

## Congregation Etz Chaim

August 2011/5771

Please mark your calendars for a night to remember!

Congregation Etz Chaim is working with Complements Art Gallery of Warwick, Rhode Island.

### Inside this issue:

NY Trip Go Green Cemetery Planning Mtg	<b>2</b>
High Holidays Note from the Board	<b>3</b>
Mikvat Shalom	<b>4</b>
Seeds of Peace Sunday School Schedule	<b>5</b>
Food Festival /Cook-off Koshering of Coke	<b>6-7</b>
Koshering of Coke cont Board Members Let's See if Phyllis is home Shabbat Services	<b>8-9</b>
Seven Weeks in Middlebury	<b>10</b>
PJ Library Story Telling & Ice Cream Social	<b>11</b>
Our Synagogue Info and Contacts	<b>12</b>
Art Auction 9/17/11	<b>13</b>

## Art Auction Scheduled For September 17<sup>th</sup> By Stan Karlin

Please mark your calendars for a night to remember!

Congregation Etz Chaim is working with Complements Art Gallery of Warwick, Rhode Island. The Art Gallery has worked with temples throughout New England and provides a fantastic opportunity to buy a wide variety of art in all media, including oils, watercolors, etchings, and tapestries at great prices.

The auctioneer and host will be the very entertaining Domenic Rignanes, who brings a wealth of information about art to the occasion.

The Art Auction Event will take place at the Old Marsh Country

Club, just off Route 1 in Wells, Maine.

- The doors will open at 7:00 PM for viewing, and
- the auction will begin at 7:30PM.
- The price will include entertainment, food and much more.

This is our first major fund raiser in years, so please come and support Congregation Etz Chaim.

The price of admission is \$50 per couple (or \$25 per person).

More information about the auction will be coming to you as the event comes closer.

See ad on **page 13** of this newsletter.

### Complements Art Gallery

50 Lambert Lind Highway  
Warwick, Rhode Island 02886

local: 401.739.9300 toll-free: 800.841.4067

Open Mon - Sat 9am - 5pm EST & by appointment

[www.complementsartgallery.com](http://www.complementsartgallery.com)

*Banner from Merchantcircle.com*

## New York Trip

By Maia Mulcahy

We had tons of laughs along the way, but the thing that made the trip remarkable was seeing how involved the Jewish community really was in modern-day New York.

**"NEW York, New York, New York!"**

Those were the only words we thought as we loaded into the van for the trip we'd all been waiting for. From eating a huge sandwich at our favorite stop, Stage Deli, to staying up until 1:00 am watching Saturday Night Live, we made memories we would never forget.

We had tons of laughs along the way, but the thing that made the trip remarkable was seeing how involved the Jewish community really was in modern-day New York. Seeing the synagogues in places we would never have thought to look, we met wonderful people and learned so much about different aspects of our religion. We also visited the Museum of Jewish Heritage. The museum took us through Jewish history, exploring popular Jewish events with interesting new facts and views.

Not only did we investigate different "synagogue styles" and Jewish history, but we also took a ferry ride to Ellis Island to learn

about some New York history. It was really special that we got the chance to see how similar religions and cultures as Judaism went through the stressful immigration process.

You've probably heard about our trip to the racy Broadway show, "Jerusalem." Although Judaism wasn't involved in the play, the show pointed out some interesting views. The play showed that even people who commit wrongful acts do sometimes have the best intentions.

As you can see, our New York trip had many different aspects to it. I think everyone would agree that the variety of lessons we learned was what made it fun. I would never have been able to guess how beneficial this trip was going to be. That's why I'm so glad that, with every new group of Teen Class members, more experiences, memories, lessons, and laughs will be shared along the way.

## Cemetery Planning Meeting

David Strassler

On **Sunday, September 11th @ 10 am**, there will be a synagogue cemetery planning meeting.

- We are exploring the possibility of using a section of **Mount Sinai Cemetery in Portland** for members of Congregation Etz Chaim. This has been designated as an "interfaith section". There will be representation from Mount Sinai to answer questions. Brunch will be provided.
- If you are interested, but cannot attend, please contact me.
- If you have any questions you would like answered, please include them with your contact information.
- This meeting is a litmus test on whether to continue pursuing a cemetery section for Congregation Etz Chaim. If you are interested in the possibility of buying a plot and will not be at the meeting, please also contact David.

