

Community ...

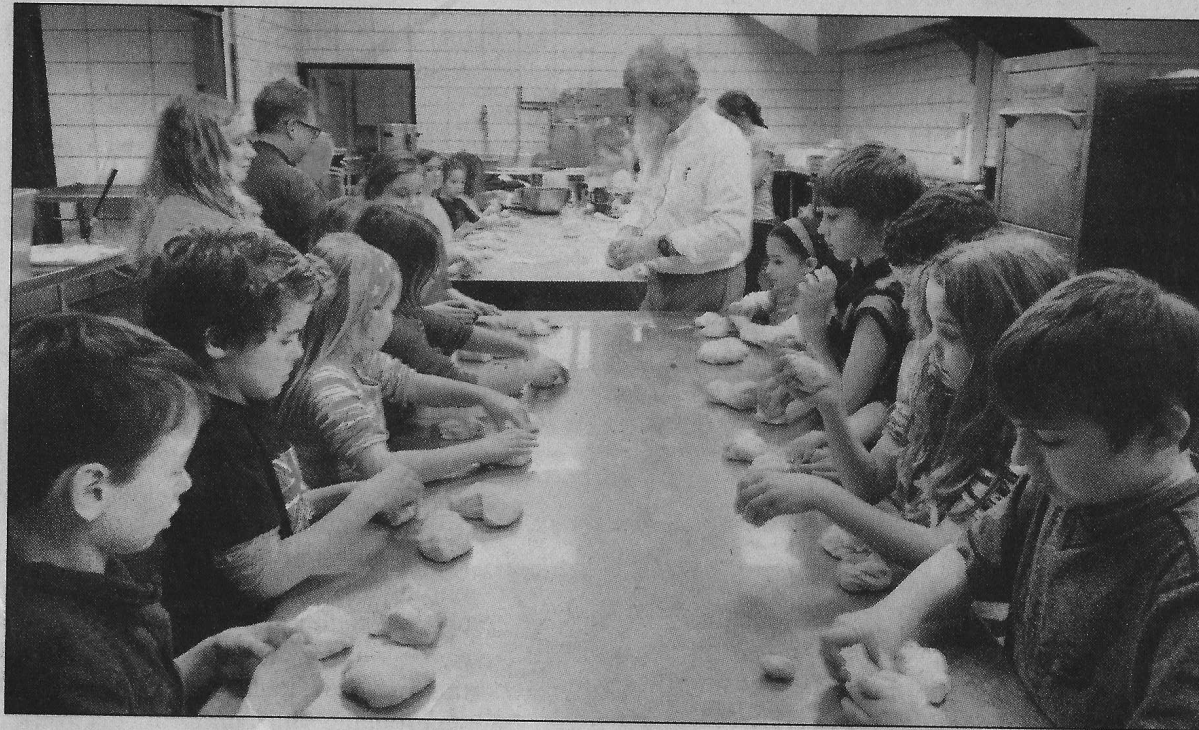
ROCHESTER, NY

Hands-On Learning With Scholarly Couple at TBK

BY RABBI REBECCA GUTTERMAN

“*Ein Kemach, Ein Torah,*” proclaimed Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah in Pirkei Avot, the Sayings of our Ancestors. “Where there is no flour (or bread), there is no Torah.” These words remind us that in the absence of physical nourishment, the prospect of learning and spiritual growth becomes dim. At the same time, if we are only concerned with our most basic needs, opportunities to open to Jewish wisdom — to stretch and deepen our perspectives — may come rarely or never. As is so often the case, the name of the game is balance!

Temple B’rith Kodesh hosted a special program throughout the weekend of March 15, one which brought that balance — the interplay of physical and spiritual sustenance. Rabbis Linda Motzkin and Jonathan Rubenstein, a husband and wife clergy team at Temple Sinai of Saratoga Springs, N.Y., were the scholars-in-residence and leaders of the program “Bread and



Torah.” He is a baker and co-founder of Slice of Heaven Breads, and she is a trained *soferet* (Torah scribe), one of very few women who has extensively studied and now practices the art of writing a Torah.

This program began on Friday

afternoon as the guest rabbis worked with Jewish teens from Rochester and surrounding cities, here for a regional youth group weekend. With Rubenstein’s leadership, the group baked challot for all to enjoy at Shabbat dinner later that night, while dis-

cussing mindful eating and gratitude for our resources. They then learned about what goes into the process of stretching animal hides on their way to becoming Torah parchment panels from Rabbi Motzkin. One participant who had been to both

the Kotel and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem described Friday’s hands-on learning as the most spiritual experience of his life.

Motzkin and Rubenstein joined the congregation Shabbat morning for Torah Study and services. Participants were truly taken with their ability to connect ordinary pursuits to prayer life and to the weekly Torah portion. Everyday activities like writing and study, food preparation and eating, can weave their way into the holy.

Finally, at the Havdallah program and during Religious School on Sunday morning, congregants of all ages had one more taste of baking challah and babka, as well as proofreading a Torah scroll in progress. Watching each participant contribute an ingredient or check a letter, witnessing the intimacy with our tradition they gained through both processes, reminded me what Jewish learning feels like at its very best. Teachings from the heart speak to the heart. ★