

TEMPLE BETH-EL OF GREAT NECK

SHEMA

שְׁמַע

SHEMA HAS BEEN LOVINGLY ENDOWED BY SANDRA ATLAS BASS

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EDITOR'S NOTE

*I don't know why I love you like I do,
After all these changes that
you put me through.*
—Al Green, "Take Me to the River"

I woke up this morning, out of a dream where I had witnessed our first contact with an alien species. In my dream, a twisting spindle of fog had appeared above the great lawn of Astoria Park—drawing a mass of onlookers. It shed ragged scraps of cloud as it turned, taking on shape and definition until it finally resolved, to the crowd's amazement, into an old-school flying saucer. *Great*, I thought, *one more thing to deal with.*

This issue's theme is Change, of which all of us, like Al Green, have had a little too much. Sure, we coasted through the first weeks of the year, but by mid-March we knew 2020 would be like nothing we'd ever seen. COVID brought us to a standstill; George Floyd's murder brought us to the streets—both events

exposing deadly inequities in our system. With schools opening and an election bearing down, it feels like we've spent months running backward, eyes fixed on the past, bracing for the next shock.

Times as they are, nobody would blame us if we put High Holy Days services on hold for a while, maybe took a nap until 5782—but that's not what's happening. Everywhere I look, Jews are finding ways to seek joy and renewal at the end of this very imperfect year. The Kotzker Rabbi Menachem Mendel (1787-1859) reminds us, "There is nothing more whole than a broken heart, and nothing more upright than a crooked ladder." I miss standing together in prayer—but only in a Zoom service do we see each other's faces. This year, we won't celebrate side-by-side, but soul-by-soul.

On a recent podcast, Andy Slavitt, who ran the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services under President Barack Obama, offered some advice for

High Holy Days observance in a pandemic: "...throw open the traditions and say, 'What are the parts of our tradition that we have an ability to maintain and what's the best way to maintain them?' Find a way to do some sort of recognition, not just the people in the temple who died in the last year, but around the country, who have not been properly mourned. You can find a dozen ways to give people a sense of connectedness that are different from the way they normally get it, and maybe some of them will even be better." In these pages, you'll find stories of change: confronting it, learning from it, creating it. I hope you find something to inspire you as we face whatever changes 5781 has in wait.

Give *kavod*, not COVID!

L'Shana Tovah!
Len Schiff

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BY RABBI
MEIR FELDMAN

Amar Rabbi Akiva
אמר רבי עקיבא,
Rabbi Akiva said:

V'ahavta l'reiakha kamocha,
וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ
“You should love your neighbor
as yourself.”

Zeh klal gadol ba'Torah
זֶה כָּלֵל גָּדוֹל בַּתּוֹרָה
That is the central rule of the Torah.”

Remember this: 1+1=26. Trust me.

The theme for these High Holy Days is Hope, Healing and Love—and, in these challenging

times, oh how we need all three. Tara has written about healing and Cantor Adam about hope; I write about love.

Akiva tells us that Love is the *klal gadol*, the great rule of Judaism. It's that simple. Don't be distracted by centuries of argumentation, overwhelmed by the subtle, sophisticated, gorgeous complexity of our tradition. First comes love.

HOPE + HEALING + LOVE

But how can G-d, or Torah, command an emotion? How can anyone tell us what to feel?

In the 19th century, the sage Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, whom we call the Netziv, addressed this question.

The problem, says the Netziv, is that we are used to thinking of love as a feeling when really it's an action. Look at the phrase *v'ahavta l'reiakha*, love your neighbor. That lamed at the start of *l'reiakha* makes neighbor into the direct object of love, a verb.

Love, says the Netziv, can't just be a thing we sit around and feel—it demands action and can only be embodied in deeds. We don't *have* love—we *do* love. It happens when we reach out to another, whether family, friend, acquaintance or stranger. When we sit quietly and listen to the concerns of another or we donate or deliver food from the Samuel Field Y to the St. Aloysius RC Church Interfaith Food Pantry, it's present in all the ways we put ourselves aside for a moment and attend to the needs of someone else.

At Temple Beth-El, *v'ahavta l'reiakha* has been a central tenet for more than nine decades.

But who—or perhaps what—is being commanded here? Who is the *you*? Is it your body, the solid object we see with our eyes, or is it your *neshama*, your soul?

It's the latter, say our rabbis: We're more than flesh and bones. Our mortal, time-bound bodies are clothing for the soul, the infinite and essential. Though our earthly forms differ, our souls were

created *b'tzelem Elohim*, in the image of G-d. We are all touched with the Divine, all made of the same, infinitely precious stuff. How can we not, then, love our neighbors as ourselves?

But let's return to that odd equation I mentioned, 1+1=26, for one last perspective from the ancient tradition of Gematria.



Illustration by Adam Schiff

Every act of hope, every act of healing, is also an act of love. Put two acts together, and in that moment is G-d. This is the message of every synagogue, the message of Temple Beth-El and our mission in these Days of Awe from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur.

May this be a year in which your love grows by leaps and bounds, and your experience of G-d is present in every tiny gesture and modest moment of giving. We are so blessed to share this journey of moments with you—let's make them many in this year of 5781. Shana Tovah. 🌱

THE HEALING POWER OF COMMUNITY IN A TIME OF CHANGE



BY RABBI
TARA FELDMAN

ramifications for our emotional and physical health.

In these trying days, we are newly aware of our interdependence. Our actions and choices have the power to hurt or heal, to infect or protect. Your powerful and heartfelt response to our many Zoom classes, volunteer outreach calls, virtual Shabbat services, Shabbat bag deliveries, robocalls and video messages is an expression and affirmation of our ancient Jewish wisdom: Even when physical distance is essential, we need human connection in order to heal.

The Talmud contains a story that illustrates this reality:

Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai was known for his healing powers. Visiting another rabbi who was ill, Rabbi Yohanan would speak with him, extend his hand and raise up his suffering friend. But one day, Yohanan ben Zakkai became sick and was visited by Rabbi Hanina. They talked for a while about the great sage's pain; then Rabbi Hanina held out his hand and lifted up Rabbi Yohanan.

