WWW.ETZCHAIMME.ORG



The Mulcahy sisters (above) and Shona and Sam Workman (right) at the Hebrew School party at Pizza Hut

Maia's Bat Mitzvah: August 7

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Congregation Etz Chaim

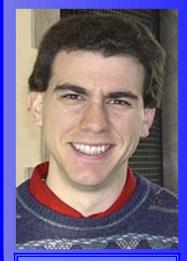
Making it in Maine: Jewish stories from the Pine Tree State

by David Freidenreich

Please join David Freidenreich, of Colby College, on Thursday, November 11, 7:00 p.m., for an evening of stories depicting Jewish experiences in Maine, from the midnineteenth century until today.

Prof. Freidenreich, one of the only academic scholars researching Jewish life in Maine, will offer a framework for understanding our state's rich Jewish history, illustrating it with anecdotes from around the state.

Whether you're a native Mainer or a recent arrival from away, come prepared to contribute your own stories to this mosaic! All are welcome at this free event, which has been made possible by funding from the Legacy Heritage Jewish Studies Project.



York County Jewish

Community News

David Freidenreich

Bar/Bat Mitzvahs Bar/Bat Mitzvahs August 7 Maia Mulcahy - Mazel Tov Maia! Well done. October 16 Sandra Moreau - begins at 9:30 a.m. October 23 Michael Reed - begins at 9:30 a.m. See Etz Chaim site for Calendar.



Free Jewish Children's Books Available Soon

by David Strassler

Jewish children in York County will soon be eligible to receive free, ageappropriate Jewish-content books each month. Any child with a Jewish parent from six months to 8 years old can be enrolled to receive the books in the mail.

There's no catch, no hidden agenda; the books are free. These are beautiful books that will enhance the Jewish life of any young family.

It's all part of The PJ Library®, a national program, run by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation in Massachusetts. More than 60,000 books are mailed each month to children in more than 125 communities in the US and Canada. "PJ" stands for pajamas. PJ Library books turn snuggly bedtime moments into Jewish moments.

Every month a child will receive a book or music CD in the mail. The books are beautifully illustrated and are about Jewish holidays, values and folk tales. The books come with reading guides to help parents discuss and do activities with their children around the themes found in the books.

The Grinspoon Foundation pays about 60% of the cost of this amazing program. Congregation Etz Chaim will pay the rest, because our board of directors think it's important to get young Jewish families off to a great start. But you don't have to be a member of the synagogue to get PJ Library books. This is for everyone—members, non-members, two Jewish parents or inter-faith couples.

Watch your mailbox in the coming months for a sample PJ Library book and information on how to sign up. If you don't have children 6 months to 8 years old, be sure to tell a friend or neighbor who would benefit from this gift of history and heritage.

To be put on the mailing list, e-mail : <u>mail@etzchaimme.org</u> or contact Barbara Simensky @ 282-4243.

Speaking of Books, Library Hours ... From Maureen King

Speaking of books, our very own Samuel Osher Memorial Library will be open during Potlucks and Hebrew School.

Anyone available to help by volunteering their time, please contact Maureen at events@etzchaimme.org for volunteer opportunities.





Free Books Coming to You!



Enjoy reading to kids, & kids enjoy reading

Samuel Osher Memorial Library at Congregation Etz Chaim Jewish Books, Music & Movies for the York County Community To donate books call 967-5833

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August 2010/5770

Congregation Etz Chaim Confirmation Class: An Overview

by Rob Pierce, Class Teacher

As we have now completed our seventh year of the Etz Chaim confirmation class (also known as the "**Teen Class**"), I am also pleased to report that we've completed trips to New York City for the past six years.

We had seven teens in the class this year. Our learning through readings, discussions, debates, movies, and current events focused on the topic of truthful reporting about the ongoing tensions between Israel and Palestine. We considered personal experiences from both cultural perspectives and viewed documentaries about finding common ground to help lead to conflict resolution and mutual cultural respect. Learning the details of the Six Day War helped us to understand how past history affects current events and climate. Finally, we watched movies and read books that had a Palestinian-centric perspective, and had many fruitful discussions.

