

York County Jewish Community News



CONGREGATION ETZ CHAIM
BIDDEFORD, MAINE

August 2015/5775

NewCAJE Conference

By Rob Pierce

"The religious anti-Semitism that reigned in the time of the Inquisition and the nationalistic anti-Semitism that prevailed during the Dreyfus Affair were succeeded by the racial anti-Semitism of the twentieth century, the worst of them all. Then, in the twenty-first century, a new breed of anti-Semitism sprang up, masquerading under the name of anti-Zionism", wrote Robert Badiner, former French minister of justice, last February, and published in the New York Review of Books this summer.

This sentiment of what is truly behind "anti-Zionism," and "anti-Israel," as a nation, was the key topic to which I was seeking workshops to hear from other Jewish educators at this year's "NewCAJE," a conference for Jewish educators, which was held August 2-5, at the University of Hartford.

Instead, I was fortunate to attend an array of enlightening sessions that covered a broader canvas of topics, ideas and lessons learned than the agenda I had originally planned for. The sessions were led by a diverse group of people, many of them rabbis, and others who are educators by profession. As a group, these people spanned all of the most common Jewish sects.

The following are stories and points of interest I'd like to share with you:

At a synagogue in Bethesda, Maryland, **a Muslim group asked leaders of a synagogue if they could use the space once a week**, and it caused a lot of dissent at the synagogue. The group was allowed to use the space, but the rabbi felt that his community did not handle the communication and fear as well as it might have done. The rabbi presented lessons learned and ways to move beyond fear, with the objective being **peaceful co-existence**, in part by using Jewish texts to help address some of the ways that we, as Jews, are supposed to interact with strangers, and with Muslims.

Rather than being exclusionary within our Jewish communities and buildings, we need to consider Leviticus, I Kings, and Jeremiah, to welcome the stranger, and seek peace in the land, as we are strangers, too.

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Shabbat Services

Join us for Shabbat Services starting in October:
every 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month, beginning at 9:30 am.

Upcoming schedule:

October 3 rd :	First service of the year
October 17 th :	Izzy Toth's Bat Mitzvah (community invited)
November 7 th :	Julia Milligan's Bat Mitzvah (community invited)
November 28 th :	Austin Macomber's Bar Mitzvah (community invited)

High Holiday Services

Rosh Hashanah:

Sun, 9/13: 6:45 pm

Mon, 9/14: Prelim Prayers: 9 am

- Shacharit: 9:15 am
- Torah Service: 10:15 am
- Hineini: 11:15 am
- Service Ends 12:15 pm
- Tashlich follows approximately 12:30 pm
- Evening Service: 6:45 pm

Tues, 9/15: Prelim Prayers: 9 am

- Shacharit: 9:15 am
- No Evening Service

Questions? Call Beth or David at 967-5833

High Holiday Services

Yom Kippur:

Sun, 9/20: High Holiday Sunday School: 10-12:00
Families are asked to stay with their children—coffee and snacks included

Tues, 9/22:

- Kol Nidre 6:30 pm

Wed, 9/23: 9:15 am

- Yizkor (Memorial Service): 11:15 am
- Afternoon Service: 5:00 pm
- Community Break Fast 6:45 pm (approx)

Sunday School!!

Sunday School at Congregation Etz Chaim is geared toward our youngest Congregation members and their families. Typical ages are a few weeks old to age 5, but we've be known to have children up to age 13.

Sunday School is coordinated by families to help local York County families feel connected, and to teach the youngest members about the Jewish holidays and the community around them. We love to have fun and eat delicious Jewish foods, too!

We normally meet on a monthly basis, and families rotate coordination of each session. This year, our first Sunday School will be led by Beth and David Strassler, on Sunday, September 20th, from 10:00 am-12:00 pm at Congregation Etz Chaim. This will be instead of the High Holiday Family Service. We will celebrate the High Holidays with stories, crafts, songs and food.

Please feel free to contact Denise Hammond at 207-251-1282 for more information or dghammond@roadrunner.com. More dates and details to come.

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's New on www.etzchaim.org

Check out www.etzchaim.org for the **High Holiday schedule**, some great recipes for the holidays, and a new Member Spotlight about our very own Ethan Levy!

If you have **recipes** to share or **ideas** for the website, or about our Facebook page, please contact Leah Macomber at: ellemaco@yahoo.com

NYC slide show: <http://etzchaimme.org/2015-nyc-teen-trip-slideshow/>

Hebrew School-5776

Calling all students-old and new.

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 1st 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 10/1, school will end at 5:15.

Hope to see y'all there!

