

August 2014/5774

**Congregation Etz Chaim**

1. Taper off habitual foods
2. Vary your meal schedule
3. Drink plenty of water

**Inside this issue:**

Tips for Fasting on Yom Kippur, cont.	<b>2</b>
Synagogue Improvements—Paint Party in September! Note from the Board	<b>3</b>
What I did during my Summer Vacation	<b>4</b>
Back to School!	<b>5-6</b>
Yizkor Donations Go Green	<b>7</b>
What it means to be Jewish	<b>8</b>
Hebrew School	<b>9</b>
Arnold Shapiro— President for Life	<b>10</b>
Power of Yiddish	<b>11-15</b>
Sunday School is back! High Holiday Schedule	<b>16</b>
.Board of Directors. .Shabbat Services .Community Services	<b>17</b>
Our Synagogue .Synagogue Contacts	<b>18</b>

## Tips for Fasting on Yom Kippur

by Beth Strassler

- Modified from internet sources  
1.) [www.jewfaq.org](http://www.jewfaq.org) and  
2.) [www.chabad.org](http://www.chabad.org)

One of the best known ways to observe Yom Kippur is by fasting for 24 hours.

The purpose is to “afflict your soul” as a way to repent for your sins. We wish each other an “easy fast” because we don’t need to make it any more difficult than it has to be!

This year, Yom Kippur falls on Shabbat. All other fasts during the year would be postponed until Sunday when they fall on Shabbat, but the YK fast is not. It is that important!

Some people fast easily, some do not. I was happy to be exempted during the years when I was either pregnant or nursing a baby, because fasting does not come easily to me. This year I checked a couple of internet sites to see if I could find tips to make it easier.

### A Week Before Yom Kippur

1. Taper off habitual foods: coffee, tea, other caffeinated beverages
  - sugar & candy, esp chocolate
  - cigarettes, cigars or a pipe
  - anything else you eat as a regular habit, i.e. salty foods, such as chips or nuts

### Vary your meal schedule

- Your body will begin to get ready for food at your regular meal times, then you will feel hungry if

no food is eaten. If you vary your schedule, it will lessen your hunger at specific meal times.

### 3. Drink plenty of water

- During the last few days before YK, drink plenty of water. You actually need water more than you need food. This will also help you to not become dehydrated during your fast.

### Your Last Meal Before YK

#### Choose your foods carefully!

- Avoid foods that you already know do not satisfy your hunger..then you will be hungry again soon after you eat. For example, don’t have Chinese food if you know it makes you hungry three hours later!
- Choose foods that are easy to digest, not heavy in your stomach.
- Don’t overeat: A large meal actually makes you hungrier the next morning.
- Focus on eating protein (poultry, lean meats, eggs, cheese) and complex carbohydrates (potatoes, beans, pasta, whole grain breads). These will stick with you and give you long term energy for the next day.

### During Your YK Fast

#### 5. Go to synagogue

- It helps to be around other people who are fasting and be away from the eating temptations around your home.

#### 6. Don’t Talk about Food or Hunger

- Talking about food actually makes it harder to fast.
- Don’t spend the day thinking about what you are going to eat after the fast.

## Tips for Fasting on Yom Kippur, cont.

*by Beth Strassler*

- Move away from people who are talking about food or how hungry they are.
- 7. Take an Afternoon Nap in between Services
  - This really does ease your hunger. Why not take advantage of the service break?
- 8. Sniff Spices
  - Pass around a havdalah spice box. Cinnamon, cloves and cardamon are believed to ease your hunger. I have never tried this, but I plan to this year!

### At the Break Fast

#### 9. Start to eat slowly and be smart

- Don't be surprised if your first reaction to food is that you are not interested as you thought you would be.
- Sip orange juice: Getting some natural sugar into your body quickly is a good idea.
- Knosh on a bagel: Re-introduce food with small amounts and small bites.

#### 10. Reward yourself.

- Eat dessert first. Hey--You did it! Why not eat a bit of that delicious Annabelle's ice cream before you saunter over to the bagels & kugel?
- Take the opportunity to eat something you really like. Our family likes a good steak at a late dinner after the Break Fast.

Most importantly: Believe you can do it more easily this year with new suggestions.

**Good Luck & Have an Easy Fast!**

## Synagogue Improvements—Join the Paint Party!

by Jeff Levy

Our synagogue is not getting any younger, and as a member of the building committee, I am happy to report to you that we have taken some positive actions over the past couple of years to improve our facility.

