

FROM THE RABBI

And What's Behind Your Mask?



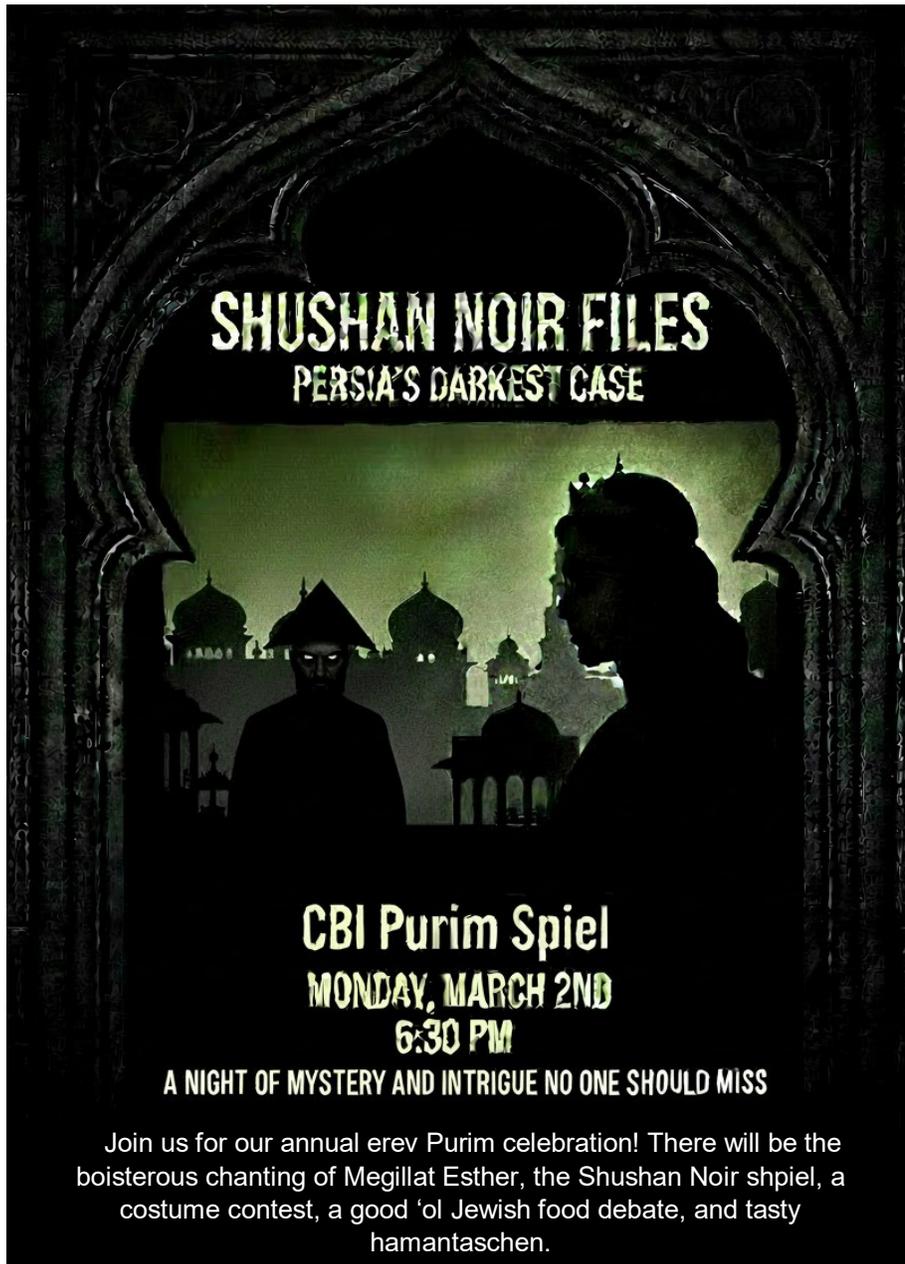
Every year as Purim approaches, I start thinking about the kinds of masks, disguises, and costumes everyone will be putting

together. The creative ones, the last-minute ones, the ones held together by safety pins, and everything in between. And whenever I think about masks, I can't help but flash back to the kind we wore in 2020-2021, the ones that fogged up our glasses and made us wonder if we had brushed our teeth.

Purim invites us into the strange spiritual practice of pretending. We dress up, we hide our faces, we blur the lines of who's who. It's all part of the holiday's playful chaos, but it's also one of Purim's deepest truths: so much of life happens behind masks.

The Book of Esther famously never mentions God's name: a literary mask that conceals the Divine. Esther hides her Jewish identity for most of the story. Even the "villain" Haman seems to wear one mask in public and another in private. Nothing is quite what it seems, and yet

Continued on page 10



SHUSHAN NOIR FILES
PERSIA'S DARKEST CASE

CBI Purim Spiel
MONDAY, MARCH 2ND
6:30 PM

A NIGHT OF MYSTERY AND INTRIGUE NO ONE SHOULD MISS

Join us for our annual erev Purim celebration! There will be the boisterous chanting of Megillat Esther, the Shushan Noir shpiel, a costume contest, a good 'ol Jewish food debate, and tasty hamantaschen.



INSIDE:

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From the President...

My New Year's Resolutions as Your President



As we welcome a brand-new year, I want to take a moment to wish each of you a happy, healthy, and meaningful year ahead. I

will admit that I am not typically a "New Year's resolutions" person. But now that I am nearly six months into my presidency at CBI, this feels like the perfect moment to pause, reflect, and set a few intentions for the year to come.

