



## From The Assistant Rabbi...

**Mitzvah Day** was a great success. On Sunday Morning, December 11th, more than 200 people in our community — Academy students, teachers, congregants, and staff — were actively involved in acts of *tikkun olam* (acts which bring the world a little closer to perfection). I was honored to be part of the team, led by the Social Action Committee, which planned and coordinated *Mitzvah Day*.

*"Whoever does charity and justice is regarded as if he filled the whole world with kindness."*

—TALMUD SUKKAH 49B

On *Mitzvah Day*, BHCBE was filled not only with energy and excitement, but also with kindness. Throughout the building and the Chicagoland area, community members—young, older, and in-between—were engaged in a variety of *Mitzvot*, which made/will make a positive impact on other people's lives.

*"There is no happiness like the happiness of giving to another."* —MIDRASH TANCHUMAH 8:3

Daniel Rothner, the founder and president of Areyvut, spoke to adults and Academy students on *Mitzvah Day*. Daniel travels the country inspiring others to incorporate *tzedeq* (kindness), *tzedakah* (charity), and *tikkun olam* (social justice) into their everyday lives. Daniel's message can be summarized in five words—in fact, he created a poster for us with these five words — "EVERYDAY IS MITZVAH DAY!"

Through inspirational stories and personal anecdotes, Daniel challenged us to not only try to do a *mitzvah* everyday, but also to see the numerous *mitzvah* opportunities, which present themselves everyday. We should strive to do these *mitzvot* because they are needed in the world, because many of them are quick and easy to do, because we never know how big an impact they may have, and because it feels good to do them. Some of the quick and easy *mitzvot* include: smiling at others, greeting people, not speaking badly about others, and allowing cars to merge in front of us.

*"Three things restore a person's spirit: beautiful sounds, sights, and scents."* —TALMUD BERACHOT 57B

On *Mitzvah Day*, we set out to restore many peoples' spirits in a variety of ways. Perhaps the most beautiful sound someone can hear is: "Hello. How are you? I came here to meet you and to spend time with you." This is what our congregants said to

the residents of the Lieberman Geriatric Center, the Robineau Residence for Senior Citizens, the Riverside Foundation for adults with disabilities, the Friedman Place for the blind and visually impaired, and the Friend Center for Early Alzheimer's Care. Another type of beautiful sound came from the BHCBE Youth Choir, which sang Hanukkah songs at the Lieberman Center.

In addition to the beautiful sounds, we produced beautiful sights. The Academy students made more than 60 Hanukkah cards, over 80 Hanukkah place mats, and many fabric patches, which will be sewn on to quilts for children in need. We even created a beautiful scent—the smell of fresh *challah* baking at the Friend Center.

*"You are not obligated to finish the task, neither are you free to ignore it."* —PIRKEI AVOT 2:21

There are many problems, challenges, and tragedies in the world that are so great, we are overwhelmed by them. Often when we are overwhelmed, we take no action. Rabbi Tarfon teaches us that when something important or urgent comes to our attention—even if it is overwhelming—we still must act. On *Mitzvah Day*, we took one small step in combating hunger. We made 600 sandwiches for people in need.

*"Whoever is able to protest against the transgressions of the entire world and does not do so is punished for the transgressions of the entire world."* —SHABBAT 54B

How can we protest against transgressions in the world? To whom should we protest? We can and should protest to people who have the power to thwart the actions of the transgressors—the press and our elected officials. On *Mitzvah Day*, we composed and signed over 120 letters to our elected officials. Some of the letters protested the crimes taking place in Darfur, Sudan. Other letters asked Congress to tighten sanctions on Iran, intended to pressure Iran to freeze its nuclear program. We also sent letters thanking our members of Congress for supporting the fiscal year 2006 foreign aid bill, which provides for economic and military assistance to Israel.

All in all—we accomplished quite a few things on *Mitzvah Day*. (For another report on *Mitzvah Day*, please see the Social Action article in this *Bulletin*.) May we continue to inspire one another to fill our synagogue, our community, and the world with kindness.

RABBI MICHAEL MISHKIN  
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## From the Desk of the President...

I hope you have been able to participate in some of our outstanding Adult Education programs thus far. I'm taking Conversational Hebrew and it is a lot more fun than it was years ago in Hebrew school!

The end of the secular is a busy time for some and a time to slow down and travel for others. I'm in the fundraising business so the last months of the year are very busy ones. I hope that those of you that get away for the winter months travel safely and come back safely. For those of us that will still be around, please help on some of those cold and blustery nights and try to make a *minyan*. We need you.

Watch for some new programming to pop up for singles and for couples. We're committed to help people connect with each other. We don't just want to grow bigger — we want to grow more together.

I was at the Men's Club Hanukkah party, Cantor Frank and our Junior Choir did their thing again! We heard a great repertoire of Hanukkah songs and the kids brought the average age in the room down to a respectable level!

Our congregants continue to receive awards in the Jewish community. Mazel Tov to Vern Gideon who received the Keter Award from Associated Talmud Torahs and was duly honored at their recent dinner. And, Mazel Tov to Andrea Yusim Meltzer who received the Gladys Iser Award in recognition of her ongoing commitment to SHALVA and for making Chicago a safer place for Jewish families.