- ◆ Many of you may have noticed that last year we got beautiful **lamine floors** to replace the carpet we had on the ground floor. This not only enhanced the appearance, but it also eliminated many allergens that made many of our congregants uncomfortable.
- ◆ Another improvement that you might be familiar with is that we replaced the old oil furnace with a much more efficient and cost effective **gas furnace**. The new furnace has improved the comfort of the building, as well as the cost for heating each winter.
- ◆ Finally, our most recent project has been to replace the bottom few feet of **siding** that has shown signs of tremendous wear, as it typically gets covered with snow every winter, which has led to the wood rotting, as well as a few holes. We contracted to have about 4 feet of siding replaced with plastic wood, which is impervious to rotting. We also took the opportunity to add a layer of insulation, to further help reduce our fuel costs.

The costs of these improvements were not inexpensive, and when there is an opportunity to save thousands of dollars by enlisting the [help of our congregants](#), we certainly will do so. NOW happens to be one of those opportunities.

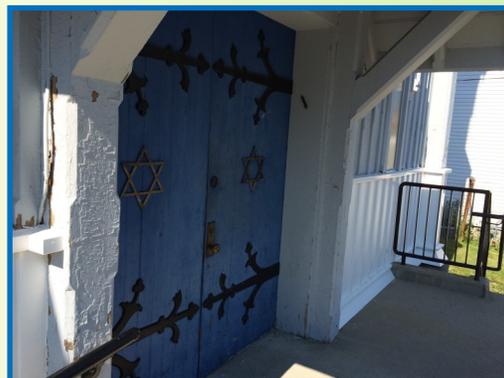
The latest improvement (the new siding) requires paint.

- ⇒ I am hoping to enlist the help of 10 – 15 volunteers to paint the new siding.
- ⇒ Our goal is to have the job done before the High Holidays, so we can show off our refreshed synagogue to the entire membership.
- ⇒ Please let me know if you can volunteer for our **Paint Day...September 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 10am to 3pm.**
- ⇒ Please RSVP to [improvingfutures@myfairpoint.net](mailto:improvingfutures@myfairpoint.net)



## A Note From the Board

President David Strassler and the Board of Directors of Congregation Etz Chaim wish you and your family a healthy, happy and peaceful New Year.



## ***What I Did During My Summer Vacation***

By David Strassler

*Oh God said to Abraham, "Kill me a son"  
Abe says, "Man, you must be puttin' me on"  
God said, "No." Abe say, "What?"  
God say, "You can do what you want Abe, but  
The next time you see me comin' you better run."  
Well, Abe says, "Where do you want this killin' done?"  
God says, "Out on Highway 61."*

Highway 61 Revisited by Bob Dylan 1965

For one week this summer, I took a course with my wife Beth at Hebrew College in Newton, Massachusetts. The name of the course was: "A Text That Binds: The *Akedah* in Jewish History and Thought", and was taught by Edward "Eddy" Breuer, a visiting professor from Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Beth took this course for credit to complete her Masters in Jewish Studies. I, on the other hand, took the course to spend time with Beth, and continue my love of learning about Jewish religion and history. (I did not take it for credit, so I did not have to write a final paper for credit). We literally read at least 1000 pages of material to prepare for the course over the previous six weeks.

How can you spend a whole week just studying 19 verses in the Torah (Genesis 22:1-19)? Leave it to the Jews and they will find a way. It turns out that we used the *Akedah* as a template to learn about Jewish history. We started with Torah and studied the life of Abraham, and ended with modern times (such as Bob Dylan). Eddy presented us with 12 different modules that corresponded to either a time period or a theme. Christianity and Islam each had their own section. Some of the questions we delved into were:

- ◇ How is it possible for G-d to promise Abraham that "Isaac will be called your seed" in the previous chapter, and then turn around and ask Abraham to sacrifice him?
- ◇ Why did Abraham tell his two servants that "we will...return to you" when he is being asked to sacrifice his son? Did he know he wouldn't? And then why did Isaac not come back down with him from Mount Moriah?
- ◇ If Isaac was 37 years old, why did he act so docile? And why did Abraham not question G-d in the first place?

As a class of ten, we wrestled with these and many other questions, as our brilliant teacher kept us engaged. It was a wonderful week, and I am actually looking forward to spending future summers of intense study. Call me Jewish!!