First Resolution: Strengthen Connections

One of the greatest joys of this role has been getting to know so many of you. And yet, there are still many faces I only wave to from across the sanctuary or smile at during an oneg. I want to change that. I resolve to meet and truly get to know as many congregants as possible, whether we sit together at a service, chat at an event, brainstorm at a committee meeting, or grab a cup of coffee. Please reach out anytime. My door and my email inbox are always open. I look forward to hearing your stories, your hopes for our community, and how we can make CBI feel even more like home.

Second Resolution: Support Our Rabbi and Staff

We are incredibly fortunate to have such dedicated professionals guiding our spiritual life and daily

operations. I resolve to work closely with Rabbi and our staff to ensure they feel valued, respected, and supported in everything they do. A healthy and joyful workplace allows each person and our congregation — as a whole — to thrive.

Third Resolution: Listen and Adapt as We Grow

CBI is growing in numbers, in energy, and in possibility. With growth comes change, and change gives us an opportunity to rethink how we serve our members. I resolve to work thoughtfully with our Board to continually evaluate how we operate, listen closely to your needs, and make adjustments that help our community flourish for years to come.

Fourth Resolution: Embrace the Honor and the Joy

Serving as president of this congregation is one of the greatest honors of my life. I am grateful every single day for the trust you have placed in me. My final resolution is simply to enjoy this journey, the big moments and the small, and to approach each challenge and celebration with gratitude, curiosity, and heart.

Thank you for allowing me to serve and grow alongside you. Here's to a wonderful year ahead, filled with connection, purpose, and community. Happy New Year!

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL

751 San Juan Boulevard
Bellingham, WA 98229

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Deadline for submission of all articles and calendar events for the March/April issue is FEBRUARY 8. Call the office for more information.

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL

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Victoria Mayers

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From the Keshet Center for Jewish Learning

Praise, Participate, Parties, Prepare

BY VICTORIA MAYERS, KESHER CO-DIRECTOR

Praise

During these unprecedented times, many Jewish congregations are losing members and Hebrew school enrollment numbers are rapidly dropping. However, at Keshet our enrollment numbers continue to rise every year. This detail caught the attention of the SAMIS Foundation. After CBI was awarded \$60,000 to support MASSA, the youth program, SAMIS has been diligently monitoring Keshet programs. They sent out pre- and post-program surveys, conducted interviews with the MASSA team leaders, and sent representatives to periodically visit Keshet. Recently, CBI's MASSA program was featured in SAMIS Foundation's monthly social blog. This article was sent to all the Jewish synagogues and communities within Washington State. Read the article here: tinyurl.com/yf88da8m

Participate

Keshet is currently looking for a Holocaust Teacher for our eighth-grade class. Daniel Sauter has taught the Holocaust for over three years but has recently accepted a job out of town and has now moved away. During those three years, Ray Wolpow volunteered to mentor Daniel and together they developed a Holocaust curriculum that Keshet has preserved online. Sydney Wolfson is currently co-teaching the class, and he has experience being the classroom madrich. Therefore, there is a lot of support offered for this position. If you or someone you know is willing and able to teach the Holocaust program, then please contact Leah Bordman or Victoria Mayers at Keshet@bethisraelbellingham.org



Some of the MASSA students and teacher Gaby Mayers in Barcelona

Parties (and Participate!)

The Chanukah party was a blast this year. We started it earlier as an effort to allow families to have more free time on their Sunday afternoon. We want to thank our diligent volunteers and dedicated Keshet families who always step up to offer support and assistance as needed. Without community volunteers Keshet would not be able to provide the extracurricular events we offer at CBI. We also want to thank the volunteers who came out to help make latkes on December 13. These baking parties are always a hoot. We invite you to consider joining us when we bake hamantaschen for the Purim Party. Please stay tuned and we'll send out more details soon.

Prepare

The Keshet Admin team has begun implementing Phase 2 of our new security procedures. All administrators now carry walkie talkies to be used only in emergencies. All Keshet classrooms now have Security Procedure packets placed at their front. Teachers have been trained on how to use these packets in the event of any sort of emergency that might arise during school hours. Phase 3 will require the Security Committee and the Keshet Admin team to determine safe evacuation strategies from CBI to Wade King Elementary School. As we continue to progress with these new developments, we will make sure to include the entire CBI community.

Cierra Burkill, kindergarten and first-grade Keshet teacher, began teaching after our last issue of *Shul Shofar*



so we are introducing her now. She and her family have been part of CBI since they moved to Bellingham in 2021. This is her first year teaching Keshet. Cierra is also a part of the Membership Committee. She enjoys baking sourdough bread, cooking, and reading science fiction.

Synagogue 411

Archives:

Tim Baker, (360) 305-6945

Care:

Elsie Sokol, (360) 393-9618

Sarah Witte, (360) 296-3058

Membership:

Sue Mahar (360) 319-5314

Library, Scrip:

Joan Wayne, (360) 676-8939

Gartner Scholarship Fund:

Carol Robinson, (360) 671-3852

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for children or adults

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Feast of Learning Returns to Beth Israel: A Shabbat Celebration of Mind, Spirit, and Community

BY ANDREA SHUPACK

After several years of dreaming about its return, Congregation Beth Israel's Feast of Learning is back, and it promises to be an unforgettable Shabbat experience. The programming committee is thrilled to bring this event back to CBI.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, January 17, for this mostly free event* when our building will be alive with music, conversation, discovery, and the joy of learning together.