Any questions, contact David: strassler@roadrunner.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 third 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 book-plate).

Please send your donation, with your name and the name of those you would like to remember, **by September 1st** 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 at: strassler@roadrunner.com

The Top Ten Reasons Why We Will Miss Barbara at Hebrew School

by Beth Strassler (with a little help from my Hebrew School friends)

When Barbara Simensky retired from her day job ten years ago, she began teaching in our weekly Hebrew School. Lucky us! She taught our youngest students their alef-bet, how to say blessings over the challah, candles and wine, and the Four Questions for the Model Seder. She always taught why it is important to wear a yarmulke inside the synagogue and enjoyed doing holiday crafts—as long as someone else led them.

Now she has decided to retire from teaching Hebrew School, although we all hope she will still come and help out each week. Here are the top ten reasons why we will miss Barbara next year at Hebrew School:

10. She knows a lot about the history of our synagogue.
9. She always asks for books from the library because she loves to read to her class.
8. She keeps the Hebrew School running on time.
7. She is a warm, friendly face we look forward to seeing each Thursday afternoon.
6. We love hearing the music playing in her classroom.
5. She loves to sing in the classroom and during services and her joy is infectious.
4. She does a great job of teaching our youngest students how to respect the synagogue and wear their yarmulkes.
3. Her smiles always make us feel good.
2. Whenever she greets someone, she gives the best hugs.
1. She is everyone's Jewish Grandmother!
We will all miss seeing our Bubbe each week.



The Arnold Shapiro Community Service Award

The Arnold Shapiro Community Service Award was created to honor Arnold Shapiro's commitment and service to Congregation Etz Chaim. Arnold Shapiro was raised in Biddeford and attended Hebrew School at Congregation Etz Chaim. He celebrated his Bar Mitzvah in 1944. In 1980, Arnold Shapiro became the president of Congregation Etz Chaim, at a time when other Board members wanted to close the synagogue due to a lack of membership. He spent countless hours at Congregation Etz Chaim doing everything from organizing High Holiday Services to attending Bar and Bat Mitzvah services to recruiting volunteers to supervising building repairs. For over 30 years, Arnold Shapiro unselfishly guided the congregation to the vibrant community it is today.

Goal: A scholarship will be provided to a member of Congregation Etz Chaim who is a graduating high school senior, to support their post-secondary study in college, professional or trade school, or other post-secondary training or opportunities.

Amount: \$500-\$1,000.

When: The scholarship will be awarded annually in June.

Eligibility: Graduating high school seniors who have been actively involved in providing service to the Congregation Etz Chaim community.

All nominations will be reviewed by and the recipient will be chosen by a committee comprised of the President of the Etz Chaim Board of Directors, one Board member, and an Education Committee member. The Scholarship is supported by the Shapiro Family.

Goal: A scholarship will be provided to a member of Congregation Etz Chaim who is a graduating high school senior, to support their post-secondary study in college, professional or trade school, or other post-secondary training or opportunities.



Eligibility: Graduating high school seniors who have been actively involved in providing service to the Congregation Etz Chaim community.

NewCAJE, cont. from pg 1

Zionism as a nationalistic movement is not and never was a religious movement. The leaders of Zionism were secular Jews, and thus, one might argue that anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitic. This idea can help untangle the web of conflict and help for a peaceful understanding and path forward for Muslim-Jewish relations, but only if and when non-Jewish nations and people fully accept that Israel is a legitimate state.

A rabbi addressed **ways to look at, share, and discuss Jewish texts** that might seem at odds with what we've come to believe as Jewish values. The point is that difficult texts (and questions) should be confronted and not avoided. And, we should always realize and respect that there are many different ways to read and interpret texts.

Applying traditional Jewish questions to different ways of thinking, and asking questions, can help students learn how to think about and ask different kinds of questions, to become **critical thinkers**.

For example, different lenses of questioning include exploring the big picture, creativity that explores alternatives, factual questions, and questions that explore benefits, cautions, and emotions. By thinking about and applying these different kinds of questions to a text, topic, or theme, we can gain a broader and clearer picture, or reach a more educated conclusion.

Regarding **mixed marriages** (where a non-Jew marries a Jewish person), we discussed **inclusionary best practices** for a Jewish community to welcome, invite, and interact to make non-Jews feel welcome. More discussion was drawn out about feeling excluded, that we've all experienced at one time or another, and what we can do to avoid making others feel this way.

By using personal narratives to tell and listen to how another person has experienced being excluded, each of us in this session shared a personal experience, and also listened to and provided a restatement of another's narrative to help support them, show empathy, and help to make them feel welcome.

