

# SoCalJSS Newsletter

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## Holiday Activities with Long Beach AEPi

The Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi) colony in Long Beach was significantly enriched in its Jewish identity programming through the Southern California Jewish Student Services' involvement over the holiday season.

With two separate programs during the holidays and participating in their first brotherhood Shabbat dinner of the academic year, Rabbi Drew of Southern California Jewish Student Services (SoCalJSS) provided Jewish content



and a rabbinic presence for young Jewish adults at the beginning of the school year.

The first program was "Shofar and Schnapps", where Rabbi Drew blasted the *shofar* for the AEPi members on Friday 30 September, enabling these Jewish young men to fulfill the *mitzvah* of hearing shofar blasts. "I thought it was really cool," said Ben Halperin, the Jewish Identity Chairman. "My favorite thing about it was that it brought the brothers together in a Jewish way." Halperin continued, "I also thought it was really cool that we were all able to

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## Torah on Tap at CSULB

Partnering with Long Beach Hillel, Rabbi Drew spoke about the practices and customs of *Rosh HaShanah* at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB). Discussing what the Jewish people traditionally do for the holiday inaugurating a new year on 27 September in the campus pub allowed students to (re-)consider the impending holiday.

With over a dozen students in attendance, it got them excited for the holiday and for Beach Hillel's *Rosh HaShanah* dinner. "I loved having stuff like that because I'm really new to Judaism," said sophomore Katie Tomeny, adding that "It's really nice learning about the holidays."

The Torah on Tap program allows for a relaxed environment in which to discuss Jewish texts and traditions, providing for an easier entry point for participants.



Rabbi Drew discussing *Rosh HaShanah* with students at California State University, Long Beach in The Nugget on September 27<sup>th</sup>

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participate in the shofar-blowing - it was a new experience, hearing the shofar all together.” Following the blasts, the members enjoyed something sweet to welcome in the year along with the blasts - apple liquor. Halperin further said, “It was a very successful first Jewish event of the school year for our AEPi group in Long Beach.”

The second event was an educational event where Rabbi Drew spoke about a couple of holidays over at the AEPi house. The “Jews, Schmooze & Brews” event on Thursday 6 October, focused on the holiday of *Yom Kippur*, which was to begin the following night, and *Sukkot*, the following week. “It was very interesting,” said AEPi member Shea Silver Hillinger, “and we didn't cover just *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkot* - I learned a lot of other interesting things as the conversation got onto tangents.” As fellow AEPi member, Yitzchak Alghatam said, “Rabbi Drew came by and dropped some heavy knowledge.”

Lastly, Rabbi Drew participated in the group's first brotherhood Shabbat dinner of the academic year, providing stories and Jewish knowledge to the experience. “I thought the brotherhood Shabbat dinner was great!” said Sam Orlik, the Long Beach AEPi's president. “And it was awesome having Rabbi Drew there to participate.” It was only the group's second ever brotherhood Shabbat dinner, the first of which took place in the spring of 2011.

AEPi, according to its website, which “was founded to provide opportunities for Jewish men seeking the best possible college and fraternity experience,” has done so by having “maintained the integrity of our purpose by strengthening our ties to the Jewish community and serving as a link between high school and career.... Alpha Epsilon Pi's role is to encourage the Jewish student to remain dedicated to Jewish ideals, values, and ethics and to prepare the student to be one of tomorrow's leaders so that he may help himself, his family, his community, and his people.”



## Holiday Activities with Beach Hillel

Partnering with Long Beach Hillel, Rabbi Drew of SoCalJSS prepared and organized evening services for the second night of *Rosh HaShanah* and for *Kol Nidre* night of *Yom Kippur*.

Sukkah activities included raising *sukkot* on-campus at CSULB and off-campus, the latter of which provided the location for a festive dinner on both the first night of the holiday and Shabbat.



Rabbi Drew with students at the Beach Hillel *sukkah* at CSULB, after having constructing it on October 11th

Rounding out the holiday season was the annual Sukkah Hop in Long Beach, where dozens of students from CSULB, UCI, CSUF, and other schools came together to celebrate and learn about the *Sukkot* holiday.

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SoCalJSS is an enterprise of Beth El Synagogue, a synagogue without walls, generously funded by Allen & Deanna Alevy. SoCalJSS's mission is to facilitate Jewish living and learning, and engaging with Jewish students and other young adults in Southern California. SoCalJSS provides the only rabbi for Jewish students at California State University (CSU), Long Beach, as well as the primary rabbi with the Hillel at CSU-Fullerton. SoCalJSS also provides for a rabbi to visit other schools and young adults in Orange County and the Inland Empire.



Tax-deductible donations to support the work of SoCalJSS can be made out to 'Beth El Synagogue' and mailed to Rabbi Drew, 3801 E. Willow Street, Long Beach, CA 90815. Rabbi Drew Kaplan can be emailed at [RabbiDrew@SoCalJSS.org](mailto:RabbiDrew@SoCalJSS.org).