

April 2019/5779

Congregation Etz Chaim



Celia Doushkess Memories

By David Strassler & Eva Nudelman



Celia Doushkess (1931-2015)

As Beth and I were going through some old papers and pictures, we independently came across the below photos, and a section of this writing about Celia (of blessed memory) from her cousin Eva Nudelman.

Celia came to Maine from Brooklyn in the early 1990's to receive assistance in her care from her cousins, Stuart and Eva Nudelman, because of her "intellectual disability". I wanted to share these memories of Congregation Etz Chaim with our community. We have been, and will continue to be, a community of inclusiveness.

David Strassler

"Before we started to clean out the house, we had a very pleasant and enjoyable get together in celebration of Celia's life in the "Palace" (so named by Celia when she first had moved in) with family, friends and Woodford's caring staff members. Adrienne had created a loving display, talking about Celia and quite a few stories were shared.

I was especially grateful that David and Beth Strassler brought closure with (Jewish) text and thoughts of Celia's Jewish life. She had, I believe, the best experiences of her life at Congregation Etz Chaim in Biddeford: attending classes with the youngest children and participating in celebrations of Jewish holidays and traditions, and especially dancing with her friend Arlene to Klezmer music during the annual Hanukkah party."

Inside this issue:

Torah Study Group	2
Library Hours/Info	3
Spring Volunteers Needed	4
. Arnold Shapiro Community Service Award . Go Green	5
Cantor's Corner: Jewish Folk Dancing on Bacon Street	6
Hebrew School Teachers – Let me explain...	7
COOKBOOK FUNDRAISER!!!	8
. Plant Sale at Bet Ha'am in May . KITCHEN RE-MODEL	9
. Shabbat Services . Board of Directors . Website link	10
. Note from the Board . Our Synagogue . Synagogue Contacts	11



Torah Study Group

By Jeff Levy

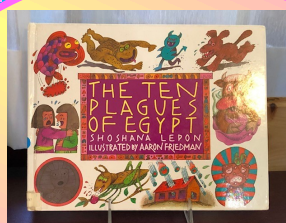
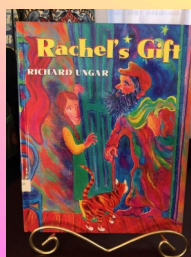
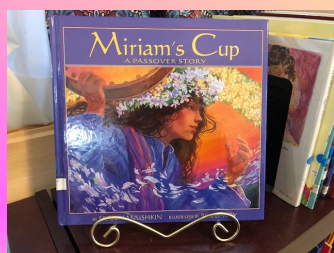
I just love our Torah Study group....

In my opinion, the second Saturday of every month, Etz Chaim Synagogue in Biddeford, Maine provides the ultimate Jewish learning experience. We begin at 9:30 a.m., and the class lasts only 90 minutes.

We begin with a nosh... bagels and lox, a little herring, pastry and coffee. We then dive right into the most exhilarating part of a traditional Saturday Morning service...the Torah Study. Those who are interested can prepare to spend time sharing what they have learned about the week's Parsha. We often hear from Jack Schraeter and David Strassler, Beth Strassler and Lynne DeSantis, who offer to instruct us and lead fascinating discussions about the week's portion from the Torah. We have a wonderful community of participants, who are tremendously respectful of our various points of view, and are happy to entertain questions and discussion, no matter where they lead.

To me, this is the very best part of any Jewish spiritual experience. We are a community, eating and learning, all within an hour and a half timeframe.

Passover Books in the Library, for your reading pleasure

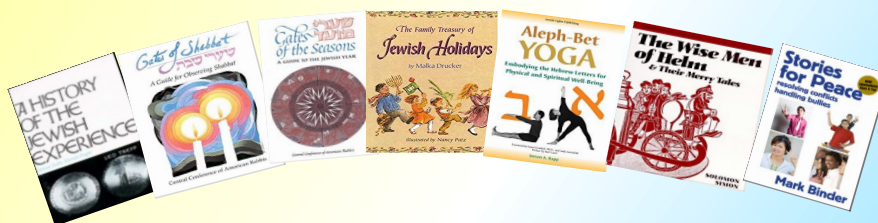


Samuel Osher Memorial Library HOURS

Please check the calendar on the Congregation Etz Chaim website www.etzchaimme.org/calendar/ for the most up to date schedule of days and hours.

