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Congregation Etz Chaim***Beth's Graduation Event***

by Morton Gold

On March 19th, Mrs. Beth Strassler performed her senior recital as part of the requirements for ordination as a Cantor from Hebrew College in Newton, Massachusetts. She was accompanied by Dr. Morton Gold on piano. Taking place in Berenson Hall, this was no ordinary student vocal recital. It was the culmination of many years of serious study.

She performed works from the classical literature in German by Schubert and Beethoven; selections by Mendelssohn (oratorio) and Menotti (20th century opera) with English text; and two works using Yiddish and Hebrew texts, one arranged as well as one composed by Sholem Secunda, a distinguished composer of secular as well as sacred Jewish music. Her wide range of musical experience was demonstrated by her performing music in a variety of styles and in four different languages besides English.

After intermission, she sang eight different settings by Dr. Morton Gold. These vocal works were in a variety of musical styles, ranging from art songs, (Psalm 92) and folk songs (Sholom Aleychem), to serious twentieth century settings (Psalm 8, Psalm 93, Half Kaddish). These works were composed by Dr. Gold, dating back to 1965, to one as recent as 2014.

At the conclusion of this series of compositions, she asked the audience to "join" her in a setting of Adon Olam, which was printed in the program booklet, dating from 2008. The melody was so appealing that by the middle of the first verse, it was apparent that the audience sang it joyously and as if they had been singing it for years!

The program booklet itself was evidence of

serious scholarship. The song texts were printed in the original language as well as in translation. There was biographical information on the composers, lyricists as well as the performers. It was a model of what a good program booklet ought to be.

The audience was a distinguished one, with the dean of the college, the school's choral director, four cantors, as well as students and members of the faculty. In addition, several members from Congregation Etz Chaim, as well as Temple Beth El, made the trip and basked in the achievements of one of their own.

In addition to the musical requirements Mrs. Strassler readily mastered, to complete her course of study for ordination as Cantor (in June) among other academic courses, she needed to show mastery of torah and haftarah chanting, as well as the appropriate *nusach*, or mode, for each part of the service (weekday or Shabbat), as well as the several holiday and holy day services.

Earlier this year, she wrote a master's thesis on the life and music of Dr. Gold, and gave a spectacular retrospective on his music at the college. She has demonstrated that she is a scholar as well as a musician, and not merely one who has a voice. She has also demonstrated that she knows *how* to sing.

It has been a long and arduous road Beth has traveled, and we are honored to share in her well-deserved simcha. I would be remiss if I did not mention her mother, husband, and her sons Andrew and Joseph, who basked in Beth's achievement, and were also present.

We now come to that part of this article where we add a well-earned Mazel Tov. It would also be appropriate to add the phrase "Shehecheyhanu, v'kiyimannu, v'higgiyanu, lazman hazeh."

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, 2017.

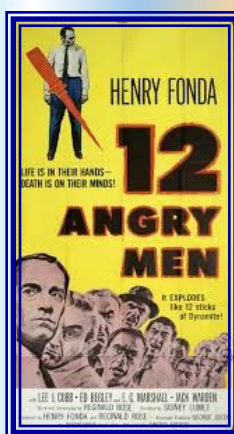
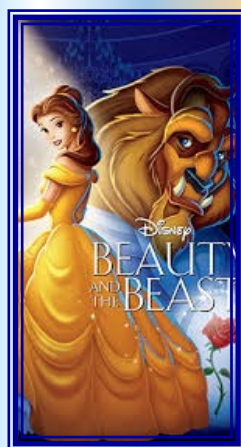
Eligibility: Graduating high school seniors who have been actively involved in providing service to the Congregation Etz Chaim community.

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.

The Teen Class and Pirkei Avot

by David Strassler



As a young adult, I remember wondering how I developed my moral values. Why was I more like Ralph (kind and inclusive) than Jack (a bully), two of the main characters in the novel The Lord of the Flies? Did this happen by chance or by learned behavior? I was aware that my values were shaped by my parents, but were their origins Jewish? Is the answer found in Pirkei Avot?

Over the past two decades, I have become more aware of a section of the Talmud called Pikei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers). Then, four years ago, I took an on-line class through Hebrew College with Rabbi Ruven Z. Cohen. And over the past 3 years, I have been studying with my chavruta partner, Chuck, from Pensacola. Weekly, by Skype, we translate and discuss each pirkei (section), and how it relates to our lives.

But how do I share this information with our community, especially our teenagers who are trying to sort out their values?

Rabbi Steven Bayar developed a curriculum that uses film clips from popular motion pictures to teach Jewish values to families. He shared his work during a presentation to our community three years ago. As I started as the Teen Class teacher this year, I realized my opportunity to implement his strategies.

