

# The Star

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



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## November/December 2025

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## In this issue...

*Welcome dear readers to the November/December issue of The Star. There's been a lot of talk about volunteers lately -- and every jot and tittle that follows came from someone who took the time to volunteer a photo or a few words. It took many hands to pull this one together. We hope you enjoy the klezmer band, the five simchas, two questions from Chelm -- and three Chanukah recipes!*

## Message from Our President

Dear CBE Family -

I write this in the final hours of daylight savings time for 2025. For me, this marks the official beginning of the winter season – time to put away the porch furniture, load in the firewood and wrap the bee hives (I am a bee keeper). We Jews have also seen the end of our fall High Holiday season, Sukkot and Simchat Torah, and now look forward to Hanukkah.

In my high Holiday speech I spoke about the importance of community and the need for



more volunteers to help enhance our wonderful community and make the synagogue more welcoming and safer for both new and longstanding congregants. Rabbi David and I hope that more of you will heed the call and give us more of your time.

While my High Holiday speech referenced the importance of volunteer time over other types of contribution, the season of financial giving is also upon us and we hope we can count on your generosity there as well. Having recently reached the golden age of the RMD – if you do not know what this is you are not there yet – where those of us over age 72 with IRA funds see a certain minimum amount withdrawn and distributed each year. These distributions necessarily involve taxes – unless the funds are used for charitable contributions! This is a handy way to turn an unavoidable source of taxable income into a generous gift instead! Talk to your tax professional or investment counselor to understand how this works.

But even for those of you who have either not yet reached that "golden age" or do not have the applicable form of investment, we hope that we can count on you for a contribution during this High Holiday season of giving. Your generosity, of any amount will be most appreciated and well used.

Thank you, and happy fall!

Linda Minkoff  
President

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## All About Schmaltz!

*No, not THAT schmaltz! THIS Schmaltz: our own CBE klezmer band, pictured below performing at last month's Simchat Torah celebration! Below, Gabe McCauley (clarinet), Ann Seigel (fiddle), Barry Shapiro (piano and accordion) and Mike Stark (guitar, bass and percussion).*



CBE's klezmer band originated with Education Director Leann Shamash and religious school music teacher Howard Worona. Soon after it began, Cantor Sarra invited her long-time favorite klezmer musician Barry Shapiro to lead our band during Simchat Torah and Purim, our most joyous holidays (he also played at Sarra and Elan's wedding!). Cantor Sarra organizes our klezmer gigs and music and leads rehearsals throughout the year — as well as singing with the band. Current members are as follows:

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## **Barry Shapiro, piano and accordion**

Barry Shapiro was born into a klezmer-playing family and started lessons from his father on the saxophone at age 10. By the age of 12 he had switched to piano and soon thereafter added accordion. He graduated from New England Conservatory, was a founding member of both the Klezmer Conservatory Band and Shirim — leading bands in the Klezmer Revival. He has performed ethnic music of all kinds (Italian, Irish, Israeli, German, French, Romanian, Yugoslavian), in theatre productions, led folk and jazz ensembles (including members of our klezmer band) at the New England Folk Festival and the B.S.O. (Barry Shapiro Orchestra).

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## **Ann Seigel, fiddle**

Ann Seigel played viola as a child and up through high school — then quit for 40 years! As an older adult she decided to play a string instrument in a less serious way, playing fiddle music instead of classical. For the past 10 years she has enjoyed playing contradance, old-time, and bluegrass music, as well as Klezmer! Playing Klezmer with the CBE band is a blast. Ann says that Barry Shapiro plays with contagious spirit, and when people start dancing the joy overflows.

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## **Gabe McCauley, clarinet**

Gabe McCauley is a senior at Concord-Carlisle High School, and he has been playing clarinet since 4th grade. In addition to his school bands, Gabe played with the Groton Hill Wind Ensemble and Youth Orchestra in 10th and 11th grades, and is currently part of the New England Conservatory Youth Repertory Orchestra in Boston. Gabe loves listening to and playing Klezmer, and is very happy to be a part of the CBE Klezmer Band!

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## Mike Stark, guitar, bass and percussion

Mike started playing percussion (pots and pans) at a very young age, at which time his parents realized they needed to get him a drum set. He began drum lessons around age 5. He continued to play percussion throughout school, playing in concert, marching, and jazz bands. High school brought guitar and bass guitar into the picture, and Mike continued playing mostly those instruments through various college and post-college rock bands. He also picked up several other genres of music along the way, including bluegrass, heavy metal, folk, jazz, modern rock, Jewish choral music, and of course, klezmer! Current bands include [2 Lbs Classic Jazz](#) and [The Displayers](#), who recently ventured out to Los Angeles to perform at the famous Whisky-a-go go..