David Strassler: [mail@etzchaimme.org](mailto:mail@etzchaimme.org) or 967-5833

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".  
\$



## ***HIGH HOLIDAYS 2011***

Plans are underway to again usher in the New Year with High Holiday services at Etz Chaim. The ritual committee began last year to introduce some changes to the service which we hope to continue. Cantorial leadership will be provided, as in the past, by Scott Rapaport, who after 20+ years with us, is an extended member of our congregation family. Our own Beth Strassler, cantorial student, will share the bimah with Scott and will provide variety in vocals and melodies.

We much appreciated Scott's extra effort last year in offering historical and theological commentary on many prayers and the service as a whole. We have tried to introduce more English, Hebrew transliteration, and congregational readers to the service as well. Our goal has been to make the service more accessible, participatory, and cognitively as well as spiritually meaningful to all levels of Hebrew/traditional backgrounds.

David Strassler will again lead the Family Service on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and will blend the conclusion of that service with the adult service upstairs. His mix of education, stories, and prayer "highlights" for all ages is a joy to behold!! We are very excited to have our of very talented alumni chant Haftorah this year: Joseph Strassler, Elyse Oliver, Beniam Hollman, Maia Mulcahy and Beth Strassler.

For many in the extended Jewish community, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Yizkor (=remember), and the final Break Fast represent the spiritual and family center of the Jewish year. We are pleased to again offer an invitation to join us to the entire community, college students, retired "snowbirds", and out-of-town visitors.

Questions or requests to participate in some way can be directed to David Strassler at 967-5833.

*By Alan Fink, on behalf of the Etz Chaim Ritual Committee and entire Board*

### ***A Note from the Board***

***President Emeritus Arnold Shapiro  
and the entire Board of Directors  
of Congregation Etz Chaim  
wish you and your family  
a healthy, happy and peaceful New Year.***

### **High Holiday Services at Congregation Etz Chaim Fall 2011/ Hebrew Year 5772**

#### **Rosh Hashanah**

Evening of Wednesday, September 28: 6:15 pm

Thursday, September 29: 9:30 am

Preliminary Prayers: 9 am

Family Service: 11:30 am

*Tashlich to follow service*

Evening Service: 6:15 pm

Friday, September 30: 9:30 am

No evening service

#### **Yom Kippur**

Evening of Friday, October 7

Kol Nidre: 6:00 pm

Saturday, October 8: 9:30 am

Yizkor (Memorial Svc): 11 am

Family Service: 11 am

Afternoon Service: 4 pm

*Community Break Fast following  
the conclusion of Services*

## Mikvat Shalom

By Sue Rubin

Mikvat Shalom was created recently, as a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping a kosher mikvah available for the entire Jewish community.

### Mikvat

1. A ritual purification bath taken by Jews on certain occasions, as before the Sabbath or after menstruation or ejaculation.
2. A building, room, or fixture in which this bath takes place.

Ritual immersion is an ancient part of Jewish tradition, noted in Torah and later Rabbinic commentaries. Today, there are only a few cases where immersion is still designated as a mitzvah or an act required by Jewish law: converts to Judaism, brides, and women observing nid-dah. Mikvah have also been used for other purposes. Today, mikvah are starting to be used to celebrate or observe other life passages.

Historically, most temples had a mikvah, including our own, but as time passed and Jewish communities changed, the mikvah disappeared. The only mikvah in Southern Maine has for years been the one at Shaarey Tphiloh in Portland. This mikvah was old and run down and did not serve the community well. All that has changed through the hard work of Mikvat Shalom.

Mikvat Shalom was created recently, as a non-profit or-

ganization dedicated to keeping a kosher mikvah available for the entire Jewish community. The board of Mikvah Shalom is a diverse group of people representing the entire Jewish community. We have taken over the responsibility for maintenance and beautification of the mikvah.

Through the hard work of Mikvah USA and our board, we were matched with a donor and the revitalization began. In the last 2 months, the mikvah has been totally re-done. Everything from pool to tiles and paint is brand new. Soon we will have a beautiful new mikvah.

Our goal for the coming year is to educate our community about mikvah and how to use the mikvah to celebrate life events.

