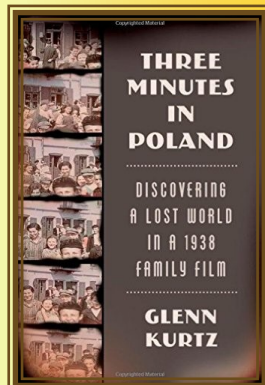


April 2016/5776

Congregation Etz Chaim



Glenn Kurtz May 12 visit re: Three Minutes in Poland

By Rob Pierce

On May 12, author Glenn Kurtz will be visiting Etz Chaim to give a talk about his book, Three Minutes in Poland, and the history behind his writing it.

As stated on his website, "Glenn Kurtz is the author of Three Minutes in Poland: Discovering a Lost World in a 1938 Family Film (Farrar, Straus & Giroux 2014), which was selected as a "Best Book of 2014" by The New Yorker, The Boston Globe, and National Public Radio."

The book is a history and a journey into the past. It covers a detailed world-wide investigation on both a personal nature and of a historical narrative, that was driven by the discovery of a three minute section of a home movie that was made by one of his grandfathers, David Kurtz, in 1938. The film was recorded during a trip to Europe that included a visit to Nasielsk, a Jewish village in Poland, where the family had come from before emigrating to America.

Kurtz spent four years of research and investigation trying to learn more about the film, and the people and places in the film. Kurtz found people in the film who had survived the Holocaust and were still alive. "Seventy years later, obsessed with my grandfather's few minutes of prewar film, I began to seek the traces of this lost community."

Part of what makes the book so powerful is the recognition that, just a year after the film was recorded, Germany invaded Poland and all but destroyed each and every one of such Jewish villages in Poland and in what used to be known as the Pale of Settlement.

The Pale of Settlement was a large region of land between western Russia and the eastern borders of Germany, Austria, and Hungary in which Jews were allowed to live. In many ways, it was an enclosed area where Jews were forced to live, but where they adapted and established a distinctive Yiddish culture and language.

I learned about Kurtz and his book by reading the short article in a recent edition of the Tufts alumni magazine. I learned that both my wife, Susan, and Glenn had graduated in 1984. Susan left the magazine open to the article on our coffee table for me to see and one thing led to another from there...

I am the teacher of the Teen Confirmation class at Congregation Etz Chaim. I have shared my strong interest in learning more about Yiddish culture and its connection to our Jewish past. Therefore, I contacted Mr. Kurtz, through his publicist, and let him know that the class would be reading his book, and asked if he did speaking engagements.

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The Smith Street Cemetery in South Portland was the first Jewish cemetery in Maine, established in 1875.

Non-Profit seeks to restore Jewish cemeteries in Portland, South Portland

By David Harry on February 1, 2016 at theForecaster.net

PORTLAND — A new nonprofit group has stepped forward to help preserve the legacy of the Portland-area Jewish community.

“One of the things we want to do is bring the cemeteries back into the communities,”

Southern Maine Jewish Cemetery Association President Wayne Goodman said Jan.

29. “There is a lot of heritage there. There is a lot of learning to do there.”

Goodman announced on Jan. 28, at the Etz Chaim Synagogue, that the association has taken title to Mount Sinai Cemetery on Hicks Street, off Warren Avenue. The SMJCA also took ownership of the Smith Street Cemetery in South Portland, just off Preble Street. The titles were previously held by local nonprofits.

Work to maintain, preserve and restore the cemeteries will begin immediately, and Goodman said the association hopes to raise \$1.2 million to fund current needs and an endowment for future operations and maintenance.

“We have a pretty good handle on what we need to fix things,” he said.

Goodman said deed to Smith Street cemetery were held by the Jewish Community

Alliance, and the Mt. Sinai Cemetery Association had been owned the Portland cemetery that is approaching a century of use.

The Smith Street Cemetery in South Portland was the first Jewish cemetery in Maine, established in 1875. It has not accepted burials for about 40 years, Goodman estimated, and is little-known even in the state’s Jewish community.

“I didn’t even know there was a cemetery when I was (a JCA) board member,” Goodman said.

He estimated there may be about a dozen burials annually at Mt. Sinai, but the majority of burials are at Temple Beth El Memorial Park, off Congress Street and Johnson Road near the Portland International Jetport.

Adjacent to Mt. Sinai is Mt. Carmel Cemetery, which will not be part of SMJCA’s operations and maintenance.

Mt. Sinai and Smith Street have fallen into some disrepair, with many stones and monuments toppled. Mt. Sinai sits near the headwaters of Capisic Brook, where wet ground and frost heaves are a problem, Goodman said.