The Gemara asks, “Why did Rabbi Yohanan wait for Rabbi Hanina to restore him to health? If he was able to heal his student, let Rabbi Yohanan stand himself up!” But the passage continues, answering its own question: “They say: *אֵין חָבוּשׁ מִתֵּיר עֲצָמוֹ מִבֵּית הָאֲסוּרִים* *Ayn chavush matir atzmo mibeit ha'asurim*. A prisoner cannot free himself from prison but depends on others to release him from his shackles.”

As this pandemic continues to unfold, we may feel at moments like that prisoner described in the Gemara, unable to move as freely as we once did,

Since March, our world, our nation and our beloved Temple Beth-El community have been cast into a period of deep uncertainty; we have collectively experienced isolation, fear, tremendous suffering and loss. *Mi Sheberach*, our prayer for healing, is always a central fixture of our worship experience, but this High Holy Days season, it has a renewed poignance and urgency. As we face the new year 5781 together, we, your rabbis and cantor, feel called as never before to focus on *רְפוּאָה* *refu'ah*: healing.

But how can we begin the process of healing body or spirit when a vaccine has yet to be found, when we have still not returned to life as we knew it and the full ripple effect of this pandemic continues to unfold before our eyes? What wisdom might our tradition have to offer?

First and foremost, Judaism teaches that healing is an interpersonal and communal endeavor: *רְפוּאָה* *refu'ah* cannot happen alone. According to Maimonides, the mitzvah of *בְּקוּר חוֹלִים* *bikur cholim*, visiting the sick, is incumbent upon us all, for it is through this act that we fulfill the obligation *וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ* *ve'ahavta l'reiakha kamocha*, love your neighbor as yourself. (See Rabbi Meir's article “Hope + Healing + Love.”)

According to the Talmud, visiting a sick person removes one sixtieth of his or her illness. These teachings shine a light on the challenge of healing in a time of social distance. If a visit from another is central to the healing process, the isolation of quarantine has major

burdened by illness, separation from loved ones and fears for our future. But, perhaps, we can also experience a newfound humility, an awareness of the sanctity of all life. Each of us matters and every moment of health and even illness is a gateway to holiness, for our tradition teaches that G-d's very presence hovers above the head of the one who is ill.

When we affirm our connections with each other—through a caring call or prayers for healing, virtual gatherings or a socially distanced visit with a friend; through sharing the challenges and gifts of each day—we draw closer to the Divine.

Pirke Avot, the Ethics of the Fathers, with its 2,000-year-old wisdom mandates, *אַל תִּפְרֹשׁ מִן הַצִּבּוּר* *Al tifrosh min hatzibur*. Do not separate yourself from the community.

This year, may we be empowered and inspired, knowing that when healing is needed, community means more than ever. 🌱

Sources
Babylonian Talmud, *Bava M'tzia*, 30b; Babylonian Talmud, *Berakot*, 5b; Babylonian Talmud, *Nedarim*, 40a; *Pirke Avot*, 2:4.



BY CANTOR
ADAM DAVIS

Shalom! I am thrilled to be your new cantor. I'm so pleased to be part of the TBE team and am grateful to everyone who made it possible! I look forward to getting acquainted, however possible under current circumstances.

Moving to a new city or job is a daunting transition for anyone, even in normal times. My interviews at TBE began as COVID-19 seeped into the news; by my final one, we were socially distanced as everything was shutting down. Now that I'm in Great Neck, it's masks in public; but I'm training B'nei Mitzvah students, leading services and doing everything else online rather than in person. It's all changed so quickly—so much is upside down! Everything I do as a cantor to bring people together in communal song has flipped into the muted, *Hollywood Squares* arrangement of Zoom, an online software platform that actually prevents people from singing together.

It is challenging to get to know people like this.

CANTOR'S NOTES

Heraclitus wrote, "The only constant is change." We are all living in a time of significant personal, societal and global change. So much rapid change at once produces a form of psychological paralysis known as "change shock." Perhaps you've felt it—staring blankly at your laptop screen, in pajamas, as the sourdough proofs and cable news blares in the background. It seems to accelerate daily, along with our heart rates and anxiety levels. We're all enduring, simultaneously, the pandemic, political strife, civil unrest, economic turmoil, familial proximity—the list goes on.

Each of these is a potential "lifequake," a psychologically seismic, life-altering event. We know the effect of negative ones like serious health events, the death of a loved one, major financial loss or a social setback. Positive ones also have an impact, though: marriage, the birth of a child, a new home, a new job, winning lotto or retirement.

Bruce Feiler's new best-selling book, *Life Is in the Transitions*, notes that we all experience eight to ten lifequakes—each requiring adjustment averaging five years. As his title suggests, we spend half our lives working through lifequakes. Good or bad, each has tremors, aftershocks, loss, joy and rebuilding phases. But through them, we can learn, grow and repair (*tikkun*) to become more the humans G-d intended. The question is how?

The Jewish tradition speaks of two states of mind, each related to something we care about, and our anticipation of what will happen to it in the future.

The first is an acute sense of loss. The Talmud (Sukkah, 30b) names the particular sense of despair over something continually pined for—

despite being unreclaimable, *yeiush*. We're all grappling with loss of what was, wishing it will return yet knowing it will never be the same.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov focused on this in his famous quotes:

Ein shum ye'ush ba'olam klal
אין שום יאוש בעולם כלל
There is no despair in the world
(that can't be overcome).

Kol ha'olam kulo gesher tzar me'od,
כל העולם כלו גשר צר מאד

veha'ikar lo le'fached klal.
והעיקר לא לפחד כלל

All the world is a very narrow bridge, and the essential thing is not to be overwhelmed by fear.

Attachments to the familiar comfort us—but can lead to our being stuck in the past (TV reruns, anyone?). As time passes, our proximity to that pain diminishes and we gain new perspectives. Overcoming *yeiush* requires letting go of yesterday, living in the now and anticipating tomorrow.

The inverse of *yeiush* is *tikvah*, familiar from Israel's national anthem, "The Hope." In Hebrew, words morph as they change tense. Interestingly, though, in Hebrew there is no good future tense for the word or even concept of hope. "I will hope" is a clumsy expression. Instead, we say "Yesh *tikvah*," (I have hope) or "Ani *m'kaveh*," (I hope). For hope to be alive, we must nurture it in the now. We can't hope for the past, only for the future while in the present.