The Samuel Osher Memorial Library is open at least two days each week, with a third day to be added this fall. Generally, the Library opens at 10 AM and closes at 2 PM. When Hebrew School begins this fall, the Library will be open from 10 AM to 6 PM on Thursdays, in addition to two other days (hours to be determined).

If you would like to make other arrangements to visit, please email Maureen King at library@etzchaimme.org or somlibrarymaine@gmail.com.



Samuel Osher Memorial Library
at Congregation Etz Chaim

Jewish Books, Music & Movies
for the
York County Community

Spring Volunteers Needed!!!

By Maureen King

Please join our Spring Volunteers team to help with the Samuel Osher Memorial Library and Congregation Etz Chaim— let's have some fun and get things done!

Spring is officially here!

The Library and the Synagogue need your help with spring cleaning tasks.

We hope you find something on this list that inspires you to volunteer.

Some of these are one afternoon/one person projects, some are group projects, but all are things we need to do this spring. We'd love to have you work with us!

Contact the Library at library@etzchaimme.org or call Maureen at 207-282-2907 (home) or 207-284-5771 (synagogue). Leave a message and we'll get back to you.

1. Sort, organize, and clean classroom supplies and classrooms on second floor.
2. Sort, organize, and clean classroom supplies in storage hall.
3. Sort, organize, and clean back storage room.
4. Staff the library, especially on Hebrew School Thursday afternoons during school year.
5. Cover books.
6. Sort, organize, and label children's books.
7. Put together album of programs.
8. Sort, organize, and clean kitchen storage area.
9. Sort, organize, and clean kitchen.
10. Collect recipes for cookbook for September 1 deadline.
11. Sell cookbook ads and dedications for September 1 deadline.
12. Pre-sell cookbooks (for December 1 delivery).
13. Type cards for books--author, book card, pocket, label, stamp.
14. Sort and catalog CD's.
15. Hebrew readers: help catalog Hebrew language books in English.
16. Help generate and produce Library program ideas: book readings by authors?; storytelling times?; movie nights or afternoons?; other library related events?
17. Help with Library mailing in April.
18. Help with membership mailing in May.

The Arnold Shapiro Community Service Award

By David Strassler

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 13, 2019**.

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, 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.



\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ Go Green!!! \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

You can save trees and reduce costs by receiving your newsletter, and all Jewish community announcements, electronically (save our trees!).

Just write to our mail address:

Congregation Etz Chaim

PO Box 905

Kennebunk, ME 04043

or send an email:

Email: mail@etzchaimme.org

and ask to:

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ "Go Green" \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$



Cantor's Corner: Jewish Folk Dancing on Bacon Street

By Beth Strassler

There is often a crowd at the synagogue on Sunday afternoons. We come together to learn and practice Jewish folk dancing. Barbara Merson is our teaching guru, an accomplished folk dancer of many cultures: Jewish, Baltic, just to name a couple.

Several students have shared their reasons for coming with me. Some are thankful for the winter exercise in a warm room, others are increasing their physical mobility after being weakened by surgery or disease, while others "just love it". The members of this last group are the ones who smile through the whole session, or some women wear a skirt for a swirly effect.

There are other accomplished dancers in the class, a few novices and more than a few who are finding they have helpful muscle memory of the dances they frequently danced in middle school. Barbara speaks clearly and loudly enough, while she constantly moves around so students may view her steps from different angles. Israeli folk dancing is not a touchy-feely dance, it is choreographed. The steps for specific dances are set.

I have done a good amount of observing during each lesson. Something special is happening. I can feel the electricity in the room. People are smiling, holding hands, laughing only at themselves, and learning—A LOT—in a mere hour and a half.

By observing, I have become more aware of the *sound* of Israeli folk dancing. Claps or steps executed in unison from these 15 - 20 people is a unique sound! It is not a waltz: 1, 2, 3, 4...1, 2, 3, 4. Or a polka: 1, 2, 3...1, 2, 3.... Or Spanish dance: *chicka, chicka, chicka, chicka*..... The beats are often not even, they are syncopated. A toe tap is lighter than a stomp. Some pauses are longer than others. The song may be a familiar one in Hebrew, i.e. Hinei Mah Tov, and the steps mimic the melody/words of the song.

