponed six months due to impacts of Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina, but they persisted and most everyone was still able to attend. The chuppah was adorned with a tallis from Matt Liebman's father Jerry

Liebman and the weekend events also remembered Amy's father Mal Michelson, who had recently passed away.



B'nai Mitzvah of Dagny Forseter – May 3 / Iyyar 5

On May 3, Dagny Forseter celebrated becoming a B'nai Mitzvah at CBE. Below: Dagny on the bimah with Cantor Sarra; catching a grin from brother Finley; and with her proud family, dad Dan, brother Finley and mom Allison. Mazel tov, Dagny!





B'nai Mitzvah of Andrew and Joshua Jacobs – May 10 / Iyyar 12

On May 10, brothers Andrew and Joshua Jacobs celebrated becoming B'nai Mitzvah. Top row: Joshua (L) and Andrew (R) on the bimah with Rabbi David and Cantor Sarra; middle row: Andrew (L); Joshua (R); bottom row: Proud father Hal, Andrew, mom Alyssa, and Joshua. Mazel tov, Andrew and Joshua!



B'nai Mitzvah of Vivian Jolivet – May 17 / Iyyar 19

On May 17, Vivian Jolivet celebrated becoming a B'nai Mitzvah at CBE. Below she's

holding the Torah, posing with her mom, Marni Zelnick, and with her proud extended family! Mazel tov, Vivian!



B'nai Mitzvah of Evan Fishman – May 24 / Iyyar 26

On May 24, Evan Fishman celebrated becoming a B'nai Mitzvah at CBE. Below, Evan

poses in front of the ark by himself, and along with sister Alexa, accepts a congratulatory high five from Alexa, and finally posing with Alexa and beaming parents Jeff and Mindy. Mazel tov, Evan!





B'nai Mitzvah of Lochlan Morse – June 21 / 25 Sivan

On June 21, Lochlan Morse celebrated becoming a B'nai Mitzvah at CBE. Here he is reading from the Torah, accepting words of congratulation from his parents Evan and Julianne, and with his proud parents and his brother Quinton. Mazel tov, Lochlan!







Have a simcha to share? Write to communications@bethelohim.org and we will include it in our next issue!

What's happening at CBE this month?

Visit our [online calendar](#) for up-to-the-minute programming.

Donations

The congregation thanks our members, their relatives and friends, and the larger community for recent donations to CBE either online or by check. If you do not see your donation, please look for it in our next donations email or issue of *The Star*, or contact communications@bethelohim.org.

Adult Education Fund

Ethan Sokol & Kristine Fong / In memory of Allan Krueger

Amy Naparstek Israel Scholarship Fund

Chips & David Naparstek / In loving memory of Chips's mother, Rosalie Harris, on the occasion of her yahrzeit

David & Chips Naparstek / With best wishes for a very happy birthday for our very special friend, Denis Friedman

Herman & Suzanne Kabakoff / In memory of Allan Krueger

Cantorial Fund

Susan Kemp / In memory of Louis and Jane Shultz, parents of Susan Kemp

Choir Fund

Gary & Judy Budiansky / In memory of Dana Merrill, husband of Marsha Martin

Marcy Epstein Hoban & Don Hoban / In memory of Terrie Block; may her memory be for a blessing.

Marcy Epstein Hoban & Don Hoban / In memory of Allan Krueger, the handsome man behind those Foster Grants; may his memory be for a blessing.

General Fund

Alan & Cathie Jacobs / In memory of Allan Krueger.

Alan & Peggy Berko / In memory of Allan Krueger

Debbie & Jeff Wesson / In memory of Allan Krueger, with gratitude for his presence and participation in so many activities

Eileen & Benjamin Myers / In memory of Allan Krueger.

Gary & Judy Budiansky / In memory of Allan Krueger

Gerald & Sharon Malkin / Given with love and fond memories of Allan Krueger

Harriet & Edward Foote / In memory of Allan Krueger. We've known Ellen and Allan since the 70's. Thank you for the zoom which allowed us to be a part of the service.

Ina & Malcolm Burdine / In memory of Ina's mother, Dorothy Hyman

Larry & Rita Grossman / In memory of Allan Krueger

Linda & Denis Friedman / In loving memory of our devoted congregant, Allan Krueger

Matthew & Stacey Briggs / In memory of Allan Krueger

Michael Biales & Sarah Coletti / In memory of Sue Biales on her Yahrzeit

Michael Biales & Sarah Coletti / In memory of Allan J. Krueger

Odette Newsome / In memory of Allan Jay Krueger.

Ronni Kenger / In memory of Allan Krueger

Ronni Kenger / In memory of her mom, Stella Saks, on the occasion of her yahrzeit

Sharon Holliday / In memory of Allan Krueger

Susan & Glenn Jacobs / In memory of Allan Krueger

Wendy & Jon Linden / In memory of Allan Krueger.

Joan Snyder Library Fund

Steven Snyder

Na'aseh Social Justice Fund

Neil Weiser / In memory of Allan Krueger

Rabbi Lewis Mintz Fund

Dan & Shelley Klein / In memory of Dan's father, David H. Klein, DDS

Ethan Sokol & Kristine Fong / In memory of Allan Krueger

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Dan & Kate Markowitz / In memory of Allan Krueger

Janice Rosenberg / In memory of Allan Krueger

Ritual Fund

Benjamin Bloomstone & Danya Zimmer-Bloomstone / In memory of Allan Krueger.

The People of Chelm Want to Know...

ANSWER TO QUESTIONS POSED ABOVE:

ANSWER 1:

A *mitzvah* is a Hebrew word meaning a commandment or obligation (not a "good deed") found in the Torah. It is to be performed as a religious duty. The mitzvot are not enumerated in the Bible but the Talmud gives the number as 613. Many are simply not applicable to us today. The agricultural commandments apply only within the borders of the Biblical Land of Israel, for example. Also, we will have a hard time following any mitzvot dealing with the treatment of slaves or sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem. Modern sages have proposed that somewhere less than 300 seem appropriate to our circumstances. Of the 613 mitzvot, 365 are prohibitions ("do not") - a very easily remembered number. And the remaining 248 are positive ("do") commandments, such as the requirement to pay a day laborer "before the sun sets".

ANSWER 2:

The Talmud assigns the lighting of the Sabbath candles as a primary but not exclusive obligation for women. When a woman cannot fulfill this duty, a man is supposed to carry on and perform the ritual. This applies even to single member households. So whoever is doing the lighting the Sabbath candles can then say the proper blessing.

Resources

[CBE's Chesed Committee](#) | Contact us in a time of need

[18 Doors](#) (formerly InterfaithFamily of Greater Boston)

[Anti-Defamation League incident reporting](#)

[CJP \(Combined Jewish Philanthropies\)](#)

[CJP SeniorDirect](#)

[Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life](#)

[Hadassah of Nashoba Valley Facebook](#)

[Hebrew College events](#)

[Jewish Bereavement Support Group](#)

[JewishBoston.com](#)

[Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston](#)

[Jewish Family Service of Metrowest](#)

[Keshet](#) | A national organization that works for full LGBTQ equality and inclusion in Jewish life

[Mayyim Hayyim | Living Waters Community Mikveh](#)

[Oneinforty.org](#) | BRCA awareness, education, and support

[Yad Chessed](#) | Emergency financial assistance to Jewish individuals and families in need

[Yerusha.com](#) | A Website for Older Childless Jews

Visit the [Resources](#) page on our website for our complete resource list.

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Let us know what you think! What do you like or not like about our format or content? If there is someone or some effort or group you'd like to see featured, please write to communications@bethelohim.org.

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