## Linda Borghesani, flute

From her days in elementary school all the way through college, Linda Borghesani has been playing the flute and piccolo. She covered the full musical spectrum, playing in everything from Concert and Jazz Bands to Marching Bands and Orchestras. After college, she continued to expand her repertoire, joining a flute ensemble in Acton and embracing the deeper sound of the alto flute. She enjoys playing in the CBE Klezmer band which has a collaborative spirit and forgiving nature of the music.



Over the years, we have had talented instrumentalists playing flute, piccolo, violin, clarinet, percussion, piano, guitar, bass and saxophone. We are always looking for new members — anyone interested should contact Cantor Sarra at [cantorsarra@bethelohim.org](mailto:cantorsarra@bethelohim.org).

*Make sure to catch our lively music next at the All-In Shabbat Mishpacha (family) service on Friday, November 21.*

## The People of Chelm Want to Know...

*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.*

*Illustration by Maurice Sendak.*

*With all the chaos in the federal government and the economy and unstable situation in Israel, we have a reason to be anxious. But let's also stop and remember that we do live in wonderful state in good towns with many great neighbors. The first question is a reminder of how good many of the neighbors have been at a another challenging period for our congregation. Old timers may remember this better, so the second question is one that the younger set may have an advantage.*

#### **QUESTION 1:**

Just over two decades ago, our congregation experienced a period when we were wandering Jews. This homeless period came during the construction period of Beth Elohim's second expansion after moving to Acton. This period extended roughly from mid-2001 to the fall of 2002. The local people and town institutions were very kind to us and outstanding temporary quarters were readily found. Of course, there was no single building that could accommodate all our activities, so operations were disbursed around the Acton area. Does anyone remember where most services were held during the construction hiatus? And where was Hebrew school held? And how about High Holydays? Finally, where were the administrative offices located during the exile? Apologies to the congregation's newest members, who may not be familiar with this period.

#### **QUESTION 2:**

Here's a question that your child may know even if you do not. In what order do you light the eight Chanukah candles – right to left or left to right? And what do you call the ninth candle, used for lighting the others? This question was asked during one of our Hebrew school's Maccabiah Games contests, a spirited competition held at the conclusion of the academic year.

**Ponder your responses – and find the answers below.**

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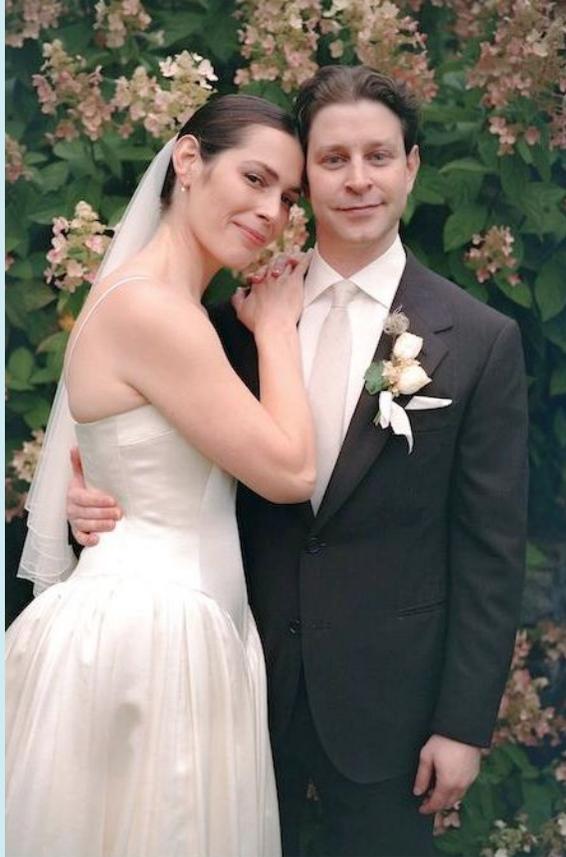
## **Kvell Korner — Looking for Your News!!!**

We are thrilled to share **two weddings** and **three b'nai mitzvah** in this issue! We are kvelling!

**Wedding of Jason Fund and Elizabeth Kenney**

*Glenn and Maida Fund are happy to*

*share that their son, Jason Fund married Elizabeth Kenney on September 6th at a beautiful venue in North Pomfret, Vermont called Hewitt Hill Farm. The farm, owned by close friends of Elizabeth's family, was where her parents were married over 40 years ago.*



### **Wedding of Miriam Beit-Aharon and Mykah Royer**

On Sunday, October 12, our CBE administrator Miriam was married at CBE — with a wonderful reception in our social hall. Here we see a portrait of Miriam and Mykah with Mykah's daughter Lilliyah; cutting an M&M cake made by Miriam's brother Noah Beit-Aharon; a moment under the chuppah — Miriam is grateful that "Rabbi David and Cantor Sarra kept us on track during the wedding!" And, finally: Miriam's name is now Miriam Royer Beit-Aharon!