All of these sessions were extremely helpful for my ongoing learning to **be a better educator** at Etz Chaim, but they also helped me by **connecting me in a personal way to a diverse, open, and intelligent Jewish community** that meets for this conference each year.

This was my fourth time attending a NewCAJE conference, and I am very thankful for Etz Chaim's support! I highly recommend this conference to any educator, or anyone looking to learn from, and connect with, a special community of Jewish educators from around the world.



NewCAJE 6

August 2-5, 2015
University of Hartford
Hartford, CT

Early Bird Residential Rate: \$745
Early Bird Deadline April 16, 2015
Some Scholarships Available
Registration opening February 2015

Questions? Email Rebecca@newcoje.org or call 857-288-8765



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POTLUCK NEWS

It's that time of year when we begin celebrating our Friday night Shabbat Potluck dinners. Please come join us for friendly camaraderie to welcome in the Sabbath.

We had some interesting programs & speakers last year & are in the process of exploring new possibilities for this year. Potluck dates will be announced shortly. We have exciting holiday parties planned.

Questions to either Barbara (simbar73@maine.rr.com) OR Linda (petsrluv1@gmail.com)

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



**You could save trees & money by
receiving your newsletter & all Jewish
community announcements electronically.**

Just write to our mail address & ask to

"Go Green!"

New York City Trip

by Joshua Bilsky

We started off from a stop and ride in Biddeford Maine. It was early morning and we were all tired from getting up about an hour before. After loading up the white van, we embarked on our long journey to New York City.

Along the way we stopped at the New York style bagel shop. There we ate our breakfast of challah French toast. After a delicious meal, we got on the road again, to finish the long ride. Once in New York we unpacked the van, tired from playing a game of monopoly.

We went to a Jewish museum. The enriching experience was a fun and exciting way to learn about both the art forms and culture of both early and modern Jewish people. After the museum, we went for a walk around the park and visited the different monuments. We saw the people of New York City and observed amazing communities and sites. Afterwards, we checked into the hotel. After a long rest, we took a walk to a Chinese food restaurant and then went to the Broadway show "On the Town". The play was about a few men from the Navy taking a night out on the town. After the show, we went back to the hotel for a good night's sleep.

The next morning, we got up and left the hotel. We first visited Eldridge Street Synagogue. It was an educational experience, to see such an old temple that was still standing. We then walked around China town and visited the different shops and museums. After that, we climbed back into the van and went to Jewish Theological Seminary University. We took a tour of the entire campus and then we went to get lunch at the cafeteria. After that, we traveled back to Biddeford. It wasn't until midnight that we got back to the park and ride.

I loved this exciting trip. Our days were packed full of site seeing and exploring New York City. The trip was amazing and I would love to go again.

Pastoral Care & Counseling, or Whatever You Call it in Hebrew

by Beth Strassler

I spent two weeks this summer taking an intensive course titled "Introduction to Pastoral Care and Counseling" at Boston College. Yes, Boston College is a Catholic school, but the teacher was actually a Protestant scholar and minister. And yes, I was the only Jewish person in a class of seventeen. It was terrific!

As we progressed through the first week, I sensed that something was amiss, but I couldn't put my finger on it. Then I read a chapter in one of our books titled "Pastoral Care from a Jewish Perspective". Written by Howard Cohen, a pastoral counselor with a Jewish background, he put his finger right on the struggle I was experiencing. He explains that even though Jews and Christians may use the same words, many do not have the same meaning.

The professional training in pastoral care includes readings by many Christian theologians and philosophers. The result is that Jewish students are trying to learn about pastoral care, but many of the concepts are rooted in specific Christian premises. Authors repeatedly use terms like "atonement, grace, messiah and salvation". When Christians hear these terms, they think of similar ideas. However, Jews neither start with nor share these theological beliefs. It gets confusing.

As I followed the bibliography trail to find similar articles, another author said it well. He quoted Winston Churchill's comments about the USA and Great Britain: "We are two countries separated by the same language". Simply substitute the word 'religions' for 'countries', and the relationship between Christianity and Judaism in the field of pastoral care is relevant: We are two religions separated by a common language.

I also suspected that the *philosophy* of the practice is different. I found that even though the *essence* of pastoral care has always existed in Judaism, the articulation of it as a distinct professional role is fairly new. It has always been an important Jewish *individual* responsibility to extend oneself to ease the suffering of another in a community. But the creation of a professional role for this has not always existed.

Many authors commented that there is no equivalent term that means "pastoral care" in Hebrew. Whenever a student of the Hebrew language hears this, red lights begin flashing in the mind's eye: The absence of a term usually means that it is not translatable not only in Hebrew, but also in the Jewish life experience. It will take an abundance of resources and terminology to understand the nuances of this concept that is Christian in nature.