Some of the books and resources used in the class were the books: "A stone in my hand," "A little piece of ground," and "Real time," as well as documentaries on the Jewish people - a story of survival, Jerusalem - a history of the city and the three major religions with connections to it, The Six Day War, and one on Palestinian and Israel parents who have each lost a child due to the conflict and trying to communicate with each other to find some kind of peace and understanding.

Rather than feeling they are told how they "should" think, feel and act, students are encouraged to participate in open discussions. The class embraces and promotes the teens to think critically for themselves, so they may see through media distortions and become more thoughtful, questioning, Jewish adults. We also spent much time learning about and discussing how Jewish people lived in the middle ages, both in Christian and Muslim cultures.

In past years, we have read books such as "The Chosen" by Chaim Potok, "Tuesdays with Morrie", "The Merchant of Venice", and others relevant to several aspects of Jewish Studies. One of the goals of the book selections is to stimulate interest and appreciation for the richness of Judaism.

Each year, we have interesting speakers join us for some of the classes. We've had the Maine Jewish Film Festival founder visit and tell us about founding the Festival, as well as about his Jewish childhood and adulthood.

- Other topics from visitors have included:
- Issues and thoughts about Judaism and anti-Semitism, comparing Judaism to being black, and considering racism in America.
- ♦ Touring Israel
- Using art to express religion, culture, and spirituality
- Competing in the Maccabiah Games
- Learning about the Maine Interfaith Youth Alliance

Student interests vary year to year. While the students in one year's class had an active interest in Israel and Middle-East current events, the students in the following year's class requested more of a focus on the Holocaust. Class



resources focused not just on events of the Holocaust, but on the times and climate that led up to it, and the aftermath of it, including it's current influence on the world, especially on America and Israel, in politics, the arts, philosophy, and psychology.

Teen trip to New York City

The intent of the trip to New York each year is for the teens to have a great time and to learn more about and make the connections among their Jewish life in Maine, Jewish cultural influence on American culture, and their own Jewish heritage. Subsequently, they develop ideas on what Judaism and Jewishness means to them in the context of living in this country and this world. The students seem to particularly absorb and appreciate a lot of what the Museum of Jewish Heritagehas to offer. The Jewish Museum is another stop that provides an interesting variety of holdings that all comprise the diversity of Jewish heritage, history, and culture.

We eat a lot of Kosher dills and some of us eat too much corned beef, but more importantly, we all make connections amongst our Etz Chaim community. These trips have helped the teens to truly connect as a group. I believe this experience will become even more valuable when they look back to their young years in Maine---living somewhat in Jewish cultural isolation, which was rejuvenated with an important Jewish peer connection through Congregation Etz Chaim. Here is an example of the itinerary of one of our NYC trips:

Saturday, March 20

6 am - Leave for NYC

8:30 am. - Stop for breakfast at Reins Deli in Vernon, CT

12 - Metropolitan Museum of Art: Focus on the European and Middle Eastern Ancient and Middle Ages sections OR Jewish Museum and then to Battery Park and Museum of Jewish Heritage

4-4:30 - Hotel check-in

5:00-6 - short rest

6-7:30 - Dinner at Stage Deli

8 pm - "Water for Haiti" Benefit Concert at the Lincoln Center OR Broadway shows, such as Fiddler on the Roof, The Color Purple, Les Miserables, or West Side Story

Sunday, March 21

9-10 - Breakfast - Carnegie Deli

10:00-12:30 Walk through Times Square, Garment District, Macy's, NY Public Library, Grand Central Station, Rockefeller Center OR Tour Jewish Theological Seminary and Old Broadway Synagogue

1:00 - hotel checkout and pizza lunch

2:00-3:30 - Guggenheim Museum OR Temple Emmanu El OR Private tour of Brooklyn and drive through lower Eastside

4-5 Tour lower eastside and tenements.

5 - Depart NYC and arrive home around 11 pm.