Am Yisrael, The People of Israel, have survived by learning to overcome obstacles, oppression and the neverending march of time that is change.

Returning to Rebbe Nachman's wisdom, observe how his axioms are active, future focused but in present tense:

Im ata ma'amin sh'ykholim lekalkel
אם אתה מאמין שיכולים לקלקל

ta'amin sh'yecholim letaken
תאמין שיכולים לתקן

If you believe breaking is possible, believe fixing is possible.

Feiler's previous brush with mortality, documented in *Council of Dads*, sought a way to handle just one lifequake. Researching his new book, he found a pattern among people who managed multiple periods of life change successfully. Each mitigated the impact of transitions through use of rituals.

Waking up, eating, sleeping and studying all have rituals to mark the start and end of days. Consider the mundane minutiae of these daily events and you'll realize you already have some. We have Jewish versions of these as well. And for the end of a week, a new month and, of course, the new year.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, former chief rabbi of the United Kingdom writes, "The whole of Judaism is a set of laws and narratives designed to create in people, families, communities and a nation habits that defeat despair. Judaism is the voice of hope in the conversation of mankind."

On waking each day, we declare it new and full of possibility. Future focus is woven into our morning prayer *Yotzer Or* (Creator of Light), *Uv'tuvo michadesh b'chol yom tamid ma'aseh bereishit*:

In Your goodness, You daily renew creation. This radical statement isn't passive optimism. The Eternal models hope as an active state through daily renewal. We can ritualize this through prayerful recitation of words, a quick family morning affirmation or private journaling. Doing so can diminish despair in our world.

Likewise, our morning blessings, *Nissim b'Chol Yom* (Daily Miracles), are a rich ritual of the potential and poetry found in every moment of waking up—providing the opportunity to be mindful and grateful for the minuscule microseconds as our minds click on a set tone for the entire day. Over time, this and other ritual recitations of gratitude produce a context of continuity that stands up to any backdrop of change.

When our newly freed ancestors left Egypt, they could hardly take care of themselves let alone create a society or govern a land. Upon their first arrival to the land flowing with milk and honey, they were unprepared for the transition. But it was in the chrysalis of the Sinai desert that they created and adopted the laws and commandments, festival seasons, social structure and spiritual rituals which helped them navigate through very uncertain times.

Am Yisrael, The People of Israel, have survived by learning to overcome obstacles, oppression and the neverending march of time that is change. We were not lost amidst a Red Sea of lifequakes; with the Eternal's help, we marched through it. We memorialized the "Song of the Sea" moment into a daily ritual recitation of *Mi Chamocha*. What new rituals will you adopt this new year to create more hope?



Morning minyan, Torah Study, Shabbat services, TriBEs, stocking food-pantry shelves and social-action initiatives—Temple Beth-El offers so many. What new rituals can you create in your own home?

Change may be the only constant for the foreseeable future. Yet, as we head into 5781, as long as we create, reinterpret and adopt rituals to overcome lifequakes, we can say "Yesh *tikvah*," we have hope.

TriBE! YOUR COMMUNITY WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY

BY JAQUI McCABE, DIRECTOR OF ENGAGEMENT



It seems like yesterday that Rabbi Tara, Rabbi Muhlbaum and I launched the rebranding of our Small Groups with Purpose initiative. Within a week, more than a hundred congregants registered for


TriBEs that spoke to them. With tremendous excitement and energy, we were off.

Then, overnight, everything changed—the doors to the temple closed and all programs, events and religious observances had to relocate to the

virtual environments of Zoom, YouTube and Facebook Live. But, in this new world, Temple Beth-El has continued to do what it does best: *Inspire through purpose, be known by love.*

As a reflection of that mission, the TriBE initiative has not only survived the change but actually flourished, gaining new members along the way. We launched the TriBE Quarantine Affinity Groups initiative, offering opportunities for those who have been affected by COVID-19 in a variety of ways to find new, necessary TriBEs. TriBEs continue to convene and some have even expanded their capacity by meeting multiple times a month.

With new, adaptive TriBEs like Documentaries and Discussions, members of the Beth-El family continue

to tell their stories, share their struggles, find ways to help those in need and, most importantly, *connect*. As we increase engagement and further train our leaders, we continue to be inspired by these meaningful gatherings and hope to see more of our members find their TriBEs. 



Temple members maintain strong connections even during the most challenging times.

ADAPTING TO CHANGE

BY VICKI PERLER, DIRECTOR OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



I BELIEVE THE CHILDREN ARE OUR FUTURE
TEACH THEM WELL AND LET THEM LEAD THE WAY
SHOW THEM ALL THE BEAUTY THEY POSSESS INSIDE
GIVE THEM A SENSE OF PRIDE TO MAKE IT EASIER
LET THE CHILDREN'S LAUGHTER REMIND US HOW WE USED TO BE

— LINDA CREED, "THE GREATEST LOVE OF ALL,"

It was the pinnacle of many years of thought, innovation and creativity. The Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) teachers and I were thrilled to be selected to host the Jewish Education Project's annual early-childhood conference. The conference topic was When We Create: Empowering Children's Unique Voices Through the Arts, and it was to bring together more than 200 early-childhood professionals and leaders from across the metro-New York area for professional development.

This special honor was a result of our strong relationships with the organization and in recognition of our school being a model early-childhood program. We collaborated for months to make our school the very best it could be. We planned and worked with vigor, and in the process our own learning was inspired and ignited. The provocation created a motivation and momentum that was stimulating, engaging and exciting.

We were almost ready—and then the beautiful community that we

all shared began to shut down. The conference, scheduled for March 19, was canceled a week before the much-anticipated day.

The reality of a changing world was surfacing, and we chose to keep our school open virtually, doing our best to learn new skills and platforms to engage our young children and their families. With the strong support of the temple's leadership and staff, the teachers and I rallied to overcome the steep learning curve as we trained ourselves to meet our new goals.

Quickly finding its way into the homes of our students and their families were a combination of Zoom (which so many of us had never even heard of before), FaceTime one-on-one meetings with children and parents, prerecorded videos of teachers reading stories, nature walks, cooking, science experiments and other valuable learning.