We begin each class discussing a specific value, followed by watching the corresponding movie clip. Here are examples:

"Be patient on judgment" - Twelve Angry Men

"Do not be like servants who serve their master in order to receive a reward, but be like the servants who serve their master without expecting to receive a reward" - Oh God & Field of Dreams

"Fashion a teacher for yourself, acquire a friend for yourself, and judge every man in the scale of merit" - The Karate Kid & Return of the Jedi

"Do not separate yourself from the community" - The Little Mermaid & Beauty and the Beast

"In a situation where there are no men, strive to be man" - To Kill a Mockingbird

"One who puts his fellow to shame in public...he has no share in the World to Come" - To Kill a Mockingbird

I am hoping that our teens will grow up and be most like Ralph, and I now understand that this doesn't happen by chance. They are influenced by parents, teachers and friends, but also by the movies they watch. Participation in this year's teen class teaches that each movie has a message, and how to figure out the message. Our focus is on movies that portray the ethical messages that were written down over 2,000 years ago in an important Jewish text by brilliant Jewish rabbis. Finding them in modern movies reveals their relevance in today's world.





Temple Events

by Linda Federman

Our **Hannukah** party was one of our most successful! Everyone seemed to enjoy every aspect of it. The latkes were amazing, thanks to Chuck, Michael, Doug, Cindy and Denise. For dessert, Hannukah cookies and jelly donuts were enjoyed by all.

The Casco Bay Tumblers were a big hit, as usual, with singing and dancing downstairs. Instead of 50% of the people venturing upstairs, ALL people were able to enjoy the festive music! The unveiling of the Arnold and Barbara Shapiro Social Hall plaque added a nice piece of our synagogue's history to this year's party. It was wonderful having his daughter, Sue Masse, in attendance.

We enjoyed our **Tu b'Shevat** festivities on February 10, and, as usual, the **PURIM PARTY** on **March 12** was fun for the kids and adults alike! Games, food, fun, prizes!

Next: Passover Model Seder on Friday, April 7! Come one, come all to enjoy this fun, annual event!



Hannukah at The Atria

by Jeff Levy

On December 22nd, our Hebrew School joined residents of the Atria to celebrate Hanukkah! Our students provided tasty latkes, scrumptious sufganiya (jelly donuts) and a lot of ruach (spirit). Together, we sang some traditional Hanukkah songs and shared the story of Hannukah. Our own Noah Hammond delighted the crowd, by playing traditional Hanukkah tunes on the piano.

Rosalyn Goodman is currently the only Jewish resident at the Atria. She told the students how happy and proud she was to have our Hebrew School perform and visit with the folks at her home, and share in a wonderful Hannukah Party.

Hannukah Party Photos



A Prayer for our Country

From Siddur Sim Shalom

Our God and God of our ancestors: We ask Your blessings for our country, for its government, for its leader and advisors, and for all who exercise just and rightful authority. Teach them insights of Your Torah, that they may administer all affairs of state fairly, that peace and security, happiness and prosperity, justice and freedom may forever abide in our midst.

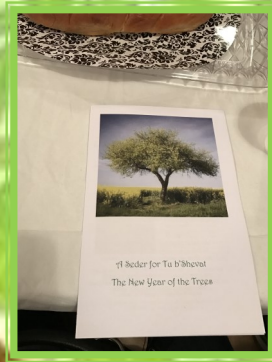
Creator of all flesh, bless all the inhabitants of our country with Your spirit. May citizens of all races and creeds forge a common bond in true harmony to banish all hatred and bigotry and to safeguard the ideals and free institutions which are the pride and glory of our country.

May this land under Your Providence be an influence for good throughout the world, uniting all people in peace and freedom and helping them to fulfill the vision of Your prophet: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they experience war any more." And let us say: Amen.

Submitted by David Strassler



Your synagogue dues going to a
good cause.



Tu B'shvat

Girls Dormitory Project

Update from Sarah Strassler

Per Sarah's 2/9/17 email:

To all of you who donated to the Girls Hostel Project:

We did it!!! The fundraising goal was reached in the beginning of January and the money was released on January 19th to begin the project. Now that I have access to internet and a computer, I want to thank you all for your generosity. We reached the fundraising goal much earlier than expected and the project is now in progress!

In just the three weeks since the money has been released, we have been able to clear the land for the building (which meant uprooting a lot of trees, which is more difficult than you would think without access to machines) and mold most of the cement blocks for the project. The mason has come to survey the land and mark the outline. After the community digs the foundation this week, the construction will begin!

I have included some pictures of the project so that you can see the progress. Further updates for the project will be sent out in the months to come so that you can see just how far your donation has gone. Thank you again, from me and the whole Menji community!