*We are making updates to  
our website:  
**[etzchaimme.org](http://etzchaimme.org)**.  
If you have any suggestions,  
please send them to  
**Leah Macomber at:**  
**[leah.macomber@yahoo.com](mailto:leah.macomber@yahoo.com)***

I learned that we have some of the same joys, like teaching the Hebrew alphabet, the Old Testament heroes, celebrations, traditions, and Jewish ethics.

I learned that some of the best educational resources are within our own congregations...

## Back To School!

Hebrew School Teacher, Leah Macomber, goes to NewCAJE 5, Los Angeles, CA

By Leah Macomber

Hello, Etz Chaim Congregation! I just got back from the NewCAJE 5 Jewish Education conference in Los Angeles, and I am excited to share my invigorated enthusiasm with the students of Etz Chaim. NewCAJE is an organization that brings Jewish educators together to share ideas about how to teach Hebrew, Judaica, Israel/Middle East studies and other topics. It was 4 days filled with workshops, discussion groups, and celebrations in the beautiful, 4-story Sinai Temple. The place was buzzing with 500+ teachers, education directors, singers, artists, storytellers and rabbis, who were all there to talk about education. It was amazing!

Honestly, when David asked me to go to the conference, I was hesitant – who me? I'd been a Jewish educator for all of 1 year. I taught 4 students in the Bet class for the Hebrew School, and wasn't really sure if I was any good (though no one dropped out!). Surely there was someone else with a little more experience and a little more time to contribute to Jewish education other than me. But as it turned out, the other Hebrew School teachers had already been to a conference, and they all highly recommended this one to me. So, although I felt like the person who steps forward to volunteer by standing still, when everyone else takes a step back, I agreed to go and booked my travel plans.

When I got to the conference, I felt more anxiety. Would I be ashamed of my short time in Jewish education? Would I meet anyone else with a tiny Hebrew school? Would I have any ideas to share? Would I quietly sit there, fretting about not knowing the words to sing-a-longs or the translations to dropped-in Hebrew words and phrases? Would I learn anything? Or would I just "not get it" and hope that when I returned to Etz Chaim, my small class would be OK learning the same way as they did last year, which wasn't so bad. And this is what happened:

- ◇ I met many, many people who were new teachers like me. Some were young with long Jewish education careers ahead of them; some were not-so-young, who had an undetermined teaching stint ahead of them. All were passionate about their kids!
- ◇ People there represented schools as small as ours, but also very big schools with 300 or more students. Small or large, I learned that we have some of the same joys, like teaching the Hebrew alphabet, the Old Testament heroes, celebrations, traditions, and Jewish ethics. And, we have some of the same hurdles, like getting kids to class by 3:45, and maintaining continuity even though other activities like sports, music and school can take priority.
- ◇ I shared lots of ideas from our classes. For example, I talked about our Sunday school field trips to the Saco River, Spiller's apple orchard, the Union Bagel Co, and the Jewish museum. I explained how we played games, wrote an Exodus scavenger hunt, put on plays and participated in community mitzvot like the Houses for Change project and our Biddeford street clean up. People took notes!
- ◇ I bonded with people who, like me, aren't good at sing-a-longs. We clapped with the music.
- ◇ I learned the word "chesed" – – טונית means acts of love, kindness, virtue
- ◇ I learned how to use technology in the classroom to make class more, interactive and fun. I'm talking about iMovie on the iPad, and Jewish-themed apps like "Whack-A-Haman." (Did I just say whack-a-Haman? I think I did!)
- ◇ I collected a lot of ideas about games, movement, and role play.
- ◇ I listened to some great stories and discussions about Jewish storytelling, and became mesmerized by the idea of a congregation maggid (or two or three) to augment education in all areas. (Plus I was taught by Peninnah Schram – she is a Jewish celebrity, like the Maya Angelou of Jewish storytelling. What a treat!)
- ◇ I learned that some of the best educational resources are within our own congregations, and one way to tap them is to list specific needs we have and ask for volunteers (see sidebar) because you know, one of our holy mitzvot is "Kol Yisrael arevim zeh la-zeh," which means "Jews are responsible for one another."