(Continued on page 4)

Watches I Have Known – Book Review, Part 1

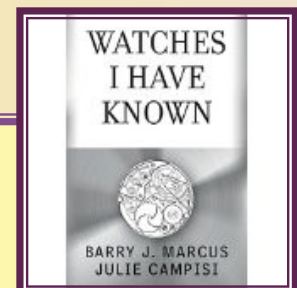
By Maureen King

"First, a disclaimer — I've known Julie Campisi and her dad "Papa Barry" (both Etz Chaim members!!) for over 15 years. I've sat at Julie's Seder table and Hanukkah feast and birthday parties and kitchen counter and listened to Papa Barry's stories. When she told me that he was writing them down, I was an enthusiastic supporter. And now that I've read their book, *Watches That I Have Known*, I'm encouraging you to give it a read. What started as a project to record the stories "for the grandchildren" became much more, and now stands a testament to a true craftsman and his work.

Barry J. Marcus is a master watchmaker and has been plying his trade for nearly 70 years. He and Julie have compiled a book of short stories and vignettes that give a peek into what a watchmaker does, and it's more than just replacing parts of a watch. Although I learned quite a bit about actual watch parts and Barry's processes for repair, I also learned that Barry is an astute student of human nature. His stories might seem to be about the many different watches he's repaired, but in reality, they are about the watches' owners, the emotional attachments people acquire from their watches, and time.

Watches come to Barry from far and wide. Through his many years at the bench, he has met and repaired thousands of watches. Barry's touching encounters with many of the watch owners and inheritors are a wonderful window into the human side of his business. His customers find him through jewelry stores, recommendations from friends and acquaintances, and now the Internet. Many make a long drive to see if Barry can fix a special watch that belonged to a beloved family member. The watches are restored to running order, and many of Barry's customers leave restored as well.

Read *Watches I Have Known* to find out what I mean! The whole book full of stories is just like having a very long coffee break (black, no sugar) with Barry. The Samuel Osher Memorial Library and Etz Chaim will be hosting a book talk with Barry and Julie. The date is still being arranged, but rest assured that coffee will be served so that you can enjoy a coffee break with Barry and hear some of his wonderful stories!!



Non-Profit seeks to restore Jewish cemeteries in Portland, South Portland

By David Harry on February 1, 2016
from the *Forecaster.net*

At Smith Street, the ground is mostly gravel, and Goodman said one memorial obelisk sits so precariously it is marked by yellow hazard tape.

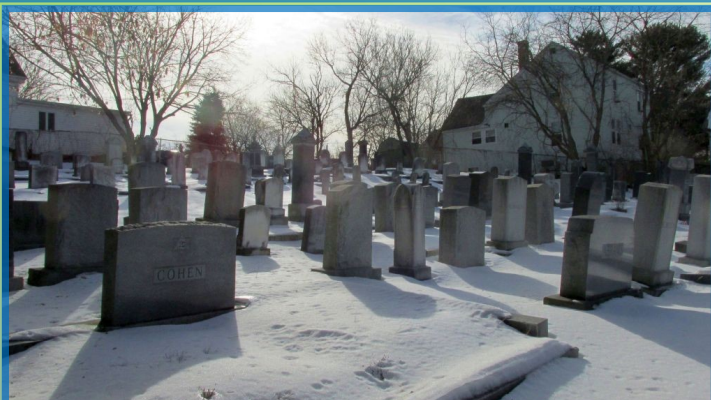
"It is hardly a religious symbol," he said, "but it would keep somebody from getting hurt."

The idea for an association took root about two years ago, Goodman said. He became involved when he noted some headstones for his family members had shifted because of unstable ground.

Mt. Sinai has a caretaker, and Goodman said the tight space in the cemetery makes it difficult to use heavy equipment, so graves are dug by hand. The caretaker will also be responsible for basic maintenance at Smith Street.

The large financial burden for upkeep and repair is due in part to the lack of new burials at the cemeteries, Goodman said.

"(The cemeteries) are going to be resource spenders, not revenue generators as they were 80 or 90 years ago," he said. "We have to build a reserve so we can take care of them into perpetuity."



The Southern Maine Jewish Cemetery Association has taken over operation and maintenance of this cemetery on Smith Street in South Portland.



Wayne Goodman, president of the new Southern Maine Jewish Cemetery Association, at the graves of his grandfather and great-grandparents Jan. 29 in Mt. Sinai Cemetery in Portland. "One of the things we want to do is bring the

Occasion Donations

by Julie Campisi

A wonderful way to honor the memory of a loved one or commemorate a special occasion is to make a donation to Congregation Etz Chaim. Donations can be made in memory, in honor, in celebration, or to recognize a person or event. When you make a donation, an acknowledgement is sent to the family or person being honored.

