

# The Star

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



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## July/August 2024 • Sivan/Tammuz/Av 5784

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## In this issue...

*Happy July! We're a little past the beginning of the month -- but with the holiday weekend behind us, we hope you have a few minutes to relax with this issue. In it we learn more about the new welcome sign gracing our entrance, get to know our new Education Director, interview a couple of our earliest members, challenge ourselves with not one but two great questions from the folks in Chelm -- and share in the nachas of three B'nai Mitzvah families! We also acknowledge that this is R+R time for ALL of us -- both staff and volunteers. The summer is a needed respite from all of our efforts, no matter how fulfilling and meaningful they are. Breathe and enjoy!*

Message from Our Rabbi, Co-Presidents, Jaymi Formaggio  
and Matt Liebman



Dear CBE Community and Friends,

We wanted to take this opportunity to discuss our new policy on outdoor signage at CBE. Entering CBE, hopefully you've seen a new banner below our permanent sign on Prospect Street. You might also have noted the absence of temporary lawn signs. This letter will give context to our new signage policy at CBE.

We began considering a signage policy following the events of October 7th and the frightening increase in antisemitism. In 2020, after the murder of George Floyd, a Black Lives Matter sign was put up at CBE to demonstrate our commitment to the cause of racial justice. More recently, some congregants and members of the larger community asked us to take down the Black Lives Matter sign, as some chapters and leaders of the BLM movement had engaged in virulent, hateful, and divisive antisemitic rhetoric. Others worried that removing the BLM sign would send the wrong signal about our commitment to the dignity of all people; or that we were no longer a welcoming congregation to Jews of Color. Other community members expressed pain caused by the absence of any sign in support of Israel in its most trying hour.

An ad-hoc committee including Rabbi David, Lindsay Rosenman, Jaymi Formaggio, and Matt Liebman was formed to explore this issue and recommend a signage policy to the board. After consulting with Na'aseh and other community members; and reviewing sign policies at other synagogues, our board unanimously passed our new signage policy. This policy states that *CBE will no longer place temporary signs or banners outside our entrance other than those which promote CBE events. We will display permanent signs with our name and a semi-permanent artistic expression that we are an inclusive congregation, consistent with our Mission and Vision.*

Why the change? We believe that no sign can adequately convey the complexity of our mission, vision, and values. Further, we hope that the programming we bring to our community (both for CBE members and the wider community) demonstrates who we are and what we value as a congregation. For example, we don't have a sign stating our commitment to welcoming immigrants, but we have multiple programs to do just that. There is not enough space to put up signs stating everything we hold dear. Even if we had such space, slogans may have multiple interpretations, and signs with short slogans are easily misunderstood. The meaning of a slogan can and often does change over time.

We decided for these and other reasons to not have temporary signs in front of CBE. That said, we wanted to maintain the semi-permanent rainbow banner which one of our B'nai Mitzvah students designed, but in an enhanced manner that artistically represents our core values of Inclusivity/Welcoming, Love of Israel/Jewish People, and *Shalom Bayit* – peace in our home. Our new banner, modeled on the inclusivity flag, has even more colors to represent welcoming LGBTQ+ people and People of Color, as well as a Star of David to express our Jewish values and love of the people of Israel. Our committee worked with the talented Lauren Solomon on creating the new artistic banner, which we hope you agree is both meaningful and beautiful.

If you have any questions regarding the policy feel free to contact any member of our committee.

Rabbi Braham David

Co Presidents Lindsay Rosenman & Laura Kelmar

Signage Committee Members Matt Liebman and Jaymi Formaggio



## Cindy Kalish — Long-time Religious School Teacher and CBE's New Director of Education



*Those of us who have children in our Religious School know how blessed we are to have such talented and committed teachers. And we have been even more blessed that one of our teachers, Cindy Kalish, has stepped up to be our new Education Director. In this interview we learn about Cindy's journey and her passions. We hope you enjoy getting to know Cindy as much as we have.*

**Cindy, when did you start teaching at CBE and what grades have you taught?**

I started teaching at CBE in September of 2018 and I have taught grades 4–6 and 8–10.