## Back To School! Cont.

By Leah Macomber

So, from the bottom of my heart, I want to say 'Thank You' to the congregation, and especially to the other Hebrew School teachers who stepped back to give me this opportunity. Since the end of the conference, I have no more anxiety about what we are not, just the opposite. Instead, I am filled with pride that our tiny school with only a small handful of active families thrives with enriching programming. I am filled with excitement about the next school year, and most of all, I am whirling with ideas on how the entire Etz Chaim community can work together to ensure the continuation of our education programs and the survival of our synagogue.

For Sidebar:

We need more students because Jewish education is really important to Jewish survival. Do you know a family with kids aged 5-18 who might be interested in an interactive, relevant, Jewish education?

We need more singers in our Hebrew School. Anyone? Anyone?

Looking for congregants (or associates of congregants) who are available between 2:00-4:00 pm on Thursdays to pick up kids and bring them to Etz Chaim for Hebrew School.



**2015 Strategic Planning is under way...**

If you're interested in joining our Etz  
Chaim Steering  
Committee, please contact  
**Jill Bilsky** at: [jbilsky@maine.rr.com](mailto:jbilsky@maine.rr.com).

## Yizkor Donations

"Yizkor" literally means "may G-d remember". On Yom Kippur, you have an opportunity to join our congregation and follow the age old tradition of remembering those who have passed away, through thoughtful prayers. Parents, children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, partners and friends. We remember them and are enriched by their memories.

For the second year, we will publish the names of your loved one(s) in our Yom Kippur Yizkor booklet. With a donation of any amount, we will include their names. If you donate \$50 or more, a bookplate will be added to one of our High Holiday Prayer books (one name per bookplate).

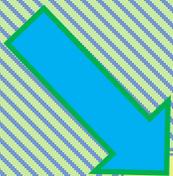
Please send your donation, with your name and the name of those you would like to remember, before September 29th to Congregation Etz Chaim, PO Box 905, Kennebunk, Maine 04043

If you donate \$50 or more, be sure to specify how you would like the bookplate to read.

If you have any questions, please contact David: [strassler@roadrunner.com](mailto:strassler@roadrunner.com)

**Samuel Osher  
Memorial Library  
at Congregation Etz Chaim  
Jewish Books, Music & Movies  
for the  
York County Community**

**To donate books call: 967-5833**



\$

You could save trees & money by  
receiving your newsletter & all Jewish  
community announcements electronically.  
Just write to our mail address & ask to

***"Go Green".***

\$

## What Does It Mean To Be Jewish?

by Sam

"One of the primary objectives of our trips is to motivate participants to explore their Jewish identity through a peer educational experience of historic and contemporary Israel."  
From the Birthright Web Site

*Hello. My name is Sam Workman. This is my story to tell you, not just about Birthright and my experience, but how it felt to be a first time traveler in the "land of milk and honey". My senior year of high school project at the New School has been for me to explore "what does it mean to be Jewish".*

*First off, I would like to share with you that Israel is an amazing place, and Birthright is an amazing program, but holy jeez: The Heat!!! Coming from Maine, it was like being in a sauna 24/7. I was with 47 other sweating, sleep deprived people on a bus for Birthright. My plan was to explore Israel with Birthright for the first 10 days, then take a bike trip out of Tel Aviv to an organic farm for the remainder of my time in Israel. This trip was a phenomenal experience!*

*My first jet lagged days in Israel were spent moving from place to place with a bunch of college students, who kept asking me what my major was. When I told them I was 18, they'd say, "Oh wow. You're so young. You're just a babe". On that bus, I met people from all around the states, including a few from Texas and California. On this trip, I met some really awesome characters and some more bizarre people. And I must have heard the question: "Why isn't the wifi working?" more times in ten days than I will hear in the next ten years. Birthright was an amazing experience, not only the places you go, but the people you meet. For instance, did you know there are Jews who sail? I, for one, have never met one except for myself. Birthright took us all up and down Israel; from Tzfat to the Negev. We climbed Masada to watch the sunrise and we felt the searing pain of the Dead Sea if you stick your head in it. We slept 47 in a Bedouin tent and also rode camels. (My favorite part was Yonatan, our resident soldier, flipping his lid the whole time he had to sit on the "creature".) It was a blast.*

*Then everybody left, and I was all alone in Israel for the next two weeks. My original plan was to rent a bike and ride as much of the length of Israel as I could manage. Of course, that is not how things turned out. For the first week, I stayed in a youth hostel called Hayarkon 48 for 113 shekels a night. I ended up staying at the Hayarkon 48 for the week and renting a bike daily. I would usually leave the hostel at 6 in the morning and be back at 10 at night. I met some really cool people staying in the hostel, and went to some of the clubs in Tel Aviv with a group of Australian travelers. Over all, I'd say it was awesome, but I think the original plan would have been more fun.*