To further complicate the situation, Jews like to use Hebrew terms in the conversation. The relevant terms

I found most often in the literature are:

: גמילות חסדים emiloot chasidim (acts of loving kindness)

: חניכום אבילים nichum avelim (comforting the mourner)

: בקור חולים bikkur cholim (visiting the sick), and,

of course, מצוה mitzvah

Rabbi Arthur Green writes: "A mitzvah or a commandment is a deed in which humans are given an opportunity to fulfill the will of God..... God has created the world that is not yet perfect. The claim of mitzvah is that there is work left to us to do, work that will make us "partners of God in the world's creation"..... (Green, 103)

All of the Hebrew terms I have listed are considered mitzvah(s) (Hebrew plural: mitzvot). They fit under the category of "loving kindness". They also represent behaviors of God that we Jews aspire to emulate. "To walk in God's ways" is to imitate God's behaviors and to be present in the moment with another person.

Cont. on pg. 11

Pastoral Care & Counseling, or Whatever You Call it in Hebrew, cont.

Cohen suggests that the story of the forbidden fruit is the first documented case of pastoral care. Adam and Eve (counselees) have eaten the forbidden fruit, realized their mistake and are 'hiding' from God (pastoral counselor). Some minutes pass. They hear God pass by. More minutes pass. God is slow to respond, cautious, and the first thing God does is ask a question: "Where are you?" Does this mean that the omnipotent God cannot tell where they are physically? —probably not. God is asking where they are mentally and psychologically, in relation to the event that has happened. God is assessing the situation before taking any action. What follows shows that while God holds firm to the limits set, God is still compassionate and not judgmental. They must leave the garden because they violated the basic rule of living there. However, before they are sent out into the world, God makes garments for them and tenderly clothes them.

To emulate God, the ultimate pastoral counselor, means to first ask questions, assess a situation before taking action, and being compassionate, not judgmental. In doing acts of loving kindness, we partner with God and imitate God's behaviors for the benefit of others.

One Talmudic story asks "If Rabbi Yohanan had the power to cure other people, why could he not cure himself? The Talmudic answer is that "just as prisoners cannot free themselves from their incarceration, so prisoners of wounded bodies, ailing spirits and devastated souls cannot heal themselves." (Taylor & Zucker)

Judaism suggests that when a family is experiencing suffering in illness or loss, this creates a sense of separation from the community. If you have ever waited for test results, for a surgery to be finished or for a loved one to be upgraded from the critical condition list, you have probably experienced that strange sense that time has a different meaning. You put the rest of your life on hold. The minutes on the clock are irrelevant to your situation. You are in your own little world of disease or loss.

It is incumbent upon each Jewish person—not just the rabbi or cantor or professional counselor—to build a rapport with the family who is estranged from the rest of the world. To effectively do this, we need to summon up our own feelings of being a stranger and remember that the idea of being a stranger is inherent to our Jewish identity. "And you shall love the stranger for you, too, were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Deuteronomy 10:19).

Jewish law codes suggest that שכינה Shechinah (God's presence) is with each person who is sick at the head of the bed. Our job in pastoral care is to be present with those who are suffering, but to stay away from the head of the bed, so as not to get in the way of God's work. We let the person(s) suffering take the lead in conversation. We listen to them. We are witness to their difficulties. Our presence reminds each person of God's presence. Most importantly, we let them know they are not alone.

References

1. Cohen, Howard. "Pastoral Care from a Jewish Perspective". In *Injustice and the Care of Souls: Taking Oppression Seriously in Pastoral Care*. edited by Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook and Karen Montagno, 89-101. Minneapolis: Fortress. 2009.
2. Green, Arthur. (2012) *These are the Words: A Vocabulary of Jewish Spiritual Life*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2012.
3. Taylor, Bonita E. and Zucker, David J. "Nearly Everything We Wish our Non-Jewish Supervisors Had Known About Us as Jewish Supervisees". *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 56 (4), 2002: 327-338.

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."

Congregation Etz Chaim in

Biddeford, Maine

Visit our website at:

<http://etzchaimme.org/>

Synagogue Contacts

Please mail **Membership dues** to:

**PO Box 905
Kennebunk, ME 04043**

Memorial Plaques, Prayer books,

Etz Chaim books of Torah:

Hebrew School/Services:

Shabbat Potlucks:

Library

Sunday School:

David Strassler:

967-5833

Beth & David Strassler:

967-5833

Linda Federman:

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