### **Bat Mitzvah of Himika Kodaka-Braune**

On September 13, Himika Kodaka-Braune celebrated becoming a Bat Mitzvah at CBE. Below: Himika on the bimah with grandfather David Braune looking on; Himika again with her grandfather David; a family portrait with her father Simon, sister Ayaka, and mother Nami; and with the extended family who came to celebrate. Mazel tov, Himika!



## Bat Mitzvah of Beckett Knight

On October 18, Beckett Knight celebrated becoming a Bat Mitzvah at CBE. Below: Beckett on the bimah; Beckett with her mom Leslie; a family portrait with Leslie, Beckett, father Andy and sister Emaline. Last photo: Rabbi David and Beckett duck to avoid getting hit by flying candy. Mazel tov, Beckett!



## Bat Mitzvah of Elsa Abramovich

On October 25, Elsa Abramovich celebrated becoming a Bat Mitzvah at CBE. Below: Elsa on the bimah; Elsa reading from the Torah with brother Zach looking on; a family portrait with mother Amanda, Elsa, Zach, and father Dan. Mazel tov, Elsa!





Have a simcha to share? Write to [communications@bethelohim.org](mailto:communications@bethelohim.org) and we will include it in our next issue!

## If it's November Then Chanukah Can't Be Too Far Behind...

Yes, we're still recovering from that Halloween sugar surge -- but why not think about our next chocolate (coin) celebration? After all, we're *Joyfully Jewish*, right? Below we bring back some Chanukah recipes from past issues. Enjoy!

### Chanukah Latkes with No Box Grater and No Onion Tears

Barbara Frank Michaelsen

Barbara's recipe uses pre-shredded potatoes and diced sweet onions to save time.

Click [here](#) for a printable pdf.



## Chanukah Rainbow Cookies

Submitted by Ellen Krueger, credit to [North Shore to South Bay](#)

These cookies are dense, chewy, and super almondy. They will be the centerpiece of your Chanukah dessert table!

Click [here](#) for a printable pdf.



## Sufganiyot In A Bag

Credit: [Jewish](#)

What a super easy way to make a classic!

Click [here](#) to play a video of the recipe.

Click [here](#) for a printable pdf.



## The Ultimate Chanukah Playlist

In 2022, then-CBE administrator Shoshana Zuckerman shared



a [Spotify playlist](#) of Chanukah-themed music collected over the years. With 174 songs -- about 9 hours' of playing time -- we think that this just about tops the list for the most Chanukah you can fit into a playlist. Enjoy!

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## What's happening at CBE this month?

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

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## Donations

The congregation thanks our members, their relatives and friends, and the larger community for recent donations to CBE. Due to circumstances, we will not be able to list our most recent donations in this issue of *The Star*. But stay tuned! You will be receiving them as soon as they are available!

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## The People of Chelm Want to Know...

### ANSWER TO QUESTIONS POSED ABOVE:

#### ANSWER 1:

The Exile phase from Beth Elohim in 2001–2 produced no Book of Lamentations, as did the Babylonian Exile over two millennia before. The reason was that we simply did not have it that bad this time around. In fact, our neighbors here in Acton really spoiled us. The congregation of St. Matthew's Methodist church on Central Street could not have been more welcoming, making us feel right at home for services in Campbell Hall. Acton-Boxborough Regional High School proved to be a very nice Hebrew School venue during the construction diaspora. The high school's auditorium served us well during the High Holydays. And finally, half way between St. Matthew's and the High School, the administrative offices found a comfortable home away from home at 3 Windsor Avenue in West Acton.

#### ANSWER 2:

By tradition, the eight Chanukah candles are lit in sequence from the left to the right. Don't be disturbed if you forget, as there have been various candle lighting practices over the years. According to the "Jewish Book of Why", the current one evolved to give equal weight to the right and left sides, to show that God's presence is everywhere. The candles are inserted from right to left (like Hebrew is written), then lit from left to right. Thus the last or newest candle, "tonight's candle", is always the first one lit. The very useful ninth candle,

which lights all the other candles, is called the *Shamash*, meaning “servant” or “helper”.

## 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](#)

[Oneinfifty.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.

## Feedback/get in touch with us!

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](mailto:communications@bethelohim.org).

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Congregation Beth Elohim | 133 Prospect Street | Acton, MA 01720 US

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