*Next, I went to stay on a farm on a moshav called Kfar Hanagid. There, I met Tom and Danny. Tom is an oddball who has lived in Israel for five years and is about to leave to teach English to Chinese kids. Danny was a whole different type of oddball. He would always ride his little scooter up and down the field all day, every once in a while stopping to check on our work and tell us to do something else. The most exciting part about staying on the farm, though, was watching the first round of Hamas rocket attacks on Israel. When the sirens went off, I was expecting us to hide. But Danny wanted to watch. It was amazing, but full of tension.*

*Israel is an amazing place and I wouldn't trade my time there for anything. The people, spirituality, and steadfastness of Israelis will always hold a place in my heart. I strongly recommend the Birthright experience to anyone Jewish between the ages of 18-26 as a way to get to Israel. And then, good luck on your travels. Shalom & Yalla!*



## Hebrew School-5775

Hard to believe that summer is ending and it is time to think about another exciting year at the York County Community Hebrew School at Congregation Etz Chaim. Classes will once again be held on Thursday afternoons, from 3:45-6:00.

October 9th will be the first class, as we celebrate Sukkot and decorate our sukkah. This is a good time to welcome new students and their families, and reconnect with old friends. On 10/9, school will end at 5:15. Hope to see y'all there!

Any questions, contact David: [strassler@roadrunner.com](mailto:strassler@roadrunner.com)



## Arnold Shapiro-President for Life 1931-2013

By David Strassler

On November 22, 2013, Arnold Shapiro passed away and finally relinquished his presidency. He officially retired two years before (for the umpteenth time), but this time was for good. But for me, he was still President, with all his knowledge of the community and synagogue to share. It is still hard for me to believe that he is gone. He was so smart, that he chose me as his physician, so I would make sure he didn't die, leaving me with the responsibility of the synagogue. But, all good things must come to an end. And in the end, he was ready to "turn over the keys" and say good bye. I was fortunate enough to see him that memorable day as he gave me his good wishes.

In years past, Arnold shared with me his Jewish upbringing. He came down with scarlet fever 6 months before my Bar Mitzvah. But, he was still able to have his Bar Mitzvah in October 1942 in the small sanctuary at Congregation Etz Chaim. He was tutored by Jon Nathanson's father-Rabbi Morris (who started officiating in Biddeford in 1942).

Another landmark event in Arnold's life happened in 1981. The Board of Directors of Congregation Etz Chaim voted to close the synagogue doors due to lack of membership. Edith Karlin approached Arnold and asked if he would work with her to keep the synagogue open. He agreed and they took over the leadership positions. Unfortunately, Edith died the next week, and Arnold made the decision to keep his word and became President, with the support of several other stalwart members: Tobie and Jon Nathanson, Sam Cohen and Sam Karlin. This was the new Board of Directors.

The next year, in 1982, Beth and I moved to Maine and "the rest is history".

Over the past twenty years, Arnold has taken me "under his wing" and mentored me on how to take care of the building, understand the Jewish community and "so on and so forth" (his favorite expression). In 1993, at the Yom Kippur Service, Arnold shared with the community that he was stepping down as President, and to let someone else take over the responsibility. In 1994, at the Yom Kippur Service, on the 13th year of his being President, he again resigned. In 1995, he was resigned to the fact that no one was stepping up to the task and that he would be President for Life. During that time and years after, I made it clear to him that I would do anything he asked, but was not ready to be responsible for running the synagogue. That was the beginning of a great working relationship.

Now Arnold is gone and I am President. I feel like I am finally ready to take on that responsibility, with the help of a robust Board of 16 members. And when times get tough, I know I can say WWAD?..... (What Would Arnold Do?), and the answer will come.

# The Power of Yiddish

by Rob Pierce

In books as in life, one thing leads to another. As the twelfth year of our Teen class approaches, I look forward to presenting multiple facets of Yiddish culture and literature to the students. Our Teen classes have learned about The Forward and about Isaac Bashevis Singer over the years. However, this year we'll go deeper. AND we will be visiting the National Yiddish Book Center.

