

York County Jewish Community News



SHALOMAN COMES TO BIDDEFORD

Enthusiastic audiences welcomed Al Wiesner, the creator of the first Jewish superhero, Shaloman, to Congregation Etz Chaim on November 16th.

Al traced the beginnings of comic books in America, noting that several of the original artists were Jewish. He believes the success of Shaloman followed the establishment of the state of Israel, making the world ready for a physically powerful Jewish figure.

Responding to the distress call "Oy vay!", Shaloman emerges from a rocky topped mountain in Israel. He is easily identified by his rippling muscles, kipa and large letter Shin on his chest.

Many of the Hebrew School students have followed his adventures by checking out copies of the comic books from the complete collection in our synagogue library.

Al Wiesner's visit was supported by a grant to Etz Chaim Community Education by the Sam L. Cohen Foundation.

Shaloman Trivia

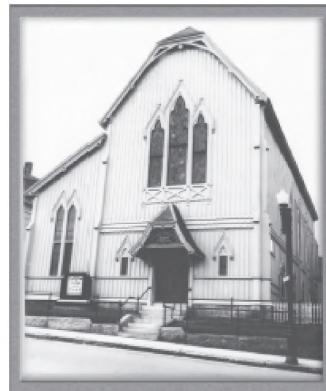
Answers on back page

1. Does Shaloman wear a cape?
2. What shape is his belt? Why?
3. What is his nickname?
4. From which letter is he formed?

Lithograph Available

Tri color lithographs of the banner designed for the Saco Museum exhibit will soon be available for purchase. Get more information from our website or express your interest in purchasing by writing to <mail@etzchaimme.org>

A Century of Jewish Life in Biddeford - Saco



September 7 - November 12

Exhibit Hours:
Tuesday-Sunday 12-4 pm
Thursday 12-8 pm

SACO MUSEUM



5. What is the mountain named?
6. Who is his arch enemy?
7. Which person in Al Wiesner's life looks like this arch enemy?

LIBRARIAN'S CORNER*by Maureen King***Book Review*****Up, Up, and Oy Vey!: How Jewish History, Culture, and Values Shaped the Comic Book Superhero****by Simcha Weinstein, (2006, Leviathan Press)*

For all you comic book fans out there, this book is for you!! When asked to write a review for this newsletter, I knew I had to continue the comic book theme.

Our visit with Shaloman creator, Al Weisner, had peaked my curiosity (and rekindled my interest in comics) and I knew this would be the perfect book. It is an enlightening read with a lot of information and fun facts about our favorite superheroes and their secret (or not so secret) lives.

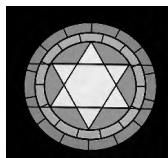
Rabbi Weinstein writes about the comic book genre from the perspective of both a lover of pop culture (his first career was in films) and a rabbi. He explores how Judaism has influenced the creators and writers of the superheroes we all grew up with. Superman, Batman, the Spirit, Captain America, the Justice League of America, Fantastic Four, the Incredible Hulk, Spider Man, and X-Men are all here, along with a few other surprises. In fact, each superhero or super-group is explored in separate chapters, complete with revelations about each one!

While each character is discussed in depth, Rabbi Weinstein also weaves in Jewish references from Adam to the Zohar. He adeptly draws parallels between such diverse elements as Superman and the immigrant

experience of many of our Jewish families; the Incredible Hulk and Golem; and the X-Men and the Holocaust. According to Stan Lee (creator of MANY of the superheroes covered here), "Finding the similarities between Jewish lore and modern American superheroes is an exciting and meaningful experience. I urge everyone who is interested in the deeper meanings behind heroes to enjoy this book."

What more can I say? The question I will leave you with: In all your comic book reading, do you recall who Sabra is? If not, read this book!!

See you at the Library!

**WINDOW REPLACED**

President Arnold Shapiro worked diligently to oversee the repair of the Magen David stained glass window and the mahogany frame around it. Rivers' Edge completed the installation of the new wood and glass at 2 pm on Friday, September 22. Just four hours latter, congregants gathered in the sanctuary for the first Rosh Hashanah service.

A generous donation from Bruce, Stuart and Matthew Ruben in memory of their parents, Gladys & Max Ruben has covered the large expense of the repair. A special dedication will be held during Rosh Hashanah services for the year 5768 in September 2007.