Our dedicated Parent-Teacher Council provided sessions of music and dance every week, our music teachers and cantor went virtual, and I set up my living room as a production studio for our weekly Shabbat Sing.

Teachers transformed their homes and created lessons with materials they had on hand and used their creativity to find new and innovative resources to achieve their goals.

As we evolved, our virtual school flourished for many students. So many options were available for engagement every week, and everyone was trying to create and build new relationships with the children, the families and the educational environment.

The grand finale was face-to-face end-of-year gatherings with the teachers and

the children—and, of course, our first Pre-K Zoom Graduation.

During this difficult year of uncertainty and quarantine, we were always certain about one thing—that we could count on our children arriving each morning with a keen desire to laugh, learn and have fun. Each day, they “lightened our loads” and helped make our days happier and more meaningful.

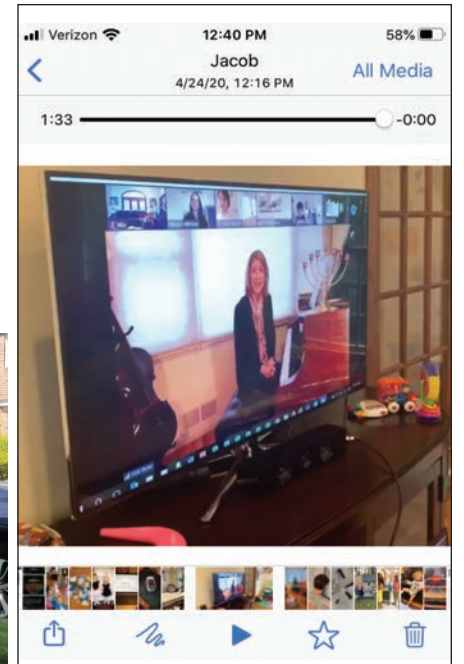
I am so proud of every child's growth in compassion, responsibility and self-confidence. They showed us how resilient they are, and I am confident that they will continue to recognize and honor their individual strengths and talents, take pride in their accomplishments and respect the feelings of others as they grow and mature.

Our children clearly “lead the way” in our school and in our remote education from home. We learned many lessons during this past year.

Through it all, the relationships built at Temple Beth-El Early Childhood Education Center remained intact and strong. We remained steadfast to our core values and our unwavering love for children. The bond among our teaching staff became much stronger, and our knowledge about using new methods to accomplish our goals grew to a higher level.

When we return to our temple home this month, we will once again, recreate a warm and loving place for children to grow, laugh and lead the way into the future. And may we continue to go from strength to strength.

From my family to yours, may the joyful sound of the shofar welcome in a new year of health, happiness, fulfillment and peace. L'Shanah Tovah. 🌸



From far left: The ECEC Director used her home production studio for weekly Shabbat Sing experiences for the entire school. Teachers offered virtual hugs to the children at face-to-face meetings. Morah Vicki regularly led Shabbat Sing on Zoom. The Pre-K Class of 2020 enjoyed some remote time together. At end-of-year in-person gatherings, each student received a special gift bag from the ECEC.



KULANU: OUR NEW JOINT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM WITH TEMPLE ISRAEL



BY DAVID WOOLFE

Our commitment to *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, affirms these basic truths: Through thoughtful action, we can make the world a better place; “better” is always ahead of us, urging us on; and getting to “better” demands change. As we’ve all experienced during the past few months, change isn’t always easy. Yet, for all the challenges of this period, we have also found wonderful opportunities for connection and new ways of accomplishing our mission.

One significant change is, of course, our new journey with Temple Israel: the joint religious education program, Kulanu. I believe that this moment is alive with potential and opportunity. That said, I hear your questions and concerns:

- What will become of our program and the values most important to our Jewish experience?

- What will become of our profound embrace of egalitarianism, of environmentalism, of combined families, of members of the LGBTQ community?
- What will become of our embrace of the prophetic call to passionate justice?

These are legitimate questions and, in voicing them, you give us the terms by which we will measure the success of Kulanu. As progressive Jews, the Reform and egalitarian Conservative movements share an engagement with the world as it presents itself to us along with a commitment to its constant improvement—what a great foundation upon which to build a program for our children!

Having been an educator at both Reform and Conservative congregations, I know how vital and vibrant our combined program can be and what a stellar Jewish education we can provide for all our students. Rabbi Amy Roth, director of the new program, affirms Kulanu’s focus on our shared values: “We may have differences in observance, but they are not going to be imparted in the new religious school. We are always open to recognizing the different types of Jewish observance.”

All of us involved in our educational *shidduch* are committed to ensuring that every student is respected, honored and meaningfully engaged. Rabbis Meir and Tara were deeply involved in the planning of Kulanu, and will continue to be involved, along with Cantor Adam and me, as we move forward. Although the future will bring many changes, our

commitment to our students will remain as firm as ever.

Affirming our shared values means also honoring our differences in ritual and observance; at Kulanu, we will practice the wise tradition of *minhag habayit*—of observing the “traditions of the house.” When we are at Temple Israel, we will respect and participate according to their practice. When we gather for programming at Beth-El, we will teach, explain and celebrate our practice. Bar and Bat Mitzvah education and preparation will remain unique to each congregation. I will teach in the seventh grade program to help ensure that the transition is successful for our TBE students. I will also be working with students throughout the school to improve the Hebrew skills so necessary to enjoy the fullness of Jewish experience.

We will continue to enlarge the safe and meaningful community in which our children are cared for and learn—and we will continue to strive to make their world a better place.

That is change we can all believe in. 🌟

“We will continue to enlarge the safe and meaningful community—and strive to make their world a better place.”

IMPROVING OUR TEMPLE HOME

BY ELLIOT ROSENZWEIG



The old sanctuary air conditioning and heating units were removed from the roof and replaced with a new powerful system.

Although COVID-19 has prevented us from being together in person, work to improve our facilities continues. When we do return, we will be able to enjoy these enhancements.

SANCTUARY COOLING AND HEATING

We were unable to use our sanctuary during fall and winter 2019–20, because the air conditioning units were no longer operational.

At the end of May, the old units were removed from the roof and replaced with two new Trane 25-ton units that will both heat and cool the large space.