**Tell us about your personal journey to CBE. What did you do before coming here and how did it lead you to us?**

I grew up in Hull, MA (Nantasket Beach) and was raised at Temple Beth Sholom. I attended religious school there and was an active member of USY. My family was very active in synagogue life, and I loved it. I moved to Worcester, MA where I graduated from Clark University and stayed in Worcester for 32 years. For 20 years, I worked in Human Services in both residential and community settings and worked with children and families through the Departments of Social Services and Youth Services. I also became an active member of Temple Emanuel in Worcester where my daughter attended religious school. She was also a student at the community's Jewish Day School.

In 2006, the religious school director at TE asked if I would like to teach first grade. That was the beginning of my fourteen years teaching grades one through five as well as the teens at Community Hebrew High School in Worcester. Additionally, I have taught at Congregation Or Atid (Wayland) and Temple Isaiah (Lexington).

Fast forward to 2018 when I married my wife, Martha, and agreed to move to Chelmsford! I explored a few local synagogues and was enchanted with CBE and the opportunity to teach here.

**What else would you like the community to know about you?**

My wife Martha and I live in Chelmsford and between the two of us, we have three children. It has been a season of graduations this year with Hannah graduating from Northeastern with her MSN/FNP, Nick graduating from Worcester State with his BA in History and Political Science, and Sam graduating from Westford Academy. We are bursting with pride!

I believe that it is never too late to try new things. Case in point: last August, at the age of 59, I challenged myself to take the Red Cross lifeguarding class. It was by far, the most physically challenging weekend of my life, and after an intense 18 hours with a group of teenagers and an instructor, I became a certified lifeguard (and I have even worked a few days as a lifeguard this summer!). I also rode a bike last summer for the first time in many decades and I am now an avid cyclist and can be found on my aqua blue Trek on the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. I absolutely love being in nature and have discovered a passion for weekly flower picking and arranging, and long walks on the beach where I delight in finding sea glass and taking time to notice and photograph the beauty in the world.

*In these photos: one of Cindy's floral arrangements; Cindy and wife Martha volunteering at a Hanukkah lunch and program at the Westford Senior Center; blowing the shofar on the beach during the pandemic; biking the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.*





Tell us about your vision for the school. Do you have any new ideas that you'd like to try out? I am so fortunate to be coming into this position with a school that has been led so beautifully. Over the past six years, I have learned more than I could have imagined from Beth Goldstein, our team of teachers and clergy, and our students.

My vision for our school and for our students is that it be a community of learning where joy and pride are central to our exploration and expression of Judaism. I want students to have a

foundation to understand why it is important to be a *kehillah kedosha*, a holy community, in this time and place, and to understand their role in Jewish history - where they came from as well as the endless possibilities in front of them. I hope for a community of critical thinkers – one in which we are all learning from one another. My vision is a community where we all respect one another both for our shared values and our differences of opinion. In addition to teaching students to read Hebrew and learn prayers, it is imperative that we teach students to think deeply about current events and to teach about the history of and our connection to the land of Israel.

I am a big fan of learning both mindfully and creatively. I am hoping to bring in guests both from within our CBE community and the larger community to lead special projects with our students. I am exploring ways for students to learn through different forms of creative expression and intention.

### **What are your plans for the summer and leading up to the start of the school year?**

When I am not picking flowers, walking on the beach and cycling on the trail, I will be recruiting and hiring a few new teachers to fill some open positions (if you know anyone send them my way!) and working on an exciting curriculum to welcome our students and families in September.

I will also be reaching out to new and perspective religious school families over the summer. Apart from the weeks of July 15 and August 12, I will be in the office. Come on by and visit. My door is open!

*Editor's note: You can email Cindy at [cindyk@bethelohim.org](mailto:cindyk@bethelohim.org)*

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## **New Series! Our Earliest Members — this issue, Denis and Linda Friedman**

*In past issues of The Star, we have interviewed new members, board members, volunteers and staff. We now realize that we have yet another untapped opportunity: to interview members who helped bring CBE into being in 1969. In asking these folks to tell us about their origins with CBE, we hope to also learn more about our congregations' humble beginnings -- and what it meant to have a Jewish community born in the suburbs of Acton. This month we start with Denis and Linda Friedman, whose story was penned for us by Linda. Enjoy!*





When Denis and I arrived in Acton in the summer of 1976, we immediately joined Congregation Beth Elohim, a very small Jewish community meeting in the old Rodoff Shalom synagogue in Maynard. I will never forget my first thought, “This is it?” Right away we understood that if we wanted our 5½ year old Paul and 2 year old Naomi to grow up in a Jewish community, we would need to play a role in its creation.