**Board of Directors
at Congregation Etz Chaim***Marc Feldman**Alan Fink**Maureen King**Cynthia Kurtz**Tobie & Jon Nathanson**Arnold & Barbara Shapiro**Jack Schraeter**Beth & David Strassler***Newsletter Contributors****JENNIE ARANOVITCH**

Curator of the exhibit "A Century of Jewish Life in Biddeford-Saco,

Jennie's roots run deep in the local Jewish community.

MAUREEN KING

As librarian for the Samuel Osher Memorial Library,



Maureen oversees all acquisitions & operations.

ROB PIERCE

The founder and teacher of our Teen Class, Rob has prepared three of his daughters for bat mitzvah.

DAVID STRASSLER

The primary lay leader of our Shabbat services, David moonlights as a family physician in Biddeford.

***Beth Strassler, Editor******<mail@etzchaimme.org>***

HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS

by Jennie Aranovitch

The End of an Exhibit.

November 13th was a day of mixed emotions for me as I dismantled “A Century of Jewish Life in Biddeford-Saco,” the exhibit that I guest-curated at the Saco Museum. After a nine week run, the exhibit’s time had come to an end. While prying foam-core boards off of the gallery walls and packing up the contents of glass display cases (the precise arrangement over which I had agonized), I felt pangs of sadness at the thought that my “baby,” who had a 13 month gestation period, had already reached the end of its lifespan.

However, thumbing through the exhibit’s visitor comment book and recalling all of the positive reactions of those who had viewed the exhibit brightened my spirits considerably. For so many people who were once part of Biddeford-Saco’s Jewish community but who had moved away, or who remained in the area but did not stay connected to Judaism or the Jewish community here, “coming back” to see the exhibit was powerfully nostalgic. Even for non-Jews who grew up in Biddeford, recalling the days of their youth spent shopping in Biddeford’s Jewish-owned stores brought back heart-warming memories. Two elderly sisters from Biddeford’s Greek community who had grown up very close to Bacon Street, told me, after attending the exhibit’s opening reception, that seeing all of the memorabilia on display had brought back their youth to them. Another attendee of the opening gala, a Jewish woman who was not from the area, became teary-eyed when looking at the photos of the immigrant families. “I don’t even know these people,” she said. “But it still makes me cry to see these pictures.”

Knowing that the exhibit touched so many people from so many backgrounds—Jews originally from Biddeford-Saco who moved away; area Jews who disengaged from the Etz Chaim community after their b’nai mitzvos; non-Jews who grew up in Biddeford during the Jewish “heyday;” and Jewish transplants to Southern Maine—I could no longer feel blue that it had all come to an end. Clearly, the exhibit accomplished what I had hoped it would.

There is one more way in which I hope the exhibit impacted people, though, and that is to have made them realize the importance of documenting their own family’s or community’s history before too much of it is lost. My grandfather Ivan Aranovitch, his sister Lillie (Aranovitch) Schlesinger, and longtime community member Gladys Ruben had all contributed artifacts and/or historical information to the exhibit, but these three people unfortunately did not live to see the project come to fruition. Three of the five individuals whose interviews were featured on the exhibit’s video presentation are no longer with us. I hope that people take a lesson from those who had the foresight to capture those interviews while they had the chance. If the exhibit, fleeting though it was, encouraged even one person to sit down with an elderly family member to record his or her memories, then I have nothing to be sad about.



*Please send your reflections on the exhibit to
mail@etzchaimme.org*

TEEN CLASS UPDATE*by Rob Pierce*

As we begin our fourth year of the Etz Chaim Confirmation Class (also known as the "Teen Class"), I am glad to report that we have now completed trips to New York City for the past two years. We are planning to travel there again on March 31, 2007 with this year's class of seven teens.

Last year's trip was terrific and all (even the parent chaperones) had a great time. The students realized the connection between seeing The Color Purple and their own Jewish heritage because the Jewish history of perseverance and strength of character may be found in other minorities, such as the play's lead character, a black female, Celie.