With Gratitude,

Sarah Strassler



Hebrew School NYC Trip

By Denise Hammond

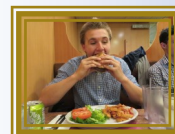
It's Saturday morning, very early, earlier than any high school student would normally be awake. Two adults and four high school students ranging from 8th grade to 11th pile into a rented minivan and set out for the approximately five hour drive to NYC. This is the 14th time Congregation Etz Chaim's teen class has been fortunate enough to take this pilgrimage to New York City. The temple has sponsored this trip to experience a different way of life, learn about Jewish culture, and to experience a live theater experience. This was David Strassler's first time leading the crew on his own, as previous Teen class teacher, Richard Pierce was the founder and leader of our past trips. If you ask any teen that went on the trip this year, they would tell you how David was a pro tour guide of the Big Apple, and was flexible in changing plans when something came up unexpected, like having our planned evening restaurant not open until sundown!

The theme of this year's trip was the Deli tour! As being the assistant chaperone, I felt I could handle that! We also enjoyed a night out at Lincoln Center to see Oslo, a surprisingly funny and poignant play about the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords between the Israelis and Palestinians, as told through the Norwegians, that helped make this happen. It was a great choice and David was able to prepare the kids with readings ahead of time, movies and explanations' around what happened and who was who. Along with the play, we were able to fit in four different delis, a visit to the Jewish Museum, a tour through the 9/11 Memorial Museum, and a leisurely walk on the High Line walkway.

It was a lovely weekend, surprisingly good weather, and great company! Traveling with four teenagers is always a different experience, and proved to be thought provoking and fun! They had a great sense of humor, able to roll through the busy-ness, woke up early without complaint, and tried new food. I was very impressed with trying new food! On the ride home, I asked the kids to tell me why we should keep this trip going, what was so important about going to NYC for them....their responses were sincere and honest. This trip provides a bonding experience, true in the sibling-like bickering that continued after that comment! It allowed them to go to NYC and experience something they probably wouldn't see if they went otherwise. It was their culture and their heritage they were learning about, and the importance of that. They said they like getting out of Maine.

Overall, I'd say these kids get what is important, and appreciate what an amazing experience the Congregation provides. What a lucky bunch we are!

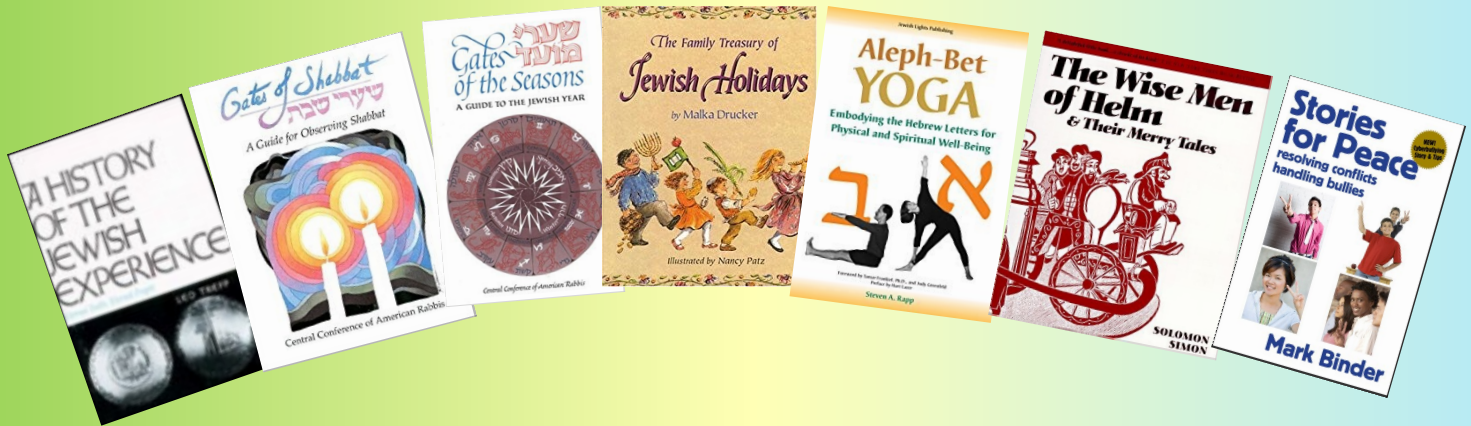
We would like to thank the Sam L. Cohen Foundation for helping to make this trip possible





Purim





**Samuel Osher Memorial Library
at Congregation Etz Chaim**

**Jewish Books, Music & Movies
for the
York County Community**



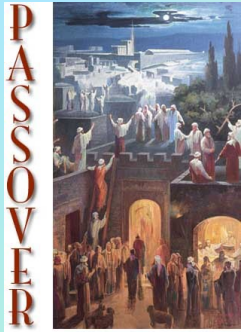
~~~~~  
You could save trees & money by  
receiving your newsletter & all Jewish  
community announcements electronically.  
Just write to our mail address and ask to  
**"Go Green".**

~~~~~

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



Happy Passover!

*The Board of Directors wants to
wish you and your family a very
Happy Passover!*

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 twice 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.

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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:
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Denise Hammond:*

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York County Jewish Community News



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