This idea began last year, as we studied the Pale of Settlement. We discussed what it represented for the Jewish people in Eastern Europe, and how the Nazis ultimately wiped out the entire Yiddish culture. I hadn't realized why it was so important for there to still be a Yiddish newspaper in New York City long after World War II, or why a Nobel Prize for literature in 1978 was awarded to a writer who wrote in Yiddish. I thought it was a "dead language".

The book that started this direction is "*Outwitting History*," by Aaron Lansky. The subtitle of this book is, "*The amazing adventure of a man who rescued a million Yiddish books.*" Lansky founded the National Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Massachusetts. Thanks to the support of Etz Chaim, to our families and teachers, I received a copy of this book and read it over this summer.

I learned much about why the connection of Yiddish to its surrounding culture is so relevant to our Jewish identity today. Though long neglected, and frequently reviled as a ghetto or peasant language, there was a reason that a new literature for the Jewish people sprung from Yiddish in the 1800-1900's.

*"Yiddish - like much of Jewish culture - was the product of two powerful dialectical forces. On the one hand, Jews' core culture, rooted in Hebrew and Aramaic texts, was so strong that they could interact with their non-Jewish neighbors and, instead of being subsumed, could transmute foreign elements into their own frame of reference.*

*An even more powerful dialectic existed within Jewish life, where a well-established system of ritual separation – between men and women, Shabbos and week, meat and milk, wool and flax, the holy and the everyday – found linguistic expression in the relationship between Hebrew, the holy tongue, ... and Yiddish, mother's tongue, the language of everyday life.*

## The Power of Yiddish, cont.

by Rob Pierce

*“In short, Hebrew conveys abstract teachings, while Yiddish brings them down to earth. Like the dialectic between Jewish and non-Jewish sphere, which found expression in **Benjamin III**, the internal dialectic between high and low culture, Hebrew and Yiddish, is also radical and full of literary potential, as became clear in the writings of **I.L. Peretz**, another pioneer of modern Yiddish literature.”*

From Lansky's book:

*“In Eastern Europe, many Jews were swept up in the spirit of nationalism, seeking to create a new, modern Jewish culture, rooted in Yiddish (or modern Hebrew) instead of religion. In America, it was different: Rather than Minority Treaties, we had a melting pot. Religious differences were okay; cultural and linguistic differences were not. Upwardly mobile Jews were quick to redefine their identity: not as nationalism, not as culture, but as religion – exactly as assimilating Jews had done in Germany several generations before.”*

*More from Lansky:*

As assimilation and integration were considered realistic possibilities, especially in Poland, Yiddish was looked down upon, since it was an alternative language that only made Jewishness a separatist culture.

I am reminded of my own childhood, where older relatives used Yiddish words within most sentences when they spoke. However, they also seemed to look down on the use of Yiddish as something to be left behind if one wanted to fit into their American society (and a nice, but WASPy, neighborhood).

Lansky studied at McGill University, where he met Ruth Wisse. She is the author of many books and essays, but one book I've particularly enjoyed reading is called *I.L. Peretz and the making of Modern Jewish Culture*. Wisse describes how Peretz helped establish a “politics of culture” for the Jewish people.

In the late 1800s, the Pale, which was the Eastern European lands that are now part of Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, and the Ukraine, but under control of the Czar of Russia, was changing for the Jews. As their population was growing, so were the restrictions placed on them. Jewish intellectuals, such as Peretz, felt the need to develop an independent culture to help reinforce their identity.

## The Power of Yiddish, cont.

by Rob Pierce

*“With the exception of Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, no Jewish writer had a more direct effect on modern Jewry than Isaac Leib Peretz. Peretz may not have promoted any fixed political program, but he tried to chart for his fellow Jews a “road” that would lead them away from religion toward a secular Jewish existence without falling into the swamp of assimilation.*

*Peretz tried to fashion a modern Jewish culture rich enough to compensate for the decline of religious tradition, the absence of political power, and the steadily rising waves of social ostracism, violence, hatred. He turned his energies to the founding of Jewish institutions – choirs and music societies, theater companies and dramatic groups, open universities, and literary circles – that involved ordinary Jews in the creation of culture.*

*Wisse writes:*

*With no political alternative to offer the Jews, neither the hope of an independent land in Palestine nor eventual assimilation into a classless society, Peretz tried to strengthen Jewish spirituality by interpreting even hardship as a force of potential good.*

*As the modern folk evolved from the ancient religious community, culture would have to take over from religion, and poets from preachers and rabbis, in ensuring Jewish survival. Modern Jews, for their part, once having quit their religious affiliation, had to find both a political and psychological alternative to their religious identity of the past.”*