For more information, or how you can help Mikvat Shalom, please contact me or visit our website: [www.mikvatshalom.org](http://www.mikvatshalom.org)

## Seeds of Peace

By Sue Rubin

At the end of May, The Education Committee tries to do a program with our Hebrew School and Sunday School teachers. We've done fun topics like writing poetry, but this year we tackled a more serious topic, creating dialogue. Our guests were two people from Seeds Of Peace. SOP, founded in 1993, brings young people from areas of conflict together to advance reconciliation and coexistence. The dialogue sessions are the core of how SOP gets these young people to talk.

Sarah Rubin and Pious Ali have worked at Seeds for a number of years. Pious, the director of the Maine Interfaith Youth Alliance, has

been a facilitator for 8 years at Seeds. Pious described how a group of strangers from very different cultures can become a cohesive unit who can talk truthfully and honestly with each other even when the topics are difficult. Sarah, the assistant director of the camp and the head of the Maine Seeds program, told us about some of the more human aspects of camp. Some of us had a working knowledge of Seeds from TV stories done about the camp, but these two young people added much to our understanding of how the camp really works.

Our Hebrew School and Sunday School faculty seemed to really enjoy talking to Sarah and Pious. It made for a great end to our year.

## Sunday School Schedule

***Sunday School is coming back soon for your family's enjoyment!***

***Bring your children at 10 a.m. downstairs and make fun crafts, listen to stories and songs, and enjoy snacks with us!***

***See you soon!***

***Adrienne, Jeff, Tara & Ethan Levy***

<b><u>Holiday</u></b>	<b><u>Sunday School</u></b>
<i>Sukkot</i>	<i>Oct 16, 2011</i>
<i>Shabbat</i>	<i>Nov 13</i>
<i>Chanukah</i>	<i>Dec 18</i>
<i>Tu b'Shevat</i>	<i>Feb 5, 2012</i>
<i>Purim</i>	<i>Mar 4</i>
<i>Pesach</i>	<i>Apr 1</i>



Make a kugel or brisket as good as your bubbeh's? Share your culinary skills with us! We're looking for batampte (tasty) Jewish treats!



## Jewish Community Alliance Jewish Food Festival and Cook-Off!

Come have dinner with us!  
Thursday, September 15, 2011  
5:30 – 7:30pm

Congregation Bet Ha'am, 81 Westbrook Street, South Portland



### Four Categories!!!

★ Kugel ★ Brisket ★ Latkes ★ Other

**\*\*Kosher meats and pareve kugels welcome but not required. Participants should identify if the dish is kosher and/or made in a kosher kitchen.**

Open to the community.

Enter a dish or make a donation at the door.

The categories will be judged by local judges and a surprise guest! If you are interested in submitting an entry or to RSVP, please contact Samantha Johnson at 772.1959 or [sjohnson@mainejewish.org](mailto:sjohnson@mainejewish.org) by August 29<sup>th</sup>.

#### Notice from:

#### **Samantha Johnson**

Campaign Coordinator/Office Manager  
Jewish Community Alliance  
57 Ashmont Street  
Portland, ME 04101  
207.772.1959 x105



**Photo from [Keepmecurrent.com](http://Keepmecurrent.com)**

... Rabbi Geffen received many inquiries from other rabbis across the United States, inquiring whether Coca-Cola was kosher, and whether it was kosher for Passover.

## Rabbi Tobias Geffen: The Koshering of Coca Cola

Rabbi Geffen was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of Av, 5630 (August 1 1870), in the Lithuanian city of Kovno. He immigrated to the United States in 1903 and soon after, became the Rabbi of Congregation Ahavas Tzedek in the City of New York. In 1907 he moved to Canton, Ohio to become the Rabbi in a small congregation. In 1910 he relocated to Atlanta, Georgia, where he served as Rabbi of Congregation Shearith Israel for close to 60 years. Once in Atlanta, the Rabbi organized the first Hebrew school, which offered a daily Talmud class. A catalyst in the area of kashrus, he standardized the regulation of kosher supervision in Atlanta, GA under his central authority, and was the leader of the Southern division of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis (Agudath HaRabonim). He published many works, but is most remembered for his kashrus certification of Coca-Cola, both for daily, as well as Passover, consumption.