TEMPLE SECURITY

Work continues to ensure the safety of the Temple Beth-El community. We

recognize that each additional level of security brings its own inconveniences, but we believe this is a reasonable price to pay for the protection and peace of mind of everyone in our extended family.

- During the past few years, Temple Beth-El has received several Homeland Security Grants that have permitted significant enhancement of our security. While some of the work is covered by these grants, parts of these costs are not included.
- You may have noticed closed-circuit TV, strobe lights and paging systems being installed the last time you were at temple. Those efforts, which started three years ago, are ongoing. Nearly two miles of wiring, or 400 sets of data cables, were used to connect the systems.

- Starting in fall 2019, Temple Beth-El issued photo ID cards to all parents and caregivers with children in our Early Childhood Education Center. All parents entering the temple without an ID card were required to verify their identity at the temple office.
- The outer door from the parking lot entrance to the temple is now locked. Anyone seeking to enter the vestibule will have to either use an ID card, enter a security number or be buzzed in from the temple office.
- When we are all back to the “new normal,” we will implement Emergency Response Drills (ERDs) to ensure that, in case of an emergency, all staff members are familiar with security protocols.

LOWER-LEVEL RENOVATIONS

Last summer, we began renovating the building’s lower level.

- The first step was to discard 50 years’ worth of old technology, files and filing cabinets, along with everything else that found its way into the lower level. The refuse filled five 30-yard dumpsters.
 - Cinder-block walls that created several rooms have been removed.
 - The elevator that travels from the sanctuary lobby to the lower level was overhauled in July.
 - Plumbing, electrical, structural and cosmetic renovations will continue, and the lower level will be reimagined and transformed into a special space.
- To learn more about these improvements, contact Executive Director Stuart Botwinick. 🌟

LESSONS FROM LOCKDOWN

CONGREGANTS SHARE SOME INSIGHTS FROM THIS UNPRECEDENTED TIME OF SOCIAL DISTANCING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

Compiled by Len Schiff and Sheri ArbitalJacoby



Hooked on Learning Hebrew

I became totally hooked on learning Hebrew conversation during the pandemic with the help of David Woolfe from TBE's Religious School and by practicing with congregant Linda Diamond for half an hour each day. שלום חברים שלי, which means either "hello, my friends" or "goodbye, my friends"—depending whether you're coming or going.

—Mel Feuerman



Stopping to Smell the Roses

Seven weeks into my retirement, COVID hit. I had always loved being on the go, but I now had to hunker down. A new me developed. I was able to enjoy sitting at my desk, watching the birds create a nest in the gutter outside my window. It was a joy when the chicks began to reach with their little beaks and eat the food their parents brought—and breathtaking to observe Mother Nature in the early spring, creating magnificent flowers from her beautiful palette. I learned how to literally stop and smell the roses.

—Linda Diamond



What I've Learned

- I own more sweatpants than I thought I did.
- We spent our best Passover ever remotely—with people we wouldn't normally get to be with.
- I am terrible at housekeeping.

—Debbie Sutin

Revising the Definition of Elderly

As an avid writer and reader, I cherish words—and, in this time of pandemic, many words have taken on new meaning for me. One is elderly.

We often hear that the people most vulnerable to COVID-19 are those with underlying conditions and the elderly. Being in good health, I most certainly did not fall into either of those categories—but, out of curiosity, I Googled the word.

Personally, I have always associated elderly with vulnerability and fragility, qualities more appropriate to someone in their 90s perhaps than to me. According to Medicare and the U.S. Census Bureau, though, anyone older than 65 is elderly; this means that for a decade, I have fallen into this category. Clearly, my personal connection with the word needs to change.

My newly revised definition of elderly is "a category of person who earns respect based on years of experience, which culminates in strength and wisdom, the need for self-care and acceptance of care from others."

Vulnerable, perhaps, but in no way fragile.

—Nina Koppelman



Feeling Fortunate

This has shown me how fortunate I am in family, home and community.

—Chris Bazinet

COVID CREATIONS

COMPILED BY SHERI ARBITALJACOBY

Imaginations have been sparked and artistic endeavors ignited as Temple Beth-El congregants sheltered in place during the past several months. From culinary confections and comfort food to expressive dance and paintings, our Temple Beth-El members have been producing inspiring works.



Berry Sweet and Delicious

Roberta Lulov recreated a \$38 Briermere Farms Mixed Berry Cream Pie for a special dinner with her children.

Dancing for Peace

Karen Siegel choreographed and performed "A Prayer for Peace," set to Karl Jenkins' "The Armed Man Mass" (A Mass for Peace).