The day begins at 9:00 am and runs to 9:00 pm.

Many of us remember the last Feast of Learning, held just before the pandemic. The day carried a special kind of electricity: classrooms full of learning and conversation; beautiful services and singing; a moving *havdalah* in the foyer; shared meals that brought our community closer; topped off with a soul-lifting concert with Laura Berman. It was one of those Shabbatot people talked about for months afterward.

* There is no cost for the day's events, classes, childcare, and dinner. The Chava Mirel concert has a suggested donation of \$18. RSVP required for dinner and the concert. Watch the *Timbre!* for registration details.

This year's Feast of Learning will feature Chava Mirel, who will join us for the entire day, beginning by leading Tot Shabbat with Rabbi Samuels, and ending with a musical concert.

A Day Built for Everyone

The Feast of Learning is designed with the entire community in mind. Whether you're someone who loves text study, enjoys hands-on creative activities, savors quiet spiritual moments, or thrives in musical space, this is your Shabbat.

You will have a rich menu of classes to choose from, led by our talented community. Expect sessions that spark curiosity — Torah learning, Jewish history, contemporary issues, spirituality, creativity, and more. You can drop into one class or stay and explore several throughout the day. There will be programming for kids and teens. Childcare will be available so, parents, you can relax and enjoy, knowing your kids are well enjoyed.

And because it's the *Feast* of Learning, there will be food. Good food. Shared food. The kind of Shabbat nourishment that warms not only the body but the spirit.

Welcoming Chava Mirel

We are excited to welcome back Chava Mirel, the award-winning musician, composer, and educator whose presence elevates any room she enters. Her music weaves together soul, jazz, prayer, and heart, creating a sound both grounded and transcendent. Chava will be teaching, singing, and sharing her unique approach to Jewish music and spiritual connection throughout the day. Her visit is truly a gift to our community.



CBI's Feast Of Learning Returns
Saturday, January 17th 9a.m. - 9p.m.

Join us for the whole day, or come for a taste
 The day is **free** and open to all
 Classes & programming for **all ages**
Evening concert at 7:30 with Chava

RSVP for dinner, purchase concert tickets (Suggested \$18)
 & see the full schedule at: bethisraelbellingham.org



Featuring Chava Mirel

Continued on page 11

Beit Café Returns: An Evening of Stories

BY ANDREA SHUPACK

The Program Committee will be hosting our annual Beit Cafe on Sunday, February 15 at 6:30 pm, at the Mount Baker Theater. This year we will be in the theater’s Walton Room, which is a larger, but still intimate space to accommodate more people. Year after year, this event stands out as one of the highlights of our programming calendar. We have a great time listening to stories, enjoying the food and wine, and between the stories — fun anecdotes and jokes shared by Rabbi Samuels and music with me. We always come away knowing one another just a little better.

Beit Café is our low-key take on the style of storytelling made famous by The Moth. But unlike its high-stakes stage and bright lights, our version is relaxed, intimate, and wonderfully supportive. It’s a space where anyone can step up to the microphone and share a piece of their life with less performance pressure. No competition, just authentic voices and genuine listening.

This year’s theme, “The Cracks Where the Light Gets In,” invites storytellers to explore the moments when life surprised them, challenged them, or changed them. These are the stories that grow from unexpected detours and hard-won insights: the times when something didn’t go as planned but led to new appreciation, deeper resilience, or an unexpected source of gratitude. Whether funny, poignant, or profound, these are the tales that reveal how illumination often comes through the places we least expect.

The evening is about more than storytelling, it’s about connection. Beit Café offers a chance to celebrate the richness of our community in a way that only shared stories can. Whether you want to tell a story or come to listen, we hope you will join us for this treasured event.

If you would like to tell a story, please email Andrea Shupack. There is also support helping prepare and craft your story, if desired. See you there!

Anniversaries

Jan 01	Ella and Allan Barney	#13
Jan 06	David Goldman and Linda Blackwell	#42
Jan 08	Lindsey and Jordan Genut	#17
Jan 27	Jacob Slosberg and Amy Frye	#9
Jan 31	Effron and Janet Esseiva	#21
Feb 14	Shana Feiger and Walker Lillard-Nelson	#6
Feb 15	Ezra and Colleen Tilland-Stafford	#11
Feb 17	Carol and David Robinson	#46
Feb 17	Rob and Kathy Grossman	#20

Did we miss your anniversary? Call the office at (360) 733-8890 or email office@bethisraelbellingham.org with the month, day, and year of your special day.

The Kvelling Corner

Welcome to our new members!

- Jackie Braverman and Jack Kintner – Bellingham
- Deanna Fleysher and Greg Schasse – Bellingham, daughter: Ula (4)
- Ira Penn and Dee Dee O’Connor – Bellingham
- Eric and Angela Shapow – Bellingham, son: Simon (17)
- Eli and Leah Wainman – Bellingham, daughters: Veda (12) and Uma (4)



PURIM CARNIVAL

Sunday, March 1,
12:00 to 2:00 pm

Purim is a time for all ages to dress up in silly costumes, eat hamantaschen, and be merry. What better way to celebrate than to attend the Purim Carnival in our Social Hall on March 1.

The Purim Carnival will feature games with prizes, a costume contest, henna and face painting, yummy food, a fortune teller, and balloon animals.