In future newsletters, donations of this type will be listed. The amount of the donation will not be published, just that the donation was received, the occasion and who made the donation. For example, *The Campisi Family made a donation commemorating Barry Marcus' 80th Birthday.*

Of course, you can specify your donation not be included in the newsletter or you can remain anonymous.

If you have any questions, please contact a board member or e-mail Julie at

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. Please submit your application by May 15, 2016

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

How: To fill out the application, go the web site: <http://etzchaimme.org/highschoolaward/>

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.



Glenn Kurtz May 12 visit re: Three Minutes in Poland, cont.

By Rob Pierce

His response was quite a surprise: "My publicist at Farrar, Straus and Giroux forwarded me your email. I appreciate your interest and especially your work with students learning about Jewish heritage. As it happens, my sister-in-law, Cynthia Kurtz, belongs to Etz Chaim and I'm planning to be in the area in the second week of May. Let's see if it's possible to schedule a presentation for the community on Thursday, May 12. I would be willing to speak to the high school students at a late-afternoon session and do a formal presentation for the community in the evening. "

It might seem hard to believe that Americans were visiting Germany when Hitler was in power in the 1930s but in the same year as this film was made, Hitler had decorated Henry Ford on Ford's 75th birthday, and "thousands of Americans were visiting Europe that summer, enjoying a nice glass of Bier in Frankfurt, Nuremberg, Berlin, Vienna, and elsewhere." In fact, very little was written nor widely publicized against the Nazi's in America until the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

The film was archived and made available online by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and by chance was viewed by a woman who recognized the face of a young little boy in the film, her grandfather, Morry Chandler, who in 1938 was the boy, Moszek Tuchendler. He'd gone into hiding in 1942 and survived by living a false Polish identity with a birth certificate that said he was Zdzislaw Plywacz.

Morry, who was born in 1924, was still not only alive in Florida, but was a father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. It's remarkable to think that a grand-daughter of Morry was able to recognize the face of her 87 year old grandfather in the face of a young boy in the film, and it's even more remarkable that Morry is able to recount a rich well of memories from so long ago when he met with Kurtz on several occasions.

Morry, after he'd watched the film, reflected on the fate of his parents and others who perished, and of his own survival and said, "These were people that were very, very gentle, fine people. They just didn't have it in them. They were business people, you know, they knew their materials, their goods - in business for generations. But you come to being street-smart, they were nothing. There was no way they could survive. I mean, they were just sheep led to slaughter. They didn't know how to improvise, and how I got this in me - I don't understand it, honestly, because I'm a product of that world."

"It is one of the peculiarities of this story that firsthand accounts of prewar Nasielsk necessarily come from people who were children at the time. And so we get a picture of a town from a child's perspective."

Another survivor he met was Andrzej Lubieniecki, in Windsor, Ontario, in 2012. "He was ninety-three years old and had lost most of his vision. He was unable to view my grandfather's film. But his memories of Nasielsk remained sharp."

"Shayne yingele," said Nasielsk survivor Rachel Laks, who was born in 1919 as she watched the film in Israel with Glen beside her. "Beautiful children. 'Shayne yidishe mentshn,' beautiful Jewish people."

Here are some memorable passages from the book:

"What moments are worth recording? Which stories and memories are passed down, and which are lost? How much detail is preserved in the few artifacts that happen to survive? And how close do these artifacts bring us to the people who left them behind? These questions have haunted and surprised me in the years since I discovered my grandfather's 1938 film."

Glenn Kurtz May 12 visit re: Three Minutes in Poland, cont.

By Rob Pierce

Part of what makes the book so powerful is the recognition that, just a year after the film was recorded, Germany invaded Poland and all but destroyed each and every one of such Jewish villages in Poland and in what used to be known as the Pale of Settlement.

"Nasielsk is not an important town, unless you lived there. It was just a town... In June 2013, my grandfather's tourist film of Nasielsk became part of the new Jewish Pavilion at the Auschwitz Museum and Memorial in Poland, located on the site of the former concentration camp. The film runs on a loop in the permanent exhibit documenting pre-war Jewish life. A million people a year visit this memorial, which has come to symbolize the Holocaust as a whole. There, for these visitors, the people in my grandfather's film represent the millions of others in thousands of small Jewish towns across Eastern Europe, of whom no record remains."

"Personal memory and historical narrative are two very different forms of preservation. In the story I now have to tell, attempting to join the two, we confront at each moment the edge of what can be expressed and what, so many years later, it is possible for us to know."