Am I the only one to hear this and think of Torah chanting? When chanting, the notes are important, but so are the rhythms. There is an established order to the notes. Chanting is not free form. It is choreographed. There are different kinds of pauses: Some long, some barely a pause. AND the music of chanting is stretched or shortened to fit the size of the words. This is different from our American pop songs, where the words are often created or adjusted to fit a set tune. The words of the Torah are all-important and the melodies exist to enhance them.

The markings of Torah chanting were not made up, but written down from a long standing oral/aural tradition. Many cantors, including me, believe that God did not merely speak, but *chanted* the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai. When emphasizing the ancient origin of a particular musical phrase, it may be called "mi Sinai" (Hebrew) or "from Sinai" (English).

I smile at the idea that we gather for different reasons at the synagogue or even at home, but are often engaged in making the same "music". The music of the Jewish soul!

Best wishes for a sweet Passover celebration and season.

Hebrew School Teachers – Let me explain...

By Leah Macomber

I race to Hebrew School on Thursdays, telling my new boss that I need to leave early to fulfill an important community commitment, but yes, I will catch up on work in the evening. As I tick off the tasks I need to resume after class in my head, I ask myself – again - why am I an Etz Chaim Hebrew School teacher? Why do I squeeze this into my busy life? Why is this important?

We only have 5 students in the pre-bar mitzvah program this year, and several adults volunteer their time to prepare and present lessons every week. Why do we race to make it, adjust our schedules, forego some afternoon activities to do this? When the thought crosses my mind – maybe it's not worth it -- the response always comes as the verse in the Sh'ma: "Teach these words to your children."

When we teach, we commit to be part of the chain of tradition – to pass along what we know and appreciate about Judaism and about our lives as Jews. We don't purport to know everything there is to know, we do some research and prepare lessons in Torah stories, Hebrew, Jewish history and morals to give the curriculum structure. You might think kids should already know the fundamentals, but no – the kids thrive learning the basic, and not-so-basic, elements of Judaism at Hebrew School. And, if you judge by the sparking in the eyes or the dropping of jaws, they are learning.

In Hebrew class:

- Teacher: Right to left, right to left
- Student: What does "Adonai" mean?
- Teacher: Let me explain...

In conversation:

- Teacher: It's like the talking snake with Adam and Eve, right?
- Student: Talking snake, talking bush... are we supposed to believe this?
- Teacher: Let me explain...

While learning about their family trees:

- Teacher: Whose great-grandparents came to the United States to escape the Holocaust?
- Students: What was the Holocaust?
- Teacher: Let me explain...

On the Passover story:

- Students: Wait a second, killing the sons was their idea?
- Teacher: Let me explain...

I don't know if we're making a huge difference in the overall scope of Judaism. Maybe these kids will end up joining a Hillel, affiliate with a synagogue, practice Judaism when they have their own homes, or teach at their kids Hebrew School one day. Maybe they will forget the lessons, but remember the silly plays and the taste of homemade hamantashen that made their Jewish community special. Whatever the outcome, these 2 hours a week are worth it – for 5 kids or 50 kids. During this time, they not only learn the basics, but they learn about themselves, where they come from, and how they will develop as the next link in the chain of tradition. We are teaching them about the commitment to be Jewish – and that is very important.



COOKBOOK FUNDRAISER!!!

By Maureen King

The Samuel Osher Memorial Library Committee is very excited to announce that they are compiling a very special **Library 20th Anniversary Cookbook**, filled with your favorite Congregation Etz Chaim recipes! Money raised from sales of the completed cookbook will benefit the SOM Library Fund for books and materials.

To have the Anniversary Cookbook ready in time for the Library's 20th Anniversary in November 2019 (and Hanukkah gifting!), recipes will be collected until **September 1, 2019**. The Cookbook will feature many potluck favorites from over the years, including the famous Etz Chaim Challah recipe and Marc's Famous Latkes, along with family heirlooms collected from Congregation members and friends. Our goal is to have 300 recipes so please share your favorites!

Please share recipes with the Library Committee:

By mail (SOM Library Cookbook, P. O. Box 905, Kennebunk, ME 04043);

By email (library@etzchaimme.org);

By filling out a recipe blank available at the Library;

By going online to www.typensave.com. Our user name is Library Etz Chaim and the password to contribute recipes is: blender220 .