"The intent of the trip to New York each year is for the teens to have a great time and to learn more about and make the connections among their Jewish life in Maine, Jewish cultural influence on American culture, and their own Jewish heritage. "



"Graduating" from the Teen Class

by Robert Pierce, cont. from p.5

Five students will be completing their third and final year of confirmation class in the coming year. The students will be recognized for this milestone during a Friday Shabbat service in May, 2011.

Traditionally, each teen gives a short speech about his/her experiences at Congregation Etz Chaim and what it meant, in terms of being Jewish, or what it meant to have completed three years of study beyond becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah. They also tell stories about some of their favorite memories over the years.

2010-2011 School Year

Next year, we will focus on what I call "Moral philosophy", using topics in the Talmud as our reference point. We're also going to be doing some creative poetry sessions with Jewish-studies points of reference.

From Her Diary: Teen Trip, Day Two: The Old Broadway Synagogue by Charlotte Pierce

After hurrying inside to get out of the rain, the surroundings felt familiar. The building was not big and beautiful, but felt homey. It stood beside other buildings that were old and not in their best shape. It struck me that this was very similar to our shul back home.

As our tour guide showed us the inside of the building, we saw a similar synagogue, and in it a small, brightly lit bema, with stained glass like ours. Seeing these things gave me the feeling of being at home in Biddeford, Maine instead of being in West Harlem, New York.

It was good to feel the connection through the similarities. Being able to see a humble synagogue like ours so far away from home, in the heart of Jewish America, was one of my favorite parts of the trip.





Photo from: http://oldbroadwaysyn agogue.blogspot.com/

"...we saw a similar synagogue, and in it a small, brightly lit bema, with stained glass like ours. "

"....Five students will be

completing their third and

final year of confirmation

class in the coming year."



The Custom of Aliyos-Auctioning

By Jennie Aranovitch



As the High Holidays approach, many people's thoughts turn to their synagogues, and they remind themselves to make a donation to support their congregations. Etz Chaim, like most congregations, relies heavily upon the generosity of its members to keep itself running and to continue to provide the array of programs and services that it offers to the Jewish community of York County.

Most people who know Congregation Etz Chaim would agree that in many ways it differs significantly from big city synagogues. Etz Chaim, as it exists now (after being stripped of orthodoxy and restructured in the early 90's), is homey, low-pressure, and inclusive. Perhaps the greatest example of this inclusiveness and easy-going atmosphere is the nonexistence of a certain tradition that still continues in other synagogues today—the custom of auctioning off the honor of an aliya. Paying for the right to ascend the bimah in order to open or close the ark, or to pronounce the blessing over a Torah reading, is often a big moneymaker for synagogues, with some alivos in certain congregations selling for thousands of dollars. At Etz Chaim, this tradition went by the wayside at the same time that mechitzah (a division of the seating between men and women at the synagogue), and the forbiddances of women on the bimah, were done away with. But, the cessation of the aliya auction tradition was not abolished by a conscious decision on the part of the Board of Directors; it simply slipped away, as the "new" atmosphere of Congregation Etz Chaim took hold.

There are some rabbis and scholars, though, who argue that the practice of aliyos auctioning should be outright abolished because, in their opinion, it goes against Choshen Mishpat, Jewish monetary law. According to the Choshen Mishpat, Shabbos and holidays are days when all monetary matters are to be put aside and business transactions may not be conducted. Defenders of buying aliyos point to specific language in the prohibition against doing business on Shabbos and Yomim Tovim, which indicates that, despite the prohibition, monetary transactions that do not contradict the spirit of the day are still permissible. Therefore, because buying aliyos is for charity and to demonstrate love of the Torah, it should be allowed.

However, the Choshen Mishpat includes a second prohibition that states that the sale of any item on Shabbos or a holiday, even if it is for the purpose of fulfilling a mitzvah, is forbidden *if* the price was discussed at the time of sale. Therefore, opponents argue that the auctioning off aliyos to the highest bidders, despite the charitable intentions behind the act, is forbidden.

Defenders of the money-for-aliyos custom fire back by pointing to a portion of the Choshen Mishpat that essentially says that one cannot buy or sell something that is not a physical thing. Since the *right* to perform an aliya is not a physical object, then it does not violate law to pay for it.