"It is obvious but must be said: The people who did not survive cannot tell their stories. There were thousands of residents of Nasielsk. We know the personal stories of just a few. By virtue of being preserved, each survivor's story, and each artifact, photograph, and document, is an almost impossible exception."

I let Mr. Kurtz know that it would be a privilege if he could spend time with our community, to share his connections to or thoughts about the book, Judaism and being Jewish, to history, to Jewish studies, American culture, and to writing...or whatever he might like to talk about. It would be a memorable experience for the Teen Class and community to have the opportunity to read the book and to meet the author.

Please plan to join us at Etz Chaim on Thursday, May 12 at 7 pm, when Glen Kurtz will give a presentation to our community.

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".**

### *A Note from the Board*

*President David Strassler and  
the entire Board of Congrega-  
tion Etz Chaim wish you and  
your family a Happy Passover.*



## The Future of Hebrew School

By Sue Pierce

Last night at the Education Committee meeting, we spent a considerable amount of time talking about the future of our Hebrew School and a trend going on at our Hebrew school, as well as others in Maine and around the nation, where fewer and fewer parents are engaging their children in Judaism, either in formal or informal ways. Our discussion eventually brought us around to how each of us became involved with Etz Chaim. To a person, the catalyst was a desire to provide our children with a sense of their Judaism. We all had different backgrounds, but were united in that same original purpose - pretty neat to realize. When you get a little older and your children are grown, you start to reflect on the different paths you followed, inevitably many of them because and for your children, and last night's discussion got me thinking about my families' journey, and what brought us to, and kept us coming to, Etz Chaim, and how maybe there are some commonalities with the future generations and ideas about how to engage parents of younger children.

Rob and I moved to Maine in 1994, at that time with three girls - aged 4, 2 and 1, with our fourth daughter born early in 1995. It was kind of a dizzying time in our lives, but it was in those preschool years we wanted to start to expose the girls to Judaism. By chance, I saw an advertisement for Sunday school at Etz Chaim, made arrangements to come to check it out, was so lost trying to find it, I think we wound up giving up the first time, but eventually we made our way there. The girls loved it - singing songs, making crafts, reading stories - all their favorite things to do, and we were hooked. Before we knew it, we were making best friends, volunteering to do this or that, and almost always excited to get up on a Sunday morning to make the trip to Biddeford. One thing led to another, and then our oldest started Hebrew School and everyone else followed suit. I have to admit, it was intimidating making the commitment to come to Hebrew School every Thursday afternoon - it felt like we were way too busy, but with some help from friends for rides, and some hiccups along the way, we are just about to confirm our fifth child this coming (May-21) years after our first days at the synagogue. (I actually just had to do the math twice to make sure I wasn't exaggerating!). I guess the long and short of it is that, with somewhat vague intentions, we dipped our toes into being part of a Jewish education and 21 years later, we are so proud and pleased that all five of our children will have had bar and bat mitzvahs and confirmation at Etz Chaim.

I have to say there are many reasons why we have maintained our involvement all these years, but the main one is because it is our **community**. Our best friends we met here, we raised our children here, we have celebrated and danced and eaten really good food here, and we have gained strength as a family and individually because of our involvement here. Sure we spent a lot of hours schlepping the kids in the car, sure there were days when they groaned about having to go to school after getting home from school, but each of our kids, I know, will look back and reflect fondly on that time in their lives and will hopefully tell their children stories of betting on their dreidel at the Hannukah Party or cringing at parsley at Passover or being in the Purim play as Ester. I don't know, is that enough to assure that they will buck the trend of their generation and engage their children in Hebrew School? I sure hope so.



## POT LUCK NEWS

Our welcoming 2015-2016 season had a successful start in October, with an impressive attendance. It was an enjoyable evening, with people sharing their summer experiences.

December Chanukah party was one of the most successful. Delicious latkes were made by Michael Reed & Chuck Newerther. Doug, Cindy & Dylan Adamsky, Cynthia Kurtz & Audrey Stemple helped make the evening a success. Home-made Chanukah cookies topped off the party. It was wonderful to see people dancing & enjoying the Klezmer Band.

The Tu B'Shevat Seder was enjoyed by about 50 people. Beth made this a memorable evening with her unique service & music program.

Sunday, March 20 was our annual Purim Party. It was a highly successful Pot Luck, with delicious Hamentaschen for dessert. Our Hebrew School kids put on an entertaining, Star Wars themed presentation, the annual Purim poem, and of course there were plenty of games and prizes for the kids after.