I promised I would let you know if I was reading any good Jewish books lately. I just completed of *The Liberated Bride*, a remarkable book by A.B. Yehoshua, one of the finest Israeli writers alive, and my all-time favorite author. If you haven't read any of his novels, you are really missing something. I got a chance to meet him at a book signing and reading a few years ago. Sally says I was "stalking" him that afternoon to get him to sign my copies of his books and to get a chance to chat. Anyway, I highly recommend his novels.

STUART H. GOLD, PRESIDENT BHCBE

## Social Action Report... Mitzvah Day 2005

Results are in from the great Race to do Mitzvot, and from what we can discern our all-synagogue Mitzvah Day was a true success! Thanks to all who helped plan and participated in this exhilarating annual event!

So, what actually went on where? Our morning began with Minyan, after which participants either partook of continental breakfast or joined the Men's Club for a full meal and an inspiring talk by Areyvut founder Daniel Rothner. Thanks to Norwin Merens and Neil Banoff for organizing this. See Rabbi Mishkin's column for a fuller description of Daniel's message of how the concepts of *Chesed*, *Tzedakah* and *Gemilut Chasidim* can be incorporated into all of our daily lives.

Groups formed and took off for several sites in the greater community: Kooki Finkelman led a cadre of congregants, their children and their pets to the Lieberman geriatric facility, where their visits lit the light and sparkle of joy in the faces of the residents. Representatives of the animal kingdom included four dogs and a bunny rabbit (!) as well as our human visitors. There were also some of our pet people who went to Lieberman — Cantor Frank and members of the Children's Choir. The visits were absolutely loved by the audiences, and hopefully the remembrance of the day brought smiles to their faces for a long time afterwards.

At the Robineau residence, a combination of high school students and adults from BHCBE reminisced about Hanukkah experiences in the lives of all. Bingo was the morning's activity at Friedman Place, a home for the visually impaired. One returning participant said enthusiastically, "It was wonderful!"

At KESHET, Mitzvah doers assisted the children in Hanukkah party festivities, and facilitated their decoration of Hanukkah place mats for upcoming celebrations at the ARK. Those would be laminated and signed "made with love by the children of KESHET." How's that for a six-handkerchief special? Nine of us went to the Riverside Center for developmentally disabled adults, where games were played and conversation ensued. In the afternoon, the BHCBE Bakers—adults and children—went to the Friends Place and assisted the residents in kneading, braiding and baking *Challah*.

Meanwhile, back in the building, Daniel Rothner concluded his talk and left to address the school children. Immediately, the breakfast attendees arose, went to the back of the room, and began assembling lunches for the homeless and hungry in nearby communities. Some of them also decorated fabric squares to be sewn together to make blankets for sick children in hospitals. This is known as the Linus project.

And what was happening in the classrooms? In the primary grades, the children cut out coupons for food and household items, which would be given to clients of the ARK to help with their grocery costs. They also created 25 Hanukkah cards for Jewish residents of Little City, 44 for Congregation Shir Chadash in Metairie, Louisiana,

and 6 Christmas cards for Katrina-displaced families in our own area. I guess they will be the first holiday cards they've received that read from right to left!

Making place mats for the ARK was another classroom activity. The older students, in addition to the art projects, made work-search games for children in our sister community in Sumi, Ukraine, and joined adult volunteers in writing letters to our congresspersons advocating a variety of current issues. Additionally, they created Linus project designs and helped in the packing of 14 boxes of clothing and medicine for the Jewish residents of Brest, Belarus. While all this was happening, hands were busy in the youth lounge making sandwiches and packing lunches for the hungry. Cantor Jan Mahler did her usual fantastic job of planning, shopping, organizing and overseeing this project.

Out in the parking lot, a score of people truly gave of themselves by donating blood in LifeSource's bloodmobile. Congregants signed up for future service at the Uptown Café, registered to vote in the World Zionist Congress elections, and gave financial support to the children at Kiryat Gat in Israel and to an extremely needy Israeli family who had turned to BHCBE for help.

The mood at the shul had been set by the creation of beautifully conceptualized and executed posters highlighting Mitzvot. What a meaningful project to inspire the realization of the importance of these ideals in the minds of our children. Each participating family earned the *Areyvut*, "A Kindness a Day," calendar, offering suggestions for a specific Mitzvah for each day of the year, along with a related Jewish text. If your family participated and you did not receive a calendar, you may pick one up in the shul office. Additional calendars are available to keep in different places in your home or workplace, or to give as gifts. The price is \$13 per calendar.

We're really not supposed to say "thank you" to a Jew for doing a *Mitzvah*—it comes with the job. But I want to indulge in the pleasure of telling you how heartwarming it has been for me to work with Rabbi Mike, Heidi Massey, Marshall Kupchan and the Social Action Committee, with special kudos to Barb Dolin, Jeff Roth, Jennifer Oppenheimer and Jan for their unflinching devotion to the task. We appreciate the efforts of every one of you who took the time to bring the world a little closer to completion. We hope this December 11, despite the snow and cold, was one that brought warmth to your souls and gladness to your hearts.