25% of your first purchase will go to Congregation Beth Israel ♥



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January/February 2026 Service Schedule

PLEASE NOTE: Friday evening services and Saturday Torah study will be *hybrid*, allowing congregants and visitors to worship or study in person, or attend via Zoom. **Except for B'nei Mitzvah, all Saturday morning services will be in-person only.**

Friday, Jan. 2	6:15 pm Kabbalat Shabbat Family Service	Friday, Feb. 6	6:15 pm Kabbalat Shabbat Family Service (4/5th Grade)
Friday, Jan. 9	6:15 pm Kabbalat Shabbat	Saturday, Feb. 7	10:30 am Contemplative Service
Saturday, Jan. 10	10:30 am Saturday Shabbat	Friday, Feb. 13	6:15 pm Kabbalat Shabbat Service
Friday, Jan. 16	6:15 pm Kabbalat Shabbat Service	Saturday, Feb. 14	9:30 am Torah Study (<i>Parashat Mishpatim</i>) 10:30 am Saturday Shabbat
Saturday, Jan. 17	11:30 am Tot Shabbat (NOTE TIME CHANGE-FEAST OF LEARNING)	Friday, Feb. 20	6:15 pm Kabbalat Shabbat Service
Friday, Jan. 23	7:30 pm Shabbat Shira	Saturday, Feb. 21	11:00 am Tot Shabbat
Saturday, Jan. 24	9:30 am Torah Study (<i>Parashat Shevat</i>) 10:30 am Conservative Lay Led Minyan	Friday, Feb. 27	7:30 pm Shabbat Shira
Friday, Jan. 30	NO SERVICE AT CBI	Saturday, Feb. 28	9:30 am Torah Study (<i>Parashat Tetzaveh</i>) 10:30 am Conservative Minyan
Saturday, Jan. 31	NO SERVICES AT CBI		



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Help!

Jason Benhaim

ACROSS

- 1 Rugged rock
- 5 Rubs until it shines
- 15 Present for a teacher?
- 16 It may be taken to start something
- 17 'Frozen' hit "Let ___"
- 18 Tone of halachic texts like the Mishnah or Talmud
- 19 Like "LOL", but even more emphatic
- 21 Place to die during an argument
- 22 Printer liquid
- 23 Kind of colony
- 24 Cascades constituents, for short
- 25 Tacks on
- 26 Bounty hunter in 'Attack of the Clones'
- 28 About 1/2,650th of the Pacific Crest Trail
- 29 Woodinville winery Chateau ___ Michelle
- 30 Jedi foe
- 31 UPS competitor
- 32 Descendant of Jacob
- 34 Goes for the gold?
- 36 Merit badge holder
- 37 Iconic Emeril Lagasse exclamation
- 40 Reddit interviews
- 41 Like some Himalayan natives
- 43 Console that had 'Super Mario World' as a launch title

- 44 Janet's fiancé in 'The Rocky Horror Picture Show'
- 45 Toward the Arctic
- 46 Wash. neighbor
- 47 Grin from ear to ear
- 48 Mathematical prefix for "seven"
- 49 Orthodontist's offering
- 52 Great Lake by Cleveland
- 54 Nobel Peace Prize winner who said, "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference."
- 55 High alpine lake
- 56 Board game that provides a sinking feeling
- 57 Hook's right-hand man

DOWN

- 1 X, to some sorority girls
- 2 Fall back
- 3 Forested French region prominent in WWI
- 4 Digital photo location data
- 5 Medicine tablet
- 6 Number of gods, according to The Shema
- 7 How to fire up a hanukkah
- 8 "If ___ broke..."
- 9 Window ledges
- 10 It comes down hard
- 11 UFO pilots
- 12 Go unused
- 13 Scale that always drops to zero after sunset
- 14 Quick kisses
- 20 Does a dance popularized by 'Fortnite'

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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46				47						48				
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54											55			
56											57			

- 23 Sleepwear
- 24 Facebook's parent company
- 25 Assistant
- 27 White and Douglas, e.g.
- 28 Natural gas, mostly
- 31 Punch ingredient?
- 32 Lead-in to much
- 33 Praise
- 34 "The ___ Effect": phenomenon of communal misremembering
- 35 "Seriously!"
- 37 British philosopher ___ Russell
- 38 Old Hollywood dancer Fred ___
- 39 "Verbal shrug" popularized by 'The Simpsons'
- 41 Readies for impact
- 42 Common apartment restriction
- 43 Back half of a record
- 44 Misrepresent
- 47 Cry a river
- 48 Fab Four film that featured "Ticket to Ride"
- 50 Letter following Chet in the Alef-Bet
- 51 Outdoor gear co-op
- 53 Hydrocarbon suffix that denotes a double bond

Steeped in Judaism: Henry (Hank) Levine

BY MINDA RAE AMIRAN

It was 1981, and the rabbi of CBI had just retired after serving for 29 years. Hank Levine was president of the small Conservative-oriented congregation, too small to afford an attractive salary for a new rabbi. In fact, it took over a year to find a retired rabbi in Vancouver who was willing to serve CBI part-time.

Throughout that search Hank substituted as rabbi, conducting services every Friday night and for all the High Holidays and at funerals and namings. His only preparation was having served previously as *hazan* for High Holy Days — and having been brought up in an Orthodox home, with *Heder* after elementary school and leadership on the *bimah* after his Bar Mitzvah in his Orthodox synagogue in Passaic, New Jersey, where he grew up. He continues to *hazen* to this day and to lead services at CBI, which was finally able to fund a full-time rabbi in 1987.