Yiddish literature became extremely popular, in part because it provided escape through humor and enchantment, but it also provided tales to help protect, encourage, uplift, and offer dignity to the Jewish people in the Pale. While many of us have watched and loved the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, did you know that many consider the 125 page collection of stories called, *Teyve the Dairyman to be the greatest Yiddish, or possibly the greatest Jewish novel in literature?*

Aleichem referred to himself as a grandson of Mendele Mocher Seforim, author of *Travels of Benjamin III*. You can see the influence in the style of his portrayal of Teyve. For example, both Teyve and Benjamin III speak directly to the reader. By the way, both authors also use pen names.

*“May it not happen to you, but I was a beggar in rags. Come to think of it, I’ m still far from being rich. The difference between me and Brodsky the millionaire: May you and I both earn (that amount) between summer and Succos.”*

## The Power of Yiddish, cont.

by Rob Pierce

### From Teyve the Dairyman,

Aleichem, like Seforim, wrote to entertain and provide laughs while also confronting readers with harsh reality. Hillel Halkin, author and translator, wrote: “In the absence of other sources, one could infer much of the history and sociology of the Russian Jewry of his time from his work alone”.

With the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, a series of pogroms that were sanctioned by the government began a period of instability for Jews living in the Pale. The policies of the government were intended to force the Jews to emigrate, convert, or perish. There had not been a greater government effort to terrorize and expel Jews from a country since the Spanish Inquisition and Expulsion of 1492. The lines between Judaism as a religion, and Jewishness as a culture, became less clear in terms of survival.

In 1896 Peretz assured his readers that “having survived the ancient Egyptian and Babylonian exiles and the bloody massacres of the Middle Ages, the Jews were in no mortal danger now. Mankind had progressed ...”He was fortunate to not live to see this vision destroyed with the Holocaust”.

Even though most people no longer see the connection, Yiddish, as a language for the Jewish people, was a strong component in building a sense of Jewish identity for Jewish culture beyond religion that continues to thrive and live today. The feeling of Jewishness, with which many secular Jews can identify, has a direct connection to Yiddish and its history.

*“The legitimation of Yiddish meant that the Jewish masses were coming into their own: The unlearned Jew was liberating himself from the domination of the Jewish scholar and man of wealth, completing the revolution that the Hasidic movement had begun in the eighteenth century; the Jewish woman was freeing herself from subjugation from male authority; the Jewish worker was learning his self-worth, and consolidating his strength. The process of democratization and political self-transformation that other nations had undertaken was now consolidating among the Jews through instruments of their culture.”*

## The Power of Yiddish, cont.

by Rob Pierce

### **From Wisse's book:**

*"The bombing in Buenos Aires was a reminder that assaults on Jews and Jewish books are not a thing of the past. All over the world there are ominous signs that anti-Semitism is on the rise. And the tragedy this time is that as lies about Jews grow more extravagant and calumnies (slander) more outrageous, most of us know too little about our history and culture to refute them."*

*Historical amnesia is a dangerous malady, especially for a people whose identity is as dependent on historical memory as ours.... This is what makes the books we've saved so important. In their pages lies a civilization, a missing millennium of Jewish history, the knowledge we need to defend ourselves.*

*There are two sides of Jewish life, the holy and the everyday, and our identity resides not in one or the other, but in the give-and-take between the two."*

Some final words from Lansky's book:

The Yiddish Book Center began as a home for Yiddish books. It has grown to become a significant Jewish organization in America. The Center provides educational resources, and makes the books widely available, including their translations. As their web site states, "saving a million Yiddish books was just the beginning. Our priority now is to advance knowledge of the content and literary and cultural progeny of the books we've saved."

See <http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/who-we-are>

# Sunday School is Back!

by Denise Hammond

Sunday School at Congregation Etz Chaim is excited about starting back up this year! We had a great year last year going to all sorts of places, such as apple picking, painting our own Seder plates at Glazey Days, finding out how bagels are made at Union Bagel and celebrating our own holidays, such as Purim and Hanukah!

Sunday school meets just about one Sunday a month from 10-12. We are a group of families that want to share our community, have a little fun and food together, while educating our children about Judaism. Typically, we meet at the temple, unless we are going on a field trip into the community.

All are welcome, new and present members, and we would love to have kids of all ages!