Those who disagree claim that yet another part of the Choshen Mishpat bolsters their argument. The concept of situmta is explained in Jewish monetary law as a mark that was put on a wine barrel by a customer, demonstrating his irrevocable agreement to purchase it. One might think that since neither the physical object of the wine, nor any actual money was part of the transaction, the exchange would not be considered a true and binding transaction. However, the Torah makes it clear that anyone who makes a situmta becomes the true owner of the barrel of wine in the eyes of G-d. Thus, the Torah understands that a marketplace transaction is shaped by the underlying assumptions of those who are making the deal. In other words, the Torah is saying that one cannot use loopholes to claim that a transaction did not really occur, when both parties clearly know that it did. G-d knows what the two parties *meant* when they made the deal. Since according to the custom of aliva-auctioning, the participants understand that the sale is real, then the Torah accommodates itself to the custom (as it did to the custom of marking a barrel of wine) and legitimizes the purchase. And, of course, if it is a legitimate purchase, it would violate the Choshen Mishpat prohibition to buy and sell on Shabbos and holidays.

Regardless of which side of the argument one thinks has better halachic proof to back it up, it seems apparent that the custom itself fosters a synagogue environment of elitism and snobbery—an environment in which one is held up—quite literally—before the congregation on the basis of his/her financial status and ability to dispense to charity superfluous funds. It is a public declaration, in a sense, of families' financial statuses, and rewards those who have the most. At Congregation Etz Chaim, performing an aliya is still an honor, but it is an honor open to anyone. Someone is far more likely at Etz Chaim to participate in an aliya because of his longtime commitment to the shul, his generosity with his time and hard work, or because he is a newcomer who needs to be introduced to the congregation's spirit of inclusiveness—than because he is a major donor.

The Custom of Aliyos-Auctioning, cont.

By Jennie Aranovitch

The congregation has certainly come a long way in this department. Having family roots at Etz Chaim that go back over a hundred years to its founding, I grew up hearing stories of the "old days" of Etz Chaim. And while many aspects of Etz Chaim's past were very positive, it was not immune from the hierarchical systems governed by socio-economics that continue to plague some congregations today.

My mother remembers feeling like an outcast as a girl at Etz Chaim, where she was the only member of her bas mitzvah group who wasn't the child of a professional, and who was from "the wrong side of the tracks"—Old Orchard Beach. Not even her status as a member of one of the most involved and dedicated families at the shul trumped her status of coming from a non-affluent household, and she still carries with her the memories of being subtly-and at times overtly-ridiculed by fellow congregants Practices that reveal a congregant's financial position, such as alivos auctions, and that grant honor and respect to those who have money while denying those things to those who do not, have no place in a shul, in my opinion. Donations are a crucial part of every synagogue's budget, and all congregants should be as generous as their incomes allow. I know that had I money to spare, I would be much more likely to donate it to a congregation that doesn't

assign worth according to bank account balance than one that does. Whether or not Jewish monetary law allows for the purchasing of aliyos, Jewish morality should not. So I am glad that aliyosauctioning at Etz Chaim has gone the way of the mechitzah, relegated to our congregation's past, before the spirit of egalitarianism was ushered in.

> "Having family roots at Etz Chaim that go back over a hundred years to its founding, I grew up hearing stories of the "old days" of Etz Chaim.

"... a Florence Melton Adult Mini-School (FMAMS) will be opening in Portland this October."

The Jewish Community Alliance is delighted to announce a Florence Melton Adult Mini-School (FMAMS) will be opening in Portland this October. Classes will meet weekly at The Atrium at The Cedars on Tuesday mornings or Wednesday evenings for 2 ½ hours for 30 weeks. The first year curriculum, Rhythms and Purposes of Jewish Living, will be taught by Ellie Miller and Dov Goldberg.

Know Judaism

the liorence mehon

edub mini-school

Adult Jewish learners from all backgrounds are invited to explore classic Jewish sources in an intellectually stimulating, interactive, non-denominational environment. Class is text-based and there are no tests, no grades and no homework. The subsidized yearly tuition for all students is \$613 and we are seeking donations for scholarships.