Hank also passionately studies Yiddish, a language he loves; it was his parents' mother tongue, but they used it as a secret language, so he has had to learn it as an adult. And now he leads a group called the *Yiddishe Ringele*.

Hank and Corinne Gimbel-Levine settled in Bellingham in 1979, partly because of CBI. It's hard to know where any real-life story begins, but perhaps this one started in Cleveland when Corinne almost spilled coffee on Hank, who was in line behind her at the hospital coffee machine. He was in medical school at Case Western Reserve, doing a hospital rotation, and she was a nurse in the adjoining coronary care unit. Their acquaintance began then and years later became a lasting marriage.

But first Hank moved to Charlottesville, Virginia for a rotating internship at the University of Virginia, where the patients he saw were mainly poor — white and Black — as they had been in Cleveland. The war in Vietnam was raging, and Hank, a lifelong activist, strongly opposed the war. When his internship ended, he applied for a two-year U.S. Public Health Service tour as an alternative to the draft. His choices were to serve in a prison, a small



Corinne Gimbel-Levine and Hank Levine

town, or a tribal reservation, and he ended up living in Bellingham as a GP for the Lummi Nation. His work with poor patients had partly prepared him for this new assignment, but he found his indigenous patients different in important ways — not very communicative verbally and not likely to see a doctor unless they were almost at death's door. Until then, Hank hadn't been clear about his direction in medicine. He had always been interested in "what made people tick," and here he realized that in primary care he wouldn't really have time to know his patients as individuals. He decided to turn to psychiatry and took up a psychiatric residency at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.

Corinne had followed him to Charlottesville, where she earned her degree as a nurse practitioner, a fairly new profession at the time. She also followed him to Bellingham, where they joined CBI, and then to Chapel Hill. Considering where to start their professional careers once Hank had completed his residency, they decided to return to Bellingham as a married couple. Besides the glorious scenery of sea and mountains, there was CBI. Enjoying the warmth of the community, Hank also believed that the connections he had already formed at CBI and with other doctors would help him with patient referrals. Corinne became the first family nurse practitioner in Whatcom County.

Continued on page 13



1. Efron Esseiva enjoying Kurly's fry kart. 2. Terry Shirk serving up some *sufganiyot*. 3. Eloise & Ansel Hecht and Selah Adelstein trying to eat donuts. 4-5. Keshet friends. 6-8. Dreidel spin-off winners (Shoshana Samuels, Eli Genut, Ezra Shupack). 9. Cherynne Kravitz and Emily Weaver overseeing the chocolate fountain. 10. Daryl Dixon, Jeff Galbraith, and Mike Braunstein watching the dreidel spin. 11. Scott Foss and his plate of latkes. 12. Rabbi Samuels and Erin Cohen.

Birthdays

JANUARY 2026

1/1	Elias Anderson (20th)	1/19	William Homer (5th)	2/11	Shalem Blum (21st)
1/1	Jeaninne Kahan	1/20	Yonit Rosenlieb (11th)	2/11	Jessica Homer
1/1	Binnie Perper	1/21	Arturo Flores Pritchett (9th)	2/11	Leo Alexander Banks Strich (8th)
1/1	Alison Zak	1/21	Alyson Kassen	2/15	Gloria Lebowitz
1/2	Rachel Bjarnason	1/22	Stuart Berman	2/16	Leviah Landau
1/2	Cierra Burkill	1/22	Katie Honeycutt	2/17	Dan Ohms
1/2	Bella Gentry (20th)	1/23	Joshua Greenberg	2/18	Tom Oliver
1/3	Keren Gott	1/23	Mikaela Kaiser	2/18	Sarah E. Zarrow
1/3	Tahlia Somers (19th)	1/23	David Nemens	2/19	Frank Corey
1/4	Julia Ban	1/25	Marc Weinstein	2/20	Donald Fenbert
1/4	Linda Blackwell	1/26	Leo David Cohen (13th)	2/20	Susan Schneider
1/4	Elijah Fay (18th)	1/26	Nathan LaMont (5th)	2/20	Elijah Wolfson (17th)
1/4	Glen Lertzman (14th)	1/26	Mitch Press	2/21	Gregg Orlik
1/4	Wolf Pomerantz (14th)	1/26	Geraldine Reitz	2/21	Meadow Ross (14th)
1/6	Rachel Goldberg	1/27	Leo Slosberg (9th)	2/21	Ben Sokol
1/6	Isaac Konikoff	1/28	Yehuda Fox	2/21	Kristin Sykes-David
1/6	Tom Maxim	1/28	Angie Lee	2/22	Teva Corey-DuBow (19th)
1/8	Max Becker (4th)	1/29	Avinoam Baruch Bokser (7th)	2/22	Corinne Hecht
1/8	Judy Diamond	1/30	Wendy Blum	2/22	Naomi Math (6th)
1/8	Victoria Mayers	1/30	Gib Morrow	2/22	Karen Sloss
1/9	Helen Feiger			2/22	Jeannette Stephens
1/9	Sarah Lertzman			2/24	Todd Haskell
1/9	Ira Penn			2/24	Mela Lertzman (10th)
1/10	Louis Lippman			2/24	Robert Meltzer
1/11	John Schapiro			2/25	Nancy Auerbach
1/12	Talia Clarke (22nd)			2/25	Avi Brennan (19th)
1/14	Leslie Hamilton			2/25	Genevieve Cohn
1/15	Diana Joyce Dixon (12th)			2/26	Tamar Cohen-Hillel
1/15	Audrey LaPlante (17th)			2/26	Alex Jeffers
1/15	Nora Mazonson			2/26	Robin Kodner
1/15	Kathi Paluch			2/26	Orly Ziv-Maxim
1/17	David Elkayam			2/27	Jeffery Benedict Weinreb
1/17	Jodi Litt			2/27	Herschel Goodwin (9th)
1/18	Miriam Buckman			2/27	Conor Keefe (7th)
1/18	Dashka Garretson			2/27	Ken Levinson
1/18	Damaris Lofortes			2/27	Teresa Sommers
				2/28	Nicholas Swisher