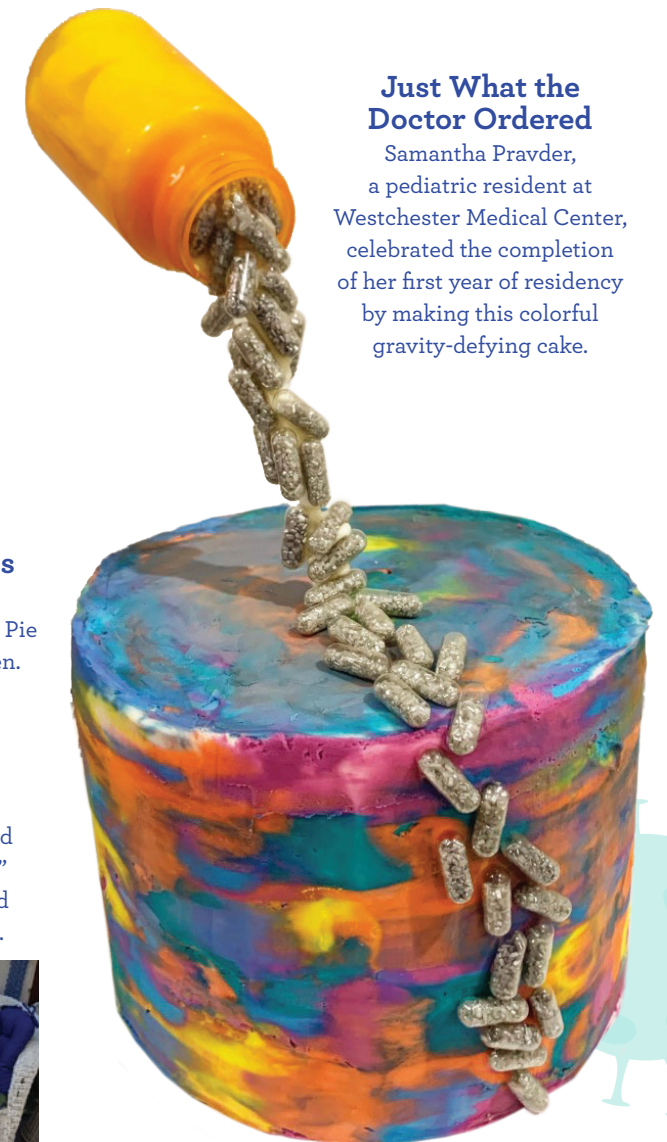
Cooking Up a Storm

Barbara Herman treated her family to zucchini-potato latkes.



Brushing Up on History

Adam Schiff painted holy Jerusalem, one of the oldest cities in the world.



Just What the Doctor Ordered

Samantha Pravder, a pediatric resident at Westchester Medical Center, celebrated the completion of her first year of residency by making this colorful gravity-defying cake.



From left: Jacob held the Torah, surrounded by his family. After the service, friends greeted him in the TBE parking lot at his “car mitzvah.”



OUR FIRST ZOOM BAR MITZVAH

BY BARBARA AND DAVID PODWALL

Who would have thought a year ago that we would have a new word in our everyday vocabulary in 2020—Zoom.

As life suddenly changed by the emergence of COVID-19, our family found itself Zooming in order to communicate with the world: Zoom happy hour with friends, Zoom work and temple board meetings, Zoom Passover Seders and family reunions and, sadly, Zoom *shiva* calls.

And now, Zoom has also become the nationwide platform on which B’nei Mitzvah are broadcast live for friends and family in virtual attendance.

We had been preparing for our son Jacob’s Bar Mitzvah for years and were looking forward to a celebratory weekend and a packed Rudin Chapel for his service. Only three months

before the big weekend, though, we were hit with the reality that we would have to change all our plans. Jacob’s party would have to be canceled—or at least postponed. More importantly, we needed to figure out a plan for a new kind of Bar Mitzvah service.

Temple Beth-El has been a second home to us since we first moved to Great Neck 15 years ago, so we were thrilled when New York’s Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that groups of as many as 10 could congregate inside a house of worship. The announcement came only two weeks before the Bar Mitzvah, though. It was legally possible to be at the temple, but could we actually do it?

We only had two short weeks to figure out all of the logistics. How would we keep clergy and attendees at the temple safe from the virus? How could we create a seamless experience for those attending via Zoom. It was a daunting challenge, but incoming Temple Beth-El President Gary Slobin assured us that the temple was going to make this happen.

So began two weeks of constant conference calls with Rabbi Meir Feldman, reviewing all aspects of the service and reinventing those rituals

that could not occur in a time of social distancing. Jacob’s service would be held in the sanctuary instead of the chapel—a much bigger room which would lend itself to social distancing—and so began planning the first Bar Mitzvah in a generation to occur inside that space.

We had one podium for Jacob and the other Podwalls in attendance and another for Rabbis Meir and Tara Feldman, with each space outfitted with plexiglass and a separate laptop. Only our family would touch the Torah, and Jacob would have to chant his portion without Cantor Vladimir Lapin at his side. In fact, the cantor wasn’t even in the room, but on Zoom.

All the wires and speakers created a new problem: microphone feedback. And it only became more complicated from there.

Barbara’s mother was in Florida and her brother was in California, so their *aliyahs* would have to be done over Zoom.

Undaunted, Executive Director Stuart Botwinick took it on as a challenge and worked hours to get it right. Rabbi Meir, Stu, Jacob and the two of us met multiple times at the temple for rehearsals—and to keep working out the details: how

people would enter the temple, which bathrooms would be open, where the 10 attendees would sit. In what was surely a first, we even designed personalized hand sanitizers and masks for all in the sanctuary. No detail was overlooked.

And, so, the big day came. In the presence of immediate family, but with hundreds watching on Zoom, Jacob read wonderfully from the Torah and gave a meaningful *d’var*. Afterward he came to the parking lot, where friends greeted him with a “car mitzvah”—another TBE first. Our caterer delivered *kiddush* box lunches to everyone’s car, and then we went home.

Jacob’s Bar Mitzvah wasn’t what we expected it to be—but it also exceeded our expectations. We cannot thank enough both the clergy (the Rabbis Feldman and Cantor Vlad) as well as Stu Botwinick who did everything possible to make our event the best it could be. In a time when the world appears to be falling apart, it is comforting to know that Temple Beth-El is here for us. We know that Jacob will always remember how he was the first Zoom Mitzvah at TBE. We will always be grateful—and couldn’t be more proud. 🌟

Clockwise from top left: Jacob read from the Torah on his special day. The Bar Mitzvah boy read from the Torah as his sister and Rabbi Meir looked on. Barbara and David Podwall wrapped Jacob in his tallit. The Podwall family celebrated in the TBE parking lot. The caterer delivered *kiddush* box lunches to guests’ cars. When Jacob exited to the parking lot, friends greeted him in what the family termed a “car mitzvah.”



THE TALE OF THE MYSTERY TORAH

PART 1 OF A TWO-PART INTERVIEW WITH
MARJORIE KURCIAS AND EILEEN WALK



BY LEN SCHIFF

An elite task force of Temple Beth-El members and staff set out to catalog and appraise the temple's enormous collection of art and Judaica in 2019. What they discovered will amaze you. *Shema* sat down to talk with two of the team's leaders, Marjorie Kurcias and Eileen Walk, and shares their experience in this first installment of that wide-ranging interview.

SHEMA: So, how did the collection-appraisal project begin?

Marjorie Kurcias: Initially, it was for our insurance, because an appraisal hadn't been done for 10 years.

Eileen Walk: And it wasn't complete. We didn't even know where all the stuff was—or how it was organized.

SHEMA: Is the collection all in the temple or is there a storage facility?