Interested? Come learn more about the program by joining us for an information session and sample lesson, *Entering the Sa-ored*, taught by our faculty Dov Goldberg and Ellie Miller.

Sincerely,

Fae Silverman

Director, FMAMS of Southern Maine fsilverman@mainejewish.org

(207) 772-1959 x 110

Who: Adult Jewish learners from all backgrounds

What: A free information session & sample lesson

When: Monday, August 30th: 6:30-8:30pm

Where: The Atrium at The Cedars,

640 Ocean Ave, Portland

Please RSVP ASAP.

For further information on the FMAMS

visit: www.fmams.org.il

August 2010/5770

Jewish Holidays - 2010/5770





"I love being a part of Sunday School!"



Schedule for High Holiday Services At Congregation Etz Chaim 2010

<u>Rosh Hashanah</u>

Wednesday, Sept. 8: 7 pm Thursday, Sept. 9: 9:30 am Preliminary Prayers: 9 am Family Svc: 11:30 am Tashlich: follows am svc Evening Svc: 7 pm Friday, Sept. 10: 9:30 am No Evening Service Friday, Sept, 17: Kol Nidre: 6:45 pm Saturday, Sept. 18: 9:30 am Preliminary Prayers: 9 am Family Svc: 11:30 am Yizkor: 11:30 am Afternoon Svc: 4 pm Community Break Fast at end of Service

Yom Kippur

Sunday School Note from 2009-10 by Tara Levy

Being part of Sunday School has been really fun! All the parents are very supportive and helpful, and the kids are fun to talk to. It has been a great experience for me, working with all of the kids and getting to know them better.

The kids are all easy to get along with, and everyone is nice to each other. I love being a part of Sunday School!!

We do a lot of activities, games, crafts, then we read stories about the holiday we are talking about that month. We also sing songs, then have a snack.

I look forward to more Sunday Schools later this year.

So, What's Nu? By David Strassler

When you review the High Holiday schedule, you might have noticed that morning services will be starting at 9:30 am, with preliminary prayers starting at 9 am. There will be some other changes this year that the ritual committee has suggested, to encourage more congregation involvement and participation.

Scott Rapaport will once again inspire us with his beautiful voice. Our own Beth Strassler, cantorial student, will join Scott at the bima, singing some of the prayers. We will be adding more commentary to the service as well, to help our congregation understand the significance of this holy service.

The Family Service will also start at a different time: 11:30 am, as David Strassler blends the end of that service into the conclusion of the adult service. The finale will be a community Rosh Hashanah Kiddush, which includes challah, and apples with honey.

And finally, we are asking members of the congregation to help lead selected English prayers. If you are interested, please contact David Strassler at 967-5833.

Mikvat Shalom

Our mission is to make it possible for Maine Jews to learn about the mitradu .

We encourage the use of traditional and non-traditional and roman traditional and roman traditionan traditional and roman traditional and roman tradititio

מקות שלום

Mikvat Shalom is a unique community-based mikvah in

August 2010/5770



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Beth at Opening of Mikvat Shalom

In Judaism, a mikvah (pool of water) is used for ritual immersion and is considered an essential element of any religious community.

Mikvat Shalom's vision is to make it possible for all Jews to learn about both the traditional ways and the more modern ways in which to use a mikvah to enrich one's life.

Many faith traditions have a water ritual. In Judaism, a mikvah (pool of water) is used for ritual immersion and is considered an essential element of any religious community. In recent times, the practice has been expanded for use by Jews outside of the orthodox community, for celebrating life events, preparing for holidays and converting to Judaism.

For a year and a half, I have had the privilege of serving on the board of directors for Mikvat Shalom, the NEW, communitybased mikvah in Portland. This organization has assumed ownership of the mikvah on the grounds of Shaarey Tphiloh, the orthodox synagogue on Noyes Street. We recently completed a renovation of the building and the mikvah itself, thanks to the generous help of King Weinstein of Old Orchard Beach.