FEBRUARY 2026

2/1	William Freeman	2/11	Ella Barney
2/2	Ruben Blick (8th)		
2/3	Adina Diamond (9th)		
2/4	Bonnie Zell		
2/5	Jordan Ebbeling (15th)		
2/5	Matthew Kinney		
2/5	Elizabeth Snyder		
2/6	Stephanie Machlin		
2/6	Laura Wolfson		
2/8	Ben Fred		
2/8	Samantha Schwartz (21st)		
2/10	Jacob Bishop (24th)		
2/10	Bob Friedman		
2/10	Laurie Riskin		

FROM THE RABBI

Continued from page 1

everything ultimately comes into the light.

That tension between the hidden and the revealed feels particularly resonant this year. Many of us walk around with a kind of emotional mask: trying to look put-together when life feels uncertain, trying to stay calm while the world feels loud, trying to stay hopeful when headlines push us toward cynicism. Some in our community feel pressure to hide their Jewishness in certain spaces; others are discovering new pride and connection. Masks are everywhere.

Purim reminds us that hiding can be a survival tool, but it is not meant to be permanent. Esther ultimately reveals who she truly is, and that act changes the story. The rabbis teach that Esther was afraid, but she stepped forward anyway. Her courage comes not from being fearless, but from being honest.

So this year, I want to ask: What mask are you ready to set down? And what part of your Jewish identity — your joy, your curiosity, your questions, your commitments — do you want to reveal a little more boldly?

Our Purim celebrations this year will be silly and spirited, as always. There will be costumes, laughter,

hamantaschen, and a Purim spiel that will definitely be better than Haman deserves. But my hope is that beneath all the fun, each of us can find a moment of clarity: a reminder that who we really are matters and that unmasking even one small part of ourselves can strengthen the entire community.

May Purim bring you joy; may it bring you permission to be playful, and may it give you the courage of Esther, who realized that sometimes the holiest thing we can do is reveal our true selves.

L'chayim and happy Purim!

RABBI JOSHUA SAMUELS

Star Gazing at CBI

BY DAVID S. COHN

The night sky has always fascinated us. How many remember the first time they looked through a telescope to see craters on the moon, the rings of Saturn, or the elongated disc of the Andromeda galaxy?

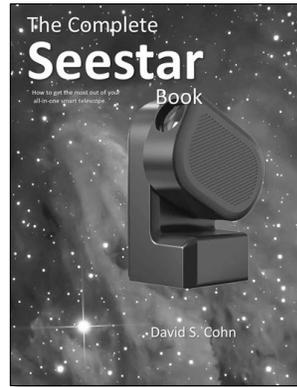
Want to indulge your curiosity — old or new? I will be setting up both my Seestar smart telescope and a traditional optical telescope at Congregation Beth Israel on Sunday, January 25, 2026, from 7:00-9:00 pm. You will be able to peer through the eyepiece of the optical telescope and then compare its image with those streaming from my Seestar onto a large-screen TV. My night sky apps indicate that we will have excellent views of the Orion nebula, the Moon, Jupiter, and many other objects. I will also give a short talk about the Seestar telescope itself.

“Traditional” telescopes rely on large optics to capture and focus light from a distant object so that it can be viewed in the telescope’s eyepiece, and the resulting image often appears quite dim.

Today, that is all changing, with the introduction of a new class of “smart” telescopes. Rather than an eyepiece, these devices have a built-in digital camera optimized for astronomy. These telescopes also include an extensive

database of celestial objects, so you can simply go to any object — no knowledge of the heavens needed.

The Seestar S50 we will be using has been such a game changer, it has rekindled my enthusiasm for astronomy, and prompted me to



write a book — *The Complete Seestar Book** — to help novice and experienced users get the most out of this amazing all-in-one smart telescope.

Registration is required.

Watch the *Timbrel* for registration details. And since this event does depend on the weather, if Mother Nature does not cooperate, we will have several back-up dates.

So be sure to register and

provide your email address. We will notify you if we have to switch to a different date.

* David will have copies of his book available at the event.

FEAST OF LEARNING

Continued from page 4

Learning as a Path to Shabbat Rest

Although the day is full, Feast of Learning is not about being busy — it’s about Shabbat. It’s about the kind of rest that comes not only from slowing down, but from nourishing the soul. Whether you choose a lively discussion, a contemplative spiritual session, an art workshop, or a musical gathering, the day is structured to

help you breathe, restore, and reconnect with what matters.

We hope you’ll join us. Bring your curiosity, your whole family, and your friends. Come to learn, to sing, to eat, to rest, to be inspired, and to be part of a day that reminds us why we gather.

For a full schedule of the day, and descriptions of all the classes to choose from, see insert or visit our website. You can also find a link to the schedule in the weekly *Timbrel* email.

We can’t wait to celebrate this Shabbat day of learning with you.