## Sunday School dates for the rest of 2014:

- ◆ We are very excited to kick off this year with our own David Strassler, who will celebrate the High Holidays with our kids on Sunday, **September 28th**.
- ◆ On **October 12th**, we will be going apple picking at Spillers to get ready for Sukkot!
- ◆ **November 16th** and
- ◆ **December 14th** will finish off 2014.

Any questions or to get on our email list, feel free to email Denise Hammond at [dghammond@roadrunner.com](mailto:dghammond@roadrunner.com) for more details!

## High Holiday Services at Congregation Etz Chaim

Fall 2014/ Hebrew Year 5775

68 Bacon Street, Biddeford, ME [www.etzchaimme.org](http://www.etzchaimme.org)

Everyone is welcome---No tickets required. Donations are always appreciated.

### **Rosh Hashanah**

Eve of Wednesday, Sept 24: 6:30 pm  
 Thursday, September 25: 9:15 am  
 Torah Service: 10:15 am  
 Hineini: 11:15 am  
 Service ends: 12:15  
*Tashlich to follow service @ 12:30*  
 Evening Service: 6:30 pm  
 Friday, September 26: 9:15 am

### **Yom Kippur**

Evening of Friday, October 3  
 Kol Nidre: 6:15 pm  
 Saturday, October 4: 9:15 am  
 Torah Service: 10:15 am  
 Yizkor (Memorial Svce): 11 am  
 Afternoon Service: 4:30 pm  
  
*Community Break Fast  
 following services at 6:15 pm*

### **Plus:**

- A special Shabbat Shuvah service: Saturday Sept 27, beginning at 9:30 am
- A special Sunday School with holiday activities for younger children & their families: Sunday, Sept 28: 10 am - 12 noon - Challah and apples & honey included

**Visit our website:**  
<http://etzchaimme.org>

## ***Shabbat Services***

*Join us for Shabbat Services:  
Sept-Oct—every 2nd and 4th Saturday  
Nov forward— every 1st and 3rd Saturday of  
the month,  
beginning at 9:30 am*



### **Board of Directors at Congregation Etz Chaim**

Jill and Edward Bilsky  
Julie Campisi  
Linda and Frank Federman  
Alan Fink  
Maureen King  
Cynthia Kurtz  
Jeff Levy  
Leah Macomber  
Pamela Small Oliver  
Sue & Michael Rubin  
Jack Schraeter  
Beth & David Strassler

### **Emeritus Board Members**

Jon Nathanson  
Barbara Shapiro  
Stan Karlin  
Mark Feldman  
Jennie Aranovitch

## **York County (YC) Jewish Community**

*This newsletter is published three to four times each year. It is intended to announce and report on Jewish community events in York County, and especially at Congregation Etz Chaim in Biddeford. It offers local perspectives on historical and contemporary aspects of Jewish life.*

*Adrienne Levy, Editor & Layout Design Consultant:  
Levy family & Board members  
[mail@etzchaimme.org](mailto:mail@etzchaimme.org)*

*If we have your email address, you have been removed from the snail mailing list.  
If you wish to continue to receive a paper newsletter, just write/email us.*

## Our Synagogue

Our community programs are available to all members of the York County Jewish Community and are driven by the following mission statement:

“We promote Jewish cultural, social, educational and religious activities in southern Maine. Our primary goal is to make available a range of activities that facilitate the expression of what each individual finds valuable in the Jewish experience.

We attempt to accommodate individuals along the entire spectrum of Jewish practice and theology. We value and support the existence of a local formal congregation, but view our community programs as open to all interested people, regardless of whether or to what congregation they may be formally affiliated.”

## Synagogue Contacts

**Please mail Membership dues to:**

*PO Box 905,  
Kennebunk, ME 04043*

**Memorial Plaques, Prayer books, Etz Chaim books of Torah:**

*David Strassler: 967-5833*

**Hebrew School/Services:**

*Beth & David Strassler: 967-5833*

**Sunday School:**

*Denise Hammond:*

*[dghammond@roadrunner.com](mailto:dghammond@roadrunner.com)*

**Shabbat Potlucks:**

*Linda:*

*967-4047*

**Library**

*Beth Strassler*

*[Strassler@roadrunner.com](mailto:Strassler@roadrunner.com)*

York County Jewish Community News



Congregation Etz Chaim  
PO Box 905  
Kennebunk, ME 04043

Address Label