May 12, which is Israel Independence Day, will be our final Pot Luck of the season with a special guest speaker. Hope to see everyone there.

Barbara & Linda





# 2016 Purim Party





## NYC Teen Trip

By David Strassler

For the past 12 years, Rob Pierce, our Teen Confirmation Class teacher, has been taking the teen class to Manhattan to expose them to United States urban Judaism at its finest. This was my first excursion with Rob & Sue Pierce, and seven teens: Jackson Pierce, Izzy & Lazslo Toth, Julia Milligan, Gabe Calandri, Bella Hammond and Austin Macomber. We met at the Biddeford Park and Ride at 6 am on a Saturday morning and took off in 2 vehicles.

Our first stop was at the halfway point at Rein's Deli in Vernon, Connecticut. This has been a tradition for the yearly trip--a taste of what's ahead, sampling of Jewish Deli food. Then we continued on to NYC, to experience the tall buildings and traffic. On our first day, we went to the Metropolitan Opera at Lincoln Center to see *The Marriage of Figaro*, followed by dinner at a nearby Chinese Restaurant (how Jewish!). The evening ended with a tour of Times Square, before settling in for the night at our midtown hotel.

No trip would be complete without some excitement. Jackson woke up early to go for a run with his Dad in Central Park. Half asleep, he couldn't understand why his foot was wet when he stepped on the floor. A pipe had burst in the middle of the night, causing a minor flood in their room. Rob & Sue helped the boys get moved to a new room. The hardest part, though, was to wake up Gabe Calandri, who was "out like a light".

Sunday was a day full of "sampling" some of the many Jewish NYC experiences. First stop was a long walk across Central Park to Congregation Shearith Israel: The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue. Founded in 1654, it is the first Jewish congregation to be established in North America. We had the good fortune to first attend a Torah study session, followed by an introduction to Rabbi Saadia Gaon, one of the last and most famous Gaonim; a great Talmudic scholar from the 10th century. This was followed by a tour of their Sephardic sanctuary, with their central bimah and ornate Aron Kodesh (Torah ark).

Next stop was another long walk, going east through Central Park to Temple Emanu-El. Temple Emanu-El of New York is the first Reform Jewish congregation in New York City, founded in 1845. I truly felt that I was walking into the Jewish equivalent of Manhattan's St. Patrick's Cathedral. It is immense, with a tall ceiling (9 stories high), and ornate stained glass windows, but with no icons. A member of the synagogue gave us a tour and lecture about the history of this unique temple. What I found interesting was that their choir is made up of professional singers, none of whom are Jewish.

(continued on page 13)





## NYC Teen Trip, cont.

By David Strassler

We then checked out of our hotel and drove uptown to the Park Avenue Synagogue. This is a thriving, Conservative congregation, which shared with us their history and present day activities. One of their teens joined us and reinforced to me what their teens are learning in their classes is similar to ours, just on a grander scale. We were fortunate enough to be there during their Purim Party, and got to experience what Purim is like in NYC. Their sanctuary was more traditional, like ours, but larger and more ornate.

By now, we were ready for dinner. What a treat! We found Alibaba Restaurant, a twelve-seat glatt kosher restaurant specializing in *Yemenite*-Israeli cuisine. We had a choice between shawarma or falafal. While we were eating, the owner, Moshe Harizy, a fifth-generation Yemenite Israeli and Upper West Sider, gave us a "drash" about Purim. What an unexpected treat to end a full Sunday in New York.

I had a very special weekend with our seven teens from four different towns. What is remarkable is that we did this on Easter weekend, with teens that are all from intermarried families. They were very engaged and very responsible. I was very proud of them, with their knowledge of Judaism, making their experience all the more meaningful. They take for granted how much they already know.

I would like to thank Rob for making this happen every year for 12 years. A thank you also goes to the Sam L. Cohen Foundation, for their generous support to make this trip a reality for our Teen Class. And lastly, funding for the York County Community Hebrew School has been provided by the Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine, through its Annual Campaign.





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

## ***Shabbat Services***

*Join us for Shabbat Services:  
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 Rubin  
Jack Schraeter  
Beth & David Strassler

## **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.

Adrianne 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:  
Hebrew School/Services:  
Shabbat Potlucks:  
Library  
Sunday School:

*David Strassler:  
Beth & David Strassler:  
Linda Federman:  
Beth Strassler  
Denise Hammond:*

*967-5833  
967-5833  
661-269-1233  
Strassler@roadrunner.com  
DGHammond@roadrunner.com*



## York County Jewish Community News



Congregation Etz Chaim  
PO Box 905  
Kennebunk, ME 04043

Address Label