Alfei Todot Many Thanks

A special thank you from the *Shul Shofar* editors to Sarah Cobb, CBI’s Office Manager, who answers all of our questions, fills in details, lends a good eye to *Shul Shofar* drafts, and does it all with graciousness and good cheer.



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From the Cemetery Committee

BY JANIS BAN

Jewish customs and traditions in matters of death place an emphasis on simplicity, humility, and the permanence of memory. Elaborate decoration of graves, while not entirely absent, is generally minimized in favor of symbols and customs that hold deeper meaning within the faith.

The Cemetery Committee has recently revised and simplified the existing rules and regulations regarding landscaping and decorating gravesites in the Congregation Beth Israel Cemetery. Please take a few minutes to review these rules and make sure that any graves you care for are within them.

Any objects or decorations not within these rules will be removed by January 1, 2026 and will remain in the CBI lost and found in the office until February 1, 2026.

A. Cut Flowers and Bouquets

Cut flowers and bouquets are allowed year-round. Cut flowers and bouquets will be removed from plots as soon as they become wilted or unsightly.

B. Prohibited Items

The placing of artificial flowers or foliage, boxes, shells, toys, metal designs, ornaments, painted stones, settees, chairs, glass, plastic, wood or metal cases shall not be permitted except for a new burial. (Section 180 C of Rules and Regulations)

C. New Burials

All flowers, plants, easels, and decorations will be allowed to remain for a seven-day period following the day of a new burial. Persons wishing to retain any of

the items must remove them during the seven day period or they will be disposed of accordingly.

Wilted flowers will be removed during this period at the discretion of the Cemetery Committee.

D. Decorations

No decorations depicting holidays other than Jewish holidays will be allowed. Any decorations shall be removed within two weeks after a holiday.

Cloth American flags no larger than 8" x 12" displayed on a wooden stick no longer than 24 inches will be allowed on the graves of U.S. service members on the U.S. Memorial Day and on the U.S. Veterans Day.

E. Not Responsible for Theft

Neither Congregation Beth Israel nor the Cemetery Committee shall be responsible for damage or theft of cut flowers, potted plants, displays, or containers. Anyone leaving such articles in the cemetery does so at their own risk.

F. Placement of Potted Plants

Potted plants must be placed so they don't interfere with lawn moving or trimming. The maintenance of the pot and its contents is the responsibility of the person placing the pot on display. If the display is not maintained or interferes with mowing or trimming of the cemetery, the Cemetery Committee may remove it from the plot and dispose of it.

G. No Glass Containers

Absolutely no glass containers are allowed in the Cemetery.

H. Customary Stones and Coins

The placing of small unpainted stones, which may be polished, on or at the plot is customary in Jewish cemeteries and shall be allowed. Customary placement of coins on the graves of veterans is also permissible. Coins must be of legal tender.

If you have any questions or concerns, contact Janis Ban (360) 734-5021.



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EYSHET CHAYIL * WOMAN OF VALOR

Torah Laughter Light

Please join us as we gather Shabbat afternoon
 Saturday, January 31, 2026 4:00 pm
 to study, share and experience Havdalah as we welcome in the new week
 RSVP by January 23, 2026 office@bethisraelbellingham.org
 A special time for yourself - A special time with community
 Cantor Sharona Feller

*We welcome all women and non-binary people who want to share space that centers Jewish women's voices and experiences.

FACES IN OUR COMMUNITY

Continued from page 8

The Lummi had not forgotten Hank and soon hired him as their psychiatric consultant, a position he held until the reservation was able to afford its own full-time psychiatrist a few years ago. During that time, he treated clients whose parents and grandparents he knew or had known; the Lummi community is rooted in place, unlike the rest of us, who are rarely to be found where we grew up. Hank continues to see local patients and has developed a specialty in forensic psychiatry, helping judges and lawyers understand how mental illnesses may affect the cases they hear. Hank also teaches forensic psychiatry pro bono at the University of Washington and for the WWU Psy-

chology Department's program in behavioral neurophysiology.

As everyone knows, Whatcom County badly needs more psychologists and psychiatrists. Over the years, Hank has done his best to recruit them, speaking to many a class of medical students at the University of Washington. Only one graduate in psychiatry from that school has come here in all that time. Hank sees the problem as the cost of medical school today. Partly because of the high price of current technology, tuition runs to \$490K and graduates carry so much debt that they must seek work in big-city institutions that offer high salaries.

Corinne and Hank's son, Jeremiah, has not followed his father's profession, but clearly upholds his values. He is an attorney in Seattle with the

same commitment to Judaism. Jeremiah was born here in 1981, graduated from Harvard Law School cum laude, and until recently was a federal prosecutor. Because he had successfully prosecuted two of the January 6 attackers on the Capitol, he resigned from his position under the current administration and is now in private practice. His wife, Rachel, a human resources administrator, has two rabbi siblings, one of whom, Sharon Brous, was chaplain at Barack Obama's inauguration. Jeremiah and Rachel have a six-year-old daughter, Hazel, who attends Jewish Day School.

As often as possible, the families come together to celebrate the holidays and family occasions. Steeped, as they all are, in Jewish values and a Jewish way of life, they continue to share those with their wide circle.

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Our grandson, Oliver Zemel's
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In memory of my beloved
father, Arthur

From: *Daniel Ingberman and
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IN APPRECIATION OF:

Thank you for everything you
do, Rabbi Samuels!