EW: It's all in the temple but spread out over many different spaces. So John Hirsch-Leiman got the keys, and we went from place to place—chatting, trying keys and labeling them as we went.

MK: By that time, we had formally started the appraising project.

EW: I said to Marge, "This is your job: Go get us the funding for an appraiser." I called Temple Emanu-El in New York, and Marge spoke to a local appraiser for non-religious objects, Fred Pine, and we both came up with the same name: Beth Weingast.

MK: So, we had two appraisers: one for Judaica and one for non-religious objects.

SHEMA: It doesn't sound like TBE has always had the most systematic approach to acquiring art.

EW: Many of the pieces dated back to when Jacob Rudin was rabbi. He, himself, was a collector of Judaica.

MK: And he bought what he loved, which eventually became a very large collection. When somebody was

having an occasion, a marriage or Bar Mitzvah...

EW: ...birth; anything, really...

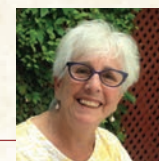
MK: Rabbi Rudin simply said, "I have a beautiful kiddush cup—would you like to acquire it in honor of your occasion?" And everybody did.

EW: So that's how the Judaica collection grew. And, meanwhile, people who had emotional or personal connections to different artists would start donating pieces, but they didn't always supply the proper paperwork—or maybe it wasn't always filed correctly. The point is...

MK: ...it was a mystery.

EW: Anyway, I called the guy at Emanu-El and he wanted to come as soon as he could. So we started searching everywhere in the temple: downstairs in the basement, which was being completely emptied; upstairs in the balcony area above the lobby.

MK: It's a play area now, but that was our first museum space, the Elsie K. Rudin



"When we unwrapped it. [The appraiser's] mouth just fell open. She took off the mantle, which was pretty threadbare, and unrolled it. And she said, 'This is very old.'"

—Marjorie Kurcias

Clockwise from top left: This 16th-century Torah was discovered wrapped in a towel in a desk drawer in the temple basement. The origins of the Torah remain a mystery. The detail is exquisite.



Museum, named after Rabbi Rudin's wife. And there's a room behind that room where stuff got stored.

EW: Now this roof leaks, so it had flooded back there too. But we started going through boxes from everywhere: first paperwork and photographs, then art stacked up in boxes, tchotchkes. We separated out a pile of pieces that people could immediately adopt for a donation to the temple. There were old books from the 16th and 18th centuries, design portfolios from artists, silver artifacts and a desk covered with tapestries and bimah and Torah covers—just sitting there. Then, in the basement, there were all these display cases, tons of office furniture and thousands of pounds of dead computers.

So, anyway, one of the last things we uncovered was a desk, and in the bottom drawer was something wrapped in a towel.

MK: No, no, no—hold on. We did not find it. After we were starting to organize everything, John told Executive Director Stuart Botwinick that, wrapped up in a towel in a desk drawer, was a Torah. Well, Stu ran up there as fast as his legs could carry him and brought it down to Beth, the appraiser, who was sitting at a table working on cataloging the collection.

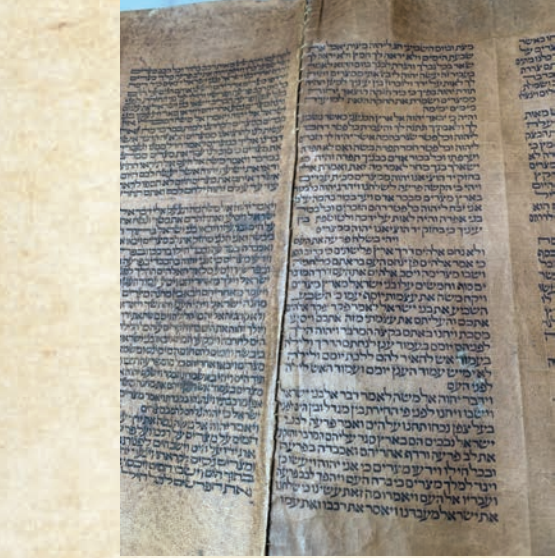
And we unwrapped it. Her mouth just fell open: "What is this? Don't touch it! Put on your white cotton gloves, and we'll take off the mantle." So she took off the mantle, which was pretty threadbare, and unrolled it. And she said, "This is very old."



EW: It was on skin, not parchment—you could tell, because one side was very dark. Something I learned when I was doing research was that around the 16th century, Jews didn't write Torahs on parchment—they went to skin, because buying parchment would identify you as a Jew. So the animal skin immediately clued her in and suggested a possible age.

SHEMA: Wow.

MK: And that began our search.



From top: The scroll was made of skin, not parchment—you can tell, because one side is very dark. No one knows how this 16th-century Torah wound up at Temple Beth-El.

EW: Beth took photos and sent them to a woman at Yeshiva University who was an expert in Torah scrolls.

MK: The expert also said it was very old; she couldn't be more specific but suggested we have it carbon-dated by sending a sample to the University of Illinois at Urbana.

Now, carbon-dating is a very technical process. They sent us sterile containers in a box, and we had to take sterile scissors and find an obscure seam on the Torah where it wouldn't be seen if we snipped off a sixteenth of an inch.

SHEMA: That must have been uncomfortable.

MK: I cannot tell you how nervous we were, but Beth took responsibility. She then picked up the snipping with a sterile tweezer and put it into this sterile test tube. We waited about two or three months, and in the end they said they couldn't get a date because there was sulfur contamination in the specimen—and asked us if we could please send another one.

So we did, and it came back the same. Beth contacted more carbon-dating labs in Europe—in Cambridge and Switzerland—but both refused to do it because they didn't want to take on a sample that had been rejected twice.

SHEMA: Did the lab give you any sense of where the sulfur contamination might have come from?

MK: No idea.

EW: Who knows how this thing was handled?

MK: But the mystery of the whole thing is, how did it get to Temple Beth-El? When did it get here? Who brought it?

I called every person I could think of, including, of course, Rabbi Davidson and Rabbi Rudin's son. Nobody has any idea of how it got here. We do know how it got to that desk: Rabbi Davidson found it in the ark in the chapel, behind the curtain in a corner, and had it brought upstairs.

EW: We don't know how long it was lying there.

MK: John took it to a scribe in New York who said, "Yes, it's very old."