Since he lived in Atlanta near the Coca-Cola Company's headquarters, Rabbi Geffen received many inquiries from

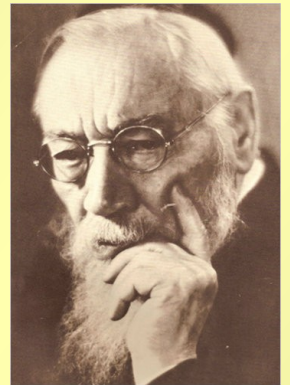
other rabbis across the United States, inquiring whether Coca-Cola was kosher, and whether it was kosher for Passover. He asked the company for a list of the beverage's ingredients. Rabbi Geffen was provided with the Coca-Cola formula, a closely guarded trade secret, on the condition that he would never, ever, disclose the secret formula. Rabbi Geffen found that one ingredient was glycerin, produced from tallow from non-kosher beef. He convinced the company to substitute a vegetable-based glycerin.

A similar problem presented itself concerning the use of Coca-Cola during Passover, when one is not permitted to consume products derived from grains. One of the sweeteners used in Coca-Cola included traces of alcohol produced from grain, rendering the drink impermissible during Passover. The company's chemists found that a sweetener made from cane sugar and beet sugar could be used without changing the beverage's flavor.



## Rabbi Tobias Geffen: The Koshering of Coca Cola, cont.

By Jack Schraeter



Satisfied that Coca-Cola's ingredients were kosher, Rabbi Geffen issued a responsum in 1935 that Coca-Cola was kosher for year-round consumption. "With the help of God, I have been able to uncover a pragmatic solution according to which there would be no question nor any doubt concerning the ingredients of Coca Cola", he wrote. "It is now possible for the most stringent Halachist to enjoy Coca Cola throughout the year and on Passover."

Rabbi Geffen was one of the longest-lived Rabbis in America; he died on 4 Adar I, 5730 (Feb. 10, 1970), having lived 99 years, 5 months and 11 days.

### Sources

Geffen, Louis (1988). "Biography of Tobias Geffen".

Sherman, Moshe D. (1996). Orthodox Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook. Westport, CT.

Hammack, William (1957). "He's the Dean of Southern Rabbis". The Atlanta Journal and Constitution.

Feldberg, Michael (ed.) (2002). "Beyond Seltzer Water: The Kashering of Coca-Cola". Blessings of Freedom: Chapters in American Jewish History. New York: American Jewish Historical Society.

Ferris, Marcie Cohen (2005). Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press

Satisfied that Coca-Cola's ingredients were kosher, Rabbi Geffen issued a responsum in 1935 that Coca-Cola was kosher for year-round consumption





## Let's See if Phyllis is Home

By David Strassler

It was time to say *Kaddish* during our Friday night service. Two members of our community, Thelma and Edna Mae, were hoping to say the prayer, to mark and remember the anniversary of the death of a loved one. But we only had nine people, one short for a minyan.

Where would we get our tenth person? Would Phyllis be home? Would she be willing to join us? She had joined us other weeks for the service.....

Thelma got up with her walker. Michael joined her and they strolled down the hallway to knock on Phyllis' door.

Phyllis was glad to join us. Within five minutes, a minyan was made. *Kaddish* was recited and the service continued.

This was one of the highlights of my summer while leading Friday Night Services at The Atria assisted living facility in Kennebunk. My mother moved there from Maryland in the beginning of the summer. Now there are five Jewish residents and an opportunity

to expand our outreach in the Jewish community.

The Atria was very kind to let us use a social area on the second floor. They often provided a challah. And the area was air-conditioned! Many different people joined us throughout the summer. It was nice to see familiar faces. Except for the situation I have described, we had a minyan every week. Sometimes twenty people gathered together.

After each service, we joined Thelma in her room as she recited her blessings over her "electric candlesticks" for Shabbat. To be there...a blessing for us all.

As the summer has been winding down, Beth and I have been trying to decide whether to continue these Friday evening services during the year. After a recent service, we shared these thoughts with our group. My mother said very clearly: "This is a very wonderful thing. You should continue it." We have her answer.

We hope to see you some Friday evening at *The Atria in Kennebunk @ 6:30 pm.*



Board of Directors at  
Congregation Etz Chaim

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Website:

<http://etzchaimme.org/index.html>

## Shabbat Services

David Strassler

Shabbat Services will begin again on  
Saturday, September 17, 2011,  
and services will continue to be held  
on the 1st and 3rd Saturday each  
month,  
beginning at 9:30 a.m.



Middlebury College,  
Middlebury, Vermont  
Photo from <http://www.britannica.co>

We each participated in a ceremony where we signed a pledge not to speak English for the duration of the program.