*B'Ahava V'Shalom*

### YOUR SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE:

LINDA, BARB, FRIDITCHKE, DAVID, JAN, ANITA, JENNIFER, CELESTE, BOB, CHUCK, JUDY, ELLY, MARLA AND (JEFF) 2 AND SHEILA SERED GIDEON, CHAIRMAN

P.S. Our next activity will be the Environmental Shabbat and the glorious **Tu B'Shvat Seder** on the weekend of February 11-12, 2006. We'll keep you posted!



Daniel Rothner, founder of Areyvut, [www.aryevut.org](http://www.aryevut.org), met with Academy students on Mitzvah Day



Jeanine Taerbaum was one of the many Academy students who spent time helping out at sandwich making.



Congregants filling out paperwork before donating blood.

## Academy News

### Mitzvah Day Rocks at BHBE Academy!

Mitzvah Day drew a wonderful response from all BHBE Academy students, grades K-10, on Sunday morning, December 11. Our youngest students, grades K-2, all participated in cutting coupons and making holiday cards and hanukkah placemats. Each Hebrew Division students, grades 3-7, chose 2 projects for the morning, which including making sandwiches, decorative quilts for Project Linus, Hanukkah placemats for the Ark, or Hanukkah cards for Little City residents. In addition, students were also involved with political advocacy letter writing, creating seek-and-find games for Jewish kids in Sumi and Brest, and sorting clothing for the Brest Jewish community. And our BHCBE Youth Choir under the direction of Cantor Frank performed at the Lieberman Geriatric Health Centre in Skokie! Our Hebrew High students visited with residents of either the Robineau Group Living Residence for Senior Citizens in Skokie or the Friedman Place for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Chicago.

A highlight of the day for our Hebrew Division students was a special discussion with Daniel Rothner of the Arevut Foundation, who stressed that each day should be a mitzvah day, and that a kind word or a simple gesture can really make someone's day quite special. Each student left with a copy of Arevut's *A Kindness A Day 2006 Desk Calendar!*

The Academy would like to thank Sheila Gideon and the Social Action Committee, and Rabbi Mishkin and Heidi Massey for working with us to make the day a most unique, exciting and meaningful experience for our students.



Jerry Hobfol attended Gan's PACE program on Hanukkah with granddaughter Madison.



Toni and Jessica Werner work on a multi-media hanukiyah at the Gan PACE program.

### School Calendar

#### January 2006

- 2 **Monday**  
Last day of Winter Break: No Classes
- 3 **Tuesday**  
Classes resume
- 7 **Shabbat**  
Junior Congregation/Vav (6th grade)  
Tot Shabbat/Torah Time
- 11 **Wednesday**  
School Board Meeting
- 14 **Shabbat**  
Junior Congregation/ Hey (5th grade)  
Tot Shabbat/Torah Time
- 15 **Sunday**  
Vav (6th grade) Program and Brunch:  
Bar/Bat Mitzvah: A Family Journey
- 16 **Monday - No Classes**  
Martin Luther King Day
- 18 **Wednesday**  
No Hebrew High Classes
- 21 **Shabbat**  
Junior Congregation/  
Dalet (4th grade)  
Tot Shabbat/Torah Time
- 22 **Sunday**  
Zayin (7th grade) Program  
and Brunch:  
The Jewish Life Cycle:  
Funeral Practices
- 25 **Wednesday**  
Post-Confirmation Seminar  
and Dinner for HS Juniors  
and Seniors
- 28 **Shabbat**  
Junior Congregation/ Schechter  
Tot Shabbat/Torah Time
- 31 **Tuesday - No Classes**  
Hebrew Division Parent Teacher  
Conferences

#### February 2006

- 1 **Wednesday - No Classes**  
Hebrew Division Parent Teacher  
Conferences  
Post-Confirmation Seminar  
and Dinner
- 3 **Friday**  
Academy Shabbat Dinner
- 4 **Shabbat**  
Kabbalat Siddurim  
Junior Congregation/  
Gimel (3rd grade)  
Tot Shabbat/Torah Time

### Contribute to the Barry Pitler Memorial Fund

You'll help the congregation continue its commitment to the SKIP Program, which allows our students to enjoy the Israel experience.

### BHCBE Summer Scholarship Program Applications for Israel Programs Due January 31

Jewish education is a year-round endeavor. We encourage families to take full advantage of the summer as the ideal time to complement the more formal educational programs offered by the Academy, the Solomon Schechter Day School, and the Chicagoland Jewish High School.

BHCBE need-based scholarship awards are available to member families whose children are currently enrolled in a formal program of Jewish education and who will be participating in an approved Israel program. Allocations will be based on the availability of funds, individual needs, and the student's commitment to continue his/her Jewish education. Congregation funding for the SKIP program is provided by the Barry Pitler Memorial Fund and additional funding for SKIP students participating in an Israel program is provided by the Elissa Hope Strom Memorial Fund.

Applications for Israel programs are available through the School Office and are due January 31.