Mikvat Shalom's vision is to make it possible for all Jews to learn about both the traditional ways, and the more modern ways, in which to use a mikvah to enrich one's life. We are committed to maintaining a kosher mikvah that is welcoming to all Jews, and a vital local resource to strengthen our community.

Mikvat Shalom, an independent nonprofit organization, represents the diversity of

Maine's Jewish community. Our board has members of Chabad, Modern Orthodox,

Conservative, Reform and non-denominational congregations. We believe we are one of only a few mikva'ot in the US that brings together Jews from such a wide spectrum of Jewish practice.

Through this involvement, I am continually learning about the traditional and contemporary uses of a mikvah. It has been fascinating to participate in two conversions held at the Mayyim Hayyim community mikvah in Newton, MA in the years before Mikvat Shalom was established. Both were conducted by Rabbi Lev Baesh, and each blended the traditional and contemporary aspects of mikvah and conversion in a meaningful way for the person converting.

I am looking forward to attending the international mikvah conference, organized by Mayyim Hayyim, in Boston this October.

by Beth Strassler Mikvah Shalom website: www.mikvatshalom.org

Sunday School Schedule 2010-11

We hope you all enjoyed the wonderful summer weather! Sunday School is coming again soon, and we are getting ready. Start time is 10:00 a.m. again, and we end at Noon. Bring the kids and join us for crafts, stories, friends, food and fun!

Please contact Jeff or Adrianne Levy with questions at:

ifutures@maine.rr.com or alevy@maine.rr.com.



Holiday Note

Arnold Shapiro, President, and the entire Board of Directors of Congregation Etz Chaim, wish you and yours a very happy, healthy and prosperous year to come.





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Sunday Schoolers and families 2009-10

THEY'RE DYING TO BE ADMITTED By David Strassler

August 2010/5770

An ad hoc committee from the board of directors has been given the task to explore our community's options for cemetery burial. The members on this committee include Cynthia Kurtz, Jack Schraeter and David Strassler.

We initially explored burial choices in the greater Biddeford area, but found too may obstacles to make this feasible.

Historically, Portland is where past Congregation Etz Chaim members have been buried; either at Mount Sinai Cemetery or at Temple Beth El Cemetery. As of now, Congregation Etz Chaim has not had a specific community burial area.

We subsequently contacted Darrell Cooper from the Jewish Funeral Home in Portland to find out more about Jewish burials in Portland. With his assistance, we then met with board membership from the Mount Sinai Cemetery.

We feel that our best option will be to utilize a part of the Mount Sinai Cemetery as our community cemetery. In the near future, a mailing will be sent out to our membership to arrange a meeting, to determine if there is interest in continuing to pursue this arrangement.

If you would like to know more, please contact David Strassler @ 967-5833.

Hebrew School

By David Strassler

Hebrew School begins the 2010-11 schedule on Thursday, *September 23 at 3:45 p.m.*

Parents/Kids: Remember to bring decorations for the Succah, to start the year off right!

Questions? Contact Beth or David Strassler at 967-5833.



Hebrew School Mission Statement

The primary goal of the York County Community Hebrew School is to teach Hebrew & Jewish Studies to children in York County.

We are committed to providing a local school community that fosters an excitement for learning & a positive Jewish identity for each child.





Board of Directors at Congregation Etz Chaim Jennie Aranovitch Marc Feldman Alan Fink Stanley Karlin Maureen King Cynthia Kurtz Jeff Levy Jon Nathanson Pamela Small Oliver Sue & Michael Rubin Arnold & Barbara Shapiro Jack Schraeter

Website: http://etzchaimme.org/index.html

Beth & David Strassler

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."

August 2010/5770

York County Jewish Community

This newsletter is published four or five times each year.

It is intended to announce & report on Jewish community events in York County, and especially at Congregation Etz Chaim in Biddeford. It offers local perspectives on historical & contemporary aspects of Jewish life.

Adrianne Levy, Editor & Layout

Design Consultant: Levy family & some 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.

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: 284-9002

> Shabbat Potlucks: Linda: 967-4047