From: *Susan Gause and
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IN HONOR OF:

Sophie Fay's Bat Mitzvah and
Jesse Simon's Bar Mitzvah.
Mazel Tov!

From: *Patrick Crane*

Our grandson, Oliver Zemel's
Bar Mitzvah. Mazel tov!

From: *Stu and Cinda Zemel*

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In loving memory of my
grandparents

From: *Bonnie Quam*

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Yahrzeits

Observances follow the Hebrew calendar, unless the secular date is requested, and are read on the Shabbat prior to the observance date.

Friday, January 2

Ruth Jacobson	1/03
Michael Ramsey	1/03
Pearl Turovitz	1/03
Lynn Shuster	1/04
Dorothea Zimmerman	1/05
Harry V. Welch, Jr	1/05
Sherwood Jacobson	1/05
Florence Weintraub	1/06
Martin Katz	1/06
Stanley Litt	1/06
Dorothy Mazel Spiro	1/07
Louis Lebowitz	1/07
Irwin Wapner	1/09
Ben Thal	1/09

Friday, January 9

Jack Diamond	1/10
Arnold Loober	1/10
Aimee Lewis	1/10
Brian House	1/10
Aaron Sanger	1/11
Anna Winefield Fox	1/11
Lillian Stiglitz Heller	1/12
Miriam Cohen	1/12
Bette Levy	1/13
Herman "Hy" Brownstein	1/13
Barney Cohn	1/13
Simon Rosen	1/13
Jack Siegel	1/14

Friday, January 16

Catherine Venturino	1/18
Shirley Spiegel Jacobson	1/19
Marion Glassman	1/19
Lawrence Weintraub	1/20
Irving Lackowitz	1/21
Morris Kalman Patinkin	1/21
Harry Suslow	1/22
Victorie Haislip	1/23

Friday, January 23

Sandor Garfinkle	1/25
Reisa Thal	1/25
Jerome Selznick	1/25
Mary Bayer Koplowitz	1/25
David Kaplowitz	1/26
(Arabelle) Chaya Schlanger	1/26
Joel K. Rubenstein	1/28
Harold Earl Perper	1/28
Derrek Jeremy Adelstein	1/29
Lillian Mauer Pravda	1/29
Morris Faber	1/29
Florence D. Shain	1/30
Daniel Weis	1/30

Friday, January 30

Chuck Collins	2/01
Alvis E. Swindell	2/02
Willie Kluger Pollock	2/03
Celia Zak	2/03
Leona Chorney Sondik	2/04
Dr. Herzl Spiro	2/04
Hally Vernon	2/04
Hannah Jacobson	2/05
Judy Holtzman	2/06
David Fine	2/06
Mishra Stephen Suloway	2/06
Steven R. Rivkin	2/06
William Schwartz	2/06

Friday, February 6

Meyer Wolpow	2/08
Mark Luster	2/09
Jean Beverly Blank	2/09
David Shain	2/10
Debbie Haskell	2/12
Muriel Smith	2/12
Urve Moyer	2/12
Albert Lebovich	2/13
Paul Sondik	2/13
Frieda Blank	2/13

Friday, February 13

Harold Katz	2/14
Rita Gordon	2/14
Burton Sklar	2/15
Lou Fine	2/15
William Freeman	2/15
Elinor Pravda	2/16
Gloria Perper	2/16
Rochelle Blum	2/17
Michel Oksenberg	2/17
Ann Perper	2/17
Judith T. Sklar	2/18
Clarence Weiner	2/18
Steve Sokol	2/18
Linda Kaplowitz Copeland	2/19
Robert Baker	2/19

Beth R. Curtis	2/19
Benjamin Solomon	2/19
David Ragosin	2/19

Friday, February 20

Luise Wikes	2/21
Harry Skinner	2/21
Betty Goldberger	2/21
Ninfa Short	2/22
Nelson Beller	2/22
Sadie Gordon Schiller	2/23
Sandra (Sandy) Miller	2/25
Sandra Glazer Lake	2/25
Robert W. Lippman	2/25
Jonathan David Mayers	2/26
Judith Ferbel	2/26
Robert Dixon	2/27
Ruth Lippman	2/27
John H. Bruns	2/27

Friday, February 27

Irwin Weiner	2/28
Gene Adelstein	3/01
Jack Eigen	3/01
Alice Duckworth	3/01
Joseph Sonneman	3/01
Robert Fife	3/02
George Schwartz	3/03
David Boman	3/03
Gilbert Orlik	3/03
Phyllis Goldin	3/03
Ida Chia Kahn	3/03
Harold Shepard	3/03
Fred Corman	3/03
Howard Little	3/03
Jessie Edinger	3/04
Judith Goldstein Zibbell	3/05
BJ Elder	3/05
Colleen Koplowitz	3/06
Walter von Hollander	3/06
Wesley Forman	3/06
Saul Faber	3/06

In Memoriam

Zichronam Lvrachiah ~ May their memories be for a blessing

Our congregation offers heartfelt condolences to the following individuals and their families:

Steve Cohen's beloved brother, **Jeffrey Cohen**, passed away on Saturday, November 29, 2025, in Pittsburgh. He is the cherished uncle of Rachel and Michael and the devoted brother-in-law of Erin. Jeffrey will be remembered with love and gratitude by his family and friends.

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Community Seder

SAVE THE DATE

For the second night Community Seder on
Thursday, April 2.

We look forward to seeing you and your
friends and family at this annual event.

Please keep an eye out for more
information coming in the *Timbrel* in
January.