Ilker from Turkey

## Seven Weeks in Middlebury

by Beth Strassler

I was one of 52 students who spent seven weeks this summer in a Hebrew language immersion program at Middlebury College in Vermont. There were students studying in nine other languages on the campus for the summer: Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, German, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, & Russian.

We each participated in a ceremony where we signed a pledge not to speak English for the duration of the program.

Hebrew faculty members from Brandeis who developed the program and wrote the text book were with us—constantly—during those seven weeks. They taught us for five hours each day, ate their meals with us, and participated in social and athletic activities.

One faculty member was constantly within hearing distance, to deliver gentle corrections whenever necessary when they heard a student's incorrect word choice or grammar faux pas.

The students were from around the US and around the world: California, Arizona,

Texas, New York, Cincinnati, Boston, Istanbul. They were of all ages and each had a different reason for attending. Many were in graduate programs in Middle Eastern studies or politics. Several were rabbinical students. Others were going to Israel in September to study or complete an internship. I was there to better understand the language that I use to pray and chant Torah.

At times, it was very frustrating. Yoga classes were in Hebrew. So were the soccer and volleyball games. Many otherwise competent, capable adults struggled to communicate a simple message in or outside of class. But I was impressed with the patience shown, by both teachers and other students, as I slowly put the words and proper verb forms together in conversation.

We watched at least three movies a week in Hebrew with English subtitles. My favorite was the first Harry Potter movie, because the dialogue is pretty simple (I understood a lot of the Hebrew!!) and, well, I just love the Harry Pot-

ter movies. There were many Israeli movies and TV miniseries. One TV series mimicked the daily trials and tribulations of thirty-something adults, as they dated and tried to maintain a modern orthodox lifestyle.

Another focused on the impossible Romeo-and-Juliet type of love that developed between a secular, Russian young man and his beautiful, ultra orthodox neighbor.

I learned several songs to sing with guitar: Lyrics I could understand while singing them. I began to write poems in Hebrew and found I had both a passion and some talent for it. My keyboarding in Hebrew is much faster, and my writing skills are much better now. The hardest part for me is still conversation: Retrieving the words and putting them together with the correct verb forms is going to take me a bit longer. But I am getting there!



Morah Esther Shorr



*Singing in the Cafeteria*



## ***PJ Library Story Telling & Ice Cream Social***

**When:** Sunday, September 11 from 1-2 pm

**Where:** Congregation Etz Chaim, Biddeford

**Who:** Families raising Jewish children between ages 6 months and 8 years

**Cost:** Free

PJ LIBRARY is a national book program implemented in York County one year ago. It is a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, and made possible here through its partnership with Congregation Etz Chaim.

PJ Library mails free, high quality Jewish children's books and music to families on a monthly basis. So far, we have 27 children signed up to explore the core values of Judaism with their parents, through the art and literature of these free books.

If you know of other families to include, invite them to our ice cream social and/or have them sign up on the PJ Library web-site:

<http://www.pjlibrary.org/>

We look forward to seeing you for the story telling, followed by a "make your own sundae" social. You will even leave with a new book!

**Please RSVP to:**

**Barbara Simensky:**

**Phone:** 282-4243 or

**Email:** simbar73@maine.rr.com

**PJ Library mails  
free, high  
quality Jewish  
children's books  
and music to  
families on a  
monthly basis.**



***Last day of class  
Beth & friends at Middlebury College***



## 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.”



**Etz Chaim photo 1916  
from MacArthur  
Public Library**

## York County (YC) Jewish Community

This newsletter is published four or five 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.

Adrianne Levy, Editor & Layout Design Consultant:

Levy family & some 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.

“It offers local perspectives on historical and contemporary aspects of Jewish life.”

## 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:** *Jeff & Adrianne Levy: 284-9002*

**Shabbat Potlucks:** *Linda: 967-4047*



Good Food.  
A Great Place.  
Together with friends.

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For more information please contact: [mail@etzchaimme.org](mailto:mail@etzchaimme.org)

## Complements Art Gallery Warwick, Rhode Island

Hosted by Domenic Rignanesi

**\$25 Per-Person**

**7 PM** - Art Preview

**7:30 PM** - Art Auction

**10 PM** - Conclusion

Proceeds go towards supporting  
Congregation Etz Chaim, Biddeford, Maine.  
[www.etzchaimme.org](http://www.etzchaimme.org)

## York County Jewish Community News



Congregation Etz Chaim  
PO Box 905  
Kennebunk, ME 04043

Address Label