I immediately volunteered to host Sisterhood meetings in our home. As a new arrival in Acton, I actually did it for selfish reasons — so I could make new friends. Later on, I served as Sisterhood President and Secretary and Programming Chair. Denis and a few other members built classrooms in the little Maynard shul so our children would have a place to learn. Then as we watched more Jewish families move to our area, we knew it was time for Beth Elohim to have a home of its own and so we enthusiastically worked toward that goal. It was a glorious Sunday in 1980 when we proudly marched the Torahs under a chuppah from Maynard to our beautiful new synagogue in Acton.

Almost immediately, we watched our little congregation grow and flourish as more and more young families moved to the area and joined CBE. Previously, many Actonians were unaware that a Jewish community even existed until we built our synagogue. In fact, it was common for realtors to tell house hunting Jewish families that there were no Jews here.

As we reflect back, we realize that had we moved to a town with an already established, thriving synagogue, we most likely would not have volunteered to the extent that we have. Yes, it might have been lovely to have had everything handed to us, but in reality, stepping up as volunteers has turned out to be a gift to ourselves. Our volunteerism has given us the opportunity to be part of a wonderful and supportive community. It is heartwarming to know that you count and are part of something important. Denis and I always felt that it was our Jewish responsibility to play our part in helping assure Jewish continuity. The people we have worked with and gotten to know have been such a meaningful part of our lives. It has underscored the fact that you can work hard to accomplish something while having fun and

creating lasting relationships at the same time.

When we first moved into our new CBE home, we couldn't even afford trash pickup, so after Friday night Shabbat services, each family brought home a black plastic bag of trash. Since then, Denis and I have had many volunteer opportunities. He served as vice-president and president of the congregation at a time when the synagogue phone was in the president's home. In addition, he has been part of many hands-on improvement projects and is currently making sure that burned out lights are replaced quickly. He jokingly refers to himself as Commander of the Light Brigade.

In addition to being on the Sisterhood board, I have served as member-at-large on the synagogue board, served on the Rabbi search committee and was chair of the transition committee, and am currently on the beautification committee. For over 30 years I welcomed new Jewish families to the area with our welcome wagon that I lovingly named "Shalom Mobile". I would always ask a newly arrived family what brought them to Acton and they would respond that they came here for the good schools and the high tech jobs along Rt 128. Then one day I asked that same question and I knew we had arrived as a congregation when the family responded, "We came here because we wanted a young Jewish community." Amen!

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## 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.*

### QUESTION:

A long hot summer is upon us. At least many of us can escape to an air-conditioned space, but what about those daring adventurers and archaeologists of prior years who spent years in the parched deserts of the Middle East uncovering the wonders of previous civilizations? The first question recalls some of their accomplishments. The second question concerns a common Jewish ritual act that we have all seen countless times but may not know what to do in the special case when a woman is not present.

1. We are living in a golden age for archaeology, thanks in large part to new technology and techniques. The findings oftentimes have radically changed today's perceptions and appreciations of past cultures. Which of these amazing discoveries is generally conceded to



be the greatest archeological discovery of the last century:

- A) the excavations of Jericho, which unearthed more than 20 settlements dating back 11,000 years,
- B) the uncovering of 20,000 tablets in the library at Nineveh, the ancient Assyrian capital,
- C) the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls, or
- D) the discovery of Hezekiah's tunnel underground in Jerusalem?

2. Lighting of the Sabbath candles is one of a small number of mitzvot that are traditionally reserved for women. But 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 male partner or family member 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 response – and find the answers below.