We absorbed a lot of what the Museum of Jewish Heritage offers and found the Jewish Museum provided an interesting variety of Jewish history and culture. We ate a lot of Kosher dills and some of us ate too much corned beef, but more importantly, it was great to connect as a group whether it was laughing in the van ride or thoughtfully sharing the many exhibits. I believe this connection to each other will be valuable when the teens think back on their young years in Maine, where they clearly lived in a somewhat cultural isolation that was rejuvenated with a positive Jewish connection through the community at Congregation Etz Chaim.



"The NYC Deli Experience": (L to R) Hannah Pierce, Katherine Pierce, Shona Workman, Jonathan Sherman, Adam Campisi, Ellie Cole, Sarah Strassler

Four students---Katherine Pierce, Adam Campisi, Ellie Cole and Emma Wilson---all competed their third year last May. They were

recognized on Friday, May 12, 2006 with a service led by David Strassler. Each gave speeches about their experiences at Etz Chaim, especially during the three years after bar/bat mitzvah, and shared their favorite Etz Chaim memories before devouring cheesecake for kiddush.



Strolling in Central Park: (L to R) Rob Pierce, Shona Workman, Jonathan Sherman, Sarah Strassler, Adam Campisi, Hannah Pierce, Ellie Cole, Katherine Pierce, Michael Campisi.

WE COULD HAVE DANCED ALL NIGHT

What a Chanukah Party! The delicious latkes, the wonderful food, the dancing & music!! 150 people attended the party this year. Many thanks to organizers Julie Campisi, Maureen King and latke chef, Marc Feldman.

SUNDAY SCHOOL HAPPENINGS*by Susan Pierce*

We have had two Sunday schools so far, the first one celebrating Shabbat and the December one Hanukkah. We have 5 or 6 children both times and there is a group of 4 year old girls who are forming strong friendships.

For Shabbat, we made braided challah and families took it home to bake. We read Remember That feasted on pumpkin, chocolate chip challah and sugar cookies.

For Hanukkah, we made "stained glass" dreidels to hang in the window, star of David snowflake cut-outs and a latke flipping into the pan game. The kids played dreidel and we sang several songs. Our Hanukkah feast included donuts and latkes. The grandparents/aunts/parents all seem to enjoy each others' company. Each session is very upbeat with everyone helping each other.

Hope to see you on January 7!

HEBREW SCHOOL NEWS*by Beth Strassler*

The year is off to a great start. Our Hebrew School has more energy than ever! We have 30 students enrolled and seven teens. We also have an abundance of good teachers and teaching assistants, which allows us to continue the unique education we like to offer our students.

Alef Class: Our youngest class boasts three returning students and five new students this year! The class made "Shalom" tee shirts to wear to hear Al Wiesner's presentation.

Bet Class: This class struggles through "You Be the Judge" with a new moral dilemma each week. OR you could call it, "What would Rashi do?"

Gimmel Class: What do those words mean? Eber tackles the teaching of prayers in Hebrew AND their meaning with our oldest class.

Stefanie Wayne-Workman is rotating through the classrooms to teach music and dance. In December, she taught dance steps in preparation for the Chanukah party.

With the help of several parents, we took each of the four classes to the Saco Museum exhibit. Parents are also helping to contribute to our weekly service as "Story Reader of the Week".

"My Child is Mensch" bumper stickers will be awarded to the family whose student completes 18 weeks of parent documented mitzvot.

The ideas of several students have been appearing in the Jewish magazine, Babganewz. Elyse Oliver, Cassie Matthews & Sarah Beth Campisi recently had their submissions for the cartoon "What do you say?" chosen for publication.

JOB CORNER

Potluck Supper Organizer: Would you like to see the suppers continue? We need people to take over the organizing & doing beginning in September 2007. Please consider taking the job. There is time to "learn the ropes" from the present organizers before this year's schedule ends. Please contact Maureen King <mknmf@adelphia.net> or 282-2907.

THE GOLDEN RULE*by David Strassler*

Everyday, there are opportunities to help people in big and little ways. Sometimes the way to help is obvious and sometimes, not so obvious. A good place to start is to put yourself in others' shoes. How would you want to be treated? You'll then usually come up with the right answer. And it isn't always the big things. Just an encouraging word, caring touch or friendly wave can sometimes change someone else's day.

Imagine if everyone followed The GOLDEN RULE...what a wonderful world this would be. The messages from several religions are the same:

JEWISH: Whatever thou hatest thyself, that do not to another.