Make sure to include your contact information so we can reach you if we have any questions.

Pre-ordering your Cookbook, and those that you need for gifts, will guarantee that you get a copy in time for 2019 Hanukkah baking and gifting. Pre-ordered Cookbooks will cost \$18. Cookbooks purchased after the November 2019 delivery will be \$25.

To help defray costs of publishing, the Library Committee will sell memorials and dedications for \$18 each, and will sell advertisements beginning at \$36 each. Please see one of the committee members for more information: Maureen King, Julie Campisi, Susan Pierce, and Sue Rubin.

And of course, if you'd like to help with the Anniversary Cookbook, or have any questions, please reach out to the Library Committee at library@etzchaimme.org or call 207-284-5771 and leave a message.

The Library page at www.etzchaimme.org has a link to the Anniversary Cookbook recipe contribution page.

Thanks for your ongoing support of the Samuel Osher Memorial Library!!

*Congregation Bet Ha'am will be having a plant sale in May.
> See below flyer for more information and location.*

From Rachel Lefkowitz
Synagogue Administrator
Congregation Bet Ha'am

A flyer for a plant sale. At the top, a dark blue bar contains the text 'SUNDAY' in white, followed by a red bar with '9:00 AM' in white, a small white banner with 'TO' in red, and '1:00 PM' in white. Below this, the words 'PLANT SALE' are written in large, bold letters, with 'PLANT' in green and 'SALE' in red. To the left of the text is an illustration of a yellow vase with a green plant, a blue vase with a green plant, and three fruit (apple, orange, and lemon) with green leaves. Below the text, 'MAY 12th' is written in a large, bold, blue font. At the bottom, a black bar contains the text '81 WESTBROOK STREET' in white.

SUNDAY 9:00 AM TO 1:00 PM

PLANT SALE

MAY 12th

81 WESTBROOK STREET

KITCHEN REMODEL

By Linda Federman

I'm excited to report that we are exploring the idea of a complete kitchen remodel! We'll be looking at new cabinets, counter tops & a new floor.

Doing this work in phases appears to be the route that will work best for us financially.

As the project progresses, we will, at some point, appreciate any help in emptying all the cabinets. If it would be possible for you to help, please email me at: petsrluv1@gmail.com or call my cell: (661) 269-1233 & I'll put you on my list to contact.

Thank you for sharing in our exciting project which we hope will come to fruition before too long.

Visit our website:

<http://etzchaimme.org>

Shabbat

Join us for:

Shabbat Services

*The first Friday evening, and the
third Saturday morning of the month*

Cantor Beth Strassler

Torah Study Session

The second Saturday of the month

Ritual Committee

Board of Directors at Congregation Etz Chaim

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

York County (YC) Jewish Community Newsletter

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.

Adrianne Levy, Editor & Layout Design Consultants:

Levy family & Board members

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.

A Note From the Board

HAPPY PASSOVER

The Board of Directors would like to wish you and your family a very Happy Passover.

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:

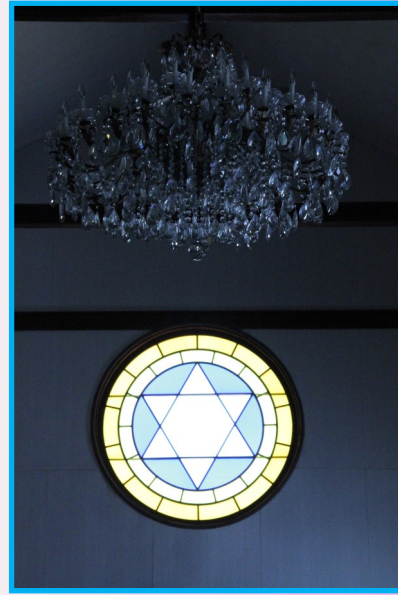
*PO Box 905,
Kennebunk, ME 04043*

**Memorial Plaques, Prayer books,
Etz Chaim books of Torah:
Hebrew School/Services:
Shabbat Potlucks:
Library**

*David Strassler:
Beth & David Strassler:
Linda Federman:
Maureen King*

*967-5833
967-5833
661-269-1233
207-282-2907 or
somlibrarymaine@gmail.com.*

York County Jewish Community News



*Congregation Etz Chaim
PO Box 905
Kennebunk, ME 04043*

Address Label