## Lifecycle and Milestone Events in Our Community

### B'nai Mitzvah

*On June 8 Elaine Rubin celebrated becoming a B'nai Mitzvah. In these wonderful photos we see the Torah being passed from generation to generation – from her Safta, Cindy Rubin, to her parents Mark and Rochelle, and then to her. The family is beaming on the bimah – and Elaine's brother Micah holds the Torah. Mazel tov to the Rubins!*





*On June 22, Adam Carp celebrated becoming a B'nai Mitzvah. As we went to press, the family had not yet received their "official" photos -- but shared with us how Adam and his parents Dan and Courtney celebrated -- first with a trip to the Celtics parade which took place the day before the big day — and then as they head to CBE on the big day itself. Mazel tov to the Carps!*





*On June 29, Sloane Roberts celebrated her B'nai Mitzvah. On the bimah: father Jeff, Sloane, brother Eli and mother Jaime. And we couldn't resist this second photo of Eli beaming proudly at his sister. Mazel tov to the Roberts family!*



Has your family celebrated a recent simcha or milestone? Send us up to 5 photos with a brief description; and we will make a selection to include in our next newsletter.

Email [communications@bethelohim.org](mailto:communications@bethelohim.org).



# 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 either online or by check. If you do not see your donation, please look for it in our next donations email in September, or contact [communications@bethelohim.org](mailto:communications@bethelohim.org).

### Alex Young Social Action Fund

Dorrie & Fred Goldstein / In memory of George Morton's mother, Ruth

Dorrie & Fred Goldstein / In memory of Katrina Fowler, sister of Kathie Becker

### Amy Naparstek Israel Scholarship Fund

Dan & Shelley Klein / In memory of Dan's mother, Ruth B. Klein

Dorrie & Fred Goldstein / In memory of Deanna Schroeder, daughter of Leslie and William, with deep sympathy

Dorrie & Fred Goldstein / In loving memory of our dear niece, Mindy

Linda & Denis Friedman / Happy 56th Anniversary wishes to Chips & David Naparstek, with love

David & Chips Naparstek / In memory of J. Maurice Naparstek

David & Chips Naparstek / In honor of Denis Friedman, with best wishes for a happy birthday

### Cantoral Fund

George & Lauren Morton / In memory of Ruth Morton

### Chesed Fund

Joseph & Jaymi Formaggio / In honor of Emily Blumberg and the Chesed Committee, with gratitude for their recent support of our family

Terrie Winograd Block / In appreciation of Ian Schenkman and Susan Welt's very kind and professional assistance and support

### General Fund

Frank Cohen & Linda Gordon-Cohen

Joseph & Jaymi Formaggio / In honor of Rabbi David, Cantor Sarra, and Beth Goldstein for their kindness and support during Joe's father's illness and death

Joseph & Jaymi Formaggio / In honor of Linda Minkoff, with deep appreciation

Kathie & Bob Becker / In memory of Deanna Schroeder

Michael Biales & Sarah Coletti / In memory of Sue Biales

Ronda Kenger / In memory of Stella Saks, mother of Ronda Kenger

### Na'aseh Fund

Dorrie & Freddy Goldstein / In memory of Adam Kenger, son of Ronni and sister of Elysa, with heartfelt sympathy.

### Rabbi Lewis Mintz Fund

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

George & Lauren Morton / In memory of Ruth Morton

### Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

George & Lauren Morton / In memory of Ruth Morton

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

### ANSWER TO QUESTIONS POSED ABOVE:

1. All of the discoveries mentioned contributed mightily to our knowledge of the past. However, an army of scholars feel the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is the greatest event in the history of archaeology. At least from the point of view of understanding Judaic and Christian history, nothing else comes close. Since the first discovery in 1946 of a cave in Judean desert containing seven ancient scrolls, over the next decade another ten local caves were found to also contain treasures. In total, the remains of about 870 separate scrolls have been found, consisting of thousands of fragments. All are devoted to religious subjects and date from the first or second century B.C.E., before the books of the Bible had been fixed or "canonized". This cache includes the oldest known versions of every book of the Bible (except Esther), many with "editions" of books never before seen. There are previously unknown psalms and prophecies, new stories of Abraham and Noah, and new writings claiming Moses as the author. There was a very torturous path in making the immense amount of Dead Sea Scroll material publicly available but this finally happened in 1991, so translations (such as [this](#)) are now available to all of us.

2. The Talmud assigns the lighting of the Sabbath candles as 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. The observant man or woman should still be lighting Sabbath candles and then saying 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](#)

[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).

*L'hitraot* (until next time),

*The Star* editorial and design team — Gary Budiansky, Maida Fund, Rick Green, Miriam Beit Aharon, Beth Schrager and Lauren Solomon

Visit us at [www.bethelohim.org](http://www.bethelohim.org)



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