CHRISTIAN: All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.

ISLAMIC: No one is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.

BUDDHIST: Hurt not others in ways that you would find hurtful.

CONFUCIAN: Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you.

It can be contagious. There is much negativity in the media, yet many wonderful good deeds are done every day that do not get recognized. One of my favorite book collections is the Chicken Soup for the Soul series. Here's one of the many stories called *The Most Caring Child*:

Author and lecturer Leo Buscaglia once talked about a contest he was asked to judge. The purpose of the contest was to find the most caring child. The winner was a four-year-old whose next-door neighbor was an elderly gentleman, who had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard climbed onto his lap and just sat there. When his mother asked him what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said, "Nothing. I just helped him cry."

Each of us can serve as an example to those around us, by treating people "right", with respect, honesty and dignity. For starters, thank those around us for their good deeds. We have many opportunities to do good. Don't miss your chance.

TU B'SHEVAT SEDER*by Caren Klein.**Friday, February 2, 6 pm.*

Just when the winter blues have set in.....Think spring! Come celebrate Tu b'Shevat, the "New Year's for the Trees" with a family community seder. The focus is on the annual renewal of the earth and the progression of the growing season.

We will provide different wines (& grape juice), nuts, fruits, and challah, if you could bring a veggie dish for the potluck dinner. Four kinds of fruits and four varieties of wine symbolize the changes from winter to spring. The seder leads us through the tasting of earthly delights with text, prayer and song. Maybe this will become one of your favorite holidays. It certainly is mine!

If you would like to contribute to the seder, please contact Caren Klein 361-1377.

Look forward to seeing you!

PURIM PARTY*Sunday, March 4, 3-6 pm.*

Join in the crazy fun of Purim! The traditional reading of the Etz Chaim megillah, songs, and games with lots of prizes make the party merry. The Hamantaschen are delicious!!! Come in costume!

TORAH REPAIR

In May 2006, our torahs were registered & assessed by Machon Ot, USA. The first one, 90 years old from Romania has been sent for repair.

Synagogue Contacts

All questions or comments

<mail@etzchaimme.org>Membership: Mail to PO Box 905

Kennebunk, ME 04043

Memorial Plaques, prayerbooks,
Etz Chaim books of Torah and
Commentary: Arnold Shapiro
284-4523 or Beth StrasslerHebrew School/Shabbat Services:
Beth/ David Strassler 967-5833.Sunday School: Susan 324-7263Library Donations: Beth StrasslerPotlucks: Maureen 282-2907**December Fundraiser**

Fundraising letters were mailed in December. Please consider supporting all we do. If you've already donated, thank you.

Do you like our new look?

Besides having several contributors, we have added photos and a more professional layout.

What do you think?

Would you like to contribute?

Please write your comments to

<mail@etzchaimme.org>**Mailing list changes**

If your address has changed, OR you know someone who would like to receive a newsletter, send the info to <maureen@etzchaimme.org>

Blue tee shirts (\$15) and lapel pins (\$5) with our 100th anniversary logo are available for purchase. To order, use the enclosed blue form.

**Community Events****January 6 & 20**

Shabbat AM Service 9:30

January 7

Sunday School, 9:30 - 11:30

February 2 (Friday night)

Tu B'Shevat Seder & Potluck 6 pm

February 3 & 17 (Saturday)

Shabbat Service 9:30 am

February 11

Sunday School 9:30 - 11:30 am

March 3 & 17 (Saturday)

Shabbat Service 9:30 am

March 4 (Sunday)

Purim Party 3-6 pm

March 11

Sunday School 9:30 - 11:30 am

March 25 (Sunday)Passover Kosher Wine
& Appetizer Tasting 3 - 5 pm**March 31-April 1 (Sat & Sun)**

Teen Trip to NYC

Holiday Calendar**Passover Seders**

Monday, April 2

Tuesday, April 3

Yom HaShoah: April 15**Yom Ha Atzma'ut:** April 23**Shalom! Trivia Answers***from page 1*

1. No; 2. Triangle, representing the three forefathers of Judaism: Abraham, Isaac & Jacob; 3. The Kosher Crusader; 4. The Hebrew letter Shin; 5. Mt. Israel; 6. Doctor Traif; 7. His evil high school art teacher, Mr. Wilcox.