EW: The thing is, because we don't know the provenance, we don't know if it's a legitimate possession.

MK: But there was one other person who looked at it: the official Judaica consultant at Sotheby's. He rolled and

unrolled it many times. I sat with him in his office while he was doing it. And he looked for telltale indications of how some letters were formed—especially the lamed.


And he said, "I can tell you that the calligraphic style dates it to the 16th century. I will also tell you that it comes from either North Africa or Yemen. It's a very valuable Torah. But it's still a Torah, one you should use and have on display, so that people understand how old it is and how it's been passed down through the generations."

All the grandiose conjectures we'd had about it, how it came out of the Inquisition and was smuggled through some port, none of those were true.

SHEMA: But, the skins?

MK: That's just how they were doing it then in North Africa.

EW: What do you do when you have an object like that? Are we prepared to display it, to store it or give it as a long-term loan to a place that has the proper storage facilities? Without knowing the provenance, do we even have the right?

MK: But I want to amend that. I don't want to disagree, because these are legitimate concerns. But the last gentleman who looked at it said, "Put it in your ark and use it. Don't coddle it. Roll and unroll it. Better to use it than have it hidden away." The Torah belongs here. 



"One of the last things we uncovered was a desk, and in the bottom drawer was something wrapped in a towel."

—Eileen Walk

LAY-LED SHABBAT MORNINGS: DEEPENING COMMUNITY

BY JENNIFER STILL-SCHIFF



"I enter this sacred space to voice
The longings of my heart in prayer..."
"May the door of this synagogue
be wide enough..."
—*Mishkan T'filah*

If the space I am entering is a Zoom Room, is it really a *space*? Is there really a door? And could a team of lay-leaders open that door to a meaningful worship experience?

After the joyous hubbub of Purim, the sudden quiet of the March shutdown left many of us lonely and adrift, missing the togetherness of the TBE community. Our clergy and leadership leapt into the gap with generosity and speed, and I was grateful for all the opportunities they created to bring us together virtually.

But, sitting on my sofa after Saturday Torah Study, my day seemed too empty. Over leftover challah, I wondered if I was the only one who missed morning services. Then I remembered how strongly, back in the building, Nina Koppelman had urged Shabbat morning attendance. I remembered

something I had learned in my earliest interactions with Judaism: that studying to become a Bat Mitzvah would equip a Jewish adult to lead a minyan, even stranded on a desert island. What could be more stranded than our sudden quarantine?

Nina, it turned out, was also finding her Saturdays too quiet. "I have missed the services," she wrote me. "Shabbat does not seem complete without them. There is something uplifting about following study with prayer. I would love to work on a lay-led service with you." Elaine Springer got on board enthusiastically.

The clergy buoyed us up with their support. Cantor Lapin was happy to guide us through the major points of the service. We unapologetically parroted his *nusach* from years of Saturdays, and made it our own. Our Rabbis Feldman offered enthusiastic help including practical guidance for *leyning*.


Since April 25, a core group has been experimenting with weekly worship together, negotiating which prayers to highlight each week. Certain readings

or songs seem to speak to us or to the time we're living in. Lea Caplan requested *Modim Anachnu Lach*, a prayer which brings a scientific world view to the liturgy. With a simple pronoun change from *I* to *we*, Susan Weiss-Horowitz helped break down the alienating barriers of our Brady Bunch Zoom boxes. Since some of us are studying with David Woolfe, we have also become eager to try out more texts from the traditional pages of the *Mishkan T'filah*.

One event canceled by the quarantine was the group Torah service that the Adult B'nei Mitzvah class had been preparing for all year. Having perfected her *parashah*, Susan chanted for us and invited her family and Hebrew teacher to attend. We have had Cantor Adam and the Feldmans join us to lend their voices but, even with their visits, the sessions have retained the informal feeling of a gathering of friends finding ways to worship together.

Every week brings a new opportunity to share virtual space and real connection, praying together and checking up on each other. We tell personal anecdotes about the people we remember for *Kaddish* or *Mi Sheberach*. Sometimes we sing.

So is it really a space? Have we made the door wide enough?

The smiling faces that lift our spirits every Saturday morning say yes, we have created a sacred space. It may have started as a stop-gap synagogue, but our lay-led Shabbat morning service has created a fellowship to outlast the restrictions of shutdown. In person or online, the members of our informal *chavurah* will continue to come together. 

APOCALYPSE, NU?

A JEREMIAD

BY LEN SCHIFF

“It’s the end of the world every day, for someone,” wrote Margaret Atwood in *The Blind Assassin*. That’s certainly true for the Jews, who have danced to the rhythm of cataclysm and rebirth for generations. Spaced every few centuries or so, these episodes have left us staggering in the wilderness, forcing our sages to make sense of a shattered past and an unknown future. So it was, that in 597 BCE, hanging up their lyres by the waters of Babylon, the exiled Jews looked back toward Jerusalem and did some hard thinking. *We had a covenant with G-d. We had a kingdom. What the hell happened?*

Answering that question would require a new way of thinking about history, one in which the story of G-d and the Jews wasn’t only current events but would play out throughout millennia, and in which the Babylonian captivity wasn’t the breaking of a covenant but a bump in a very long road. The exile, explained the Prophet Ezekiel, was an admonishment to a people who had grown complacent and stopped caring about justice. The Jews had lost their sense of the sacred and abandoned their moral center, “practiced fraud and committed robbery...wronged the poor and needy and defrauded the stranger” (Ezekiel 22:29). But repentance, though hard, was also inevitable. That’s what Martin Luther King Jr. was saying when he reminded Americans that the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice: In the long run, righteousness would prevail. G-d and the Jews were *bashert*.

Seen this way, history was a stage on which a cosmic drama would play

out to a final, decisive act. Later, Jewish sects elaborated on the idea with a grand end-times theology, complete with armies angelic and monstrous, a messiah and a last battle. Jesus taught it to his followers, who really ran with it, and the rest is history. It would be a time for great truths about the universe to be revealed, so it came to be known by the Greek word for “uncover”: *apokaluptein*, or apocalypse.

Like temple sacrifice or Sammy’s Roumanian Steakhouse, apocalypse is part of an older, stranger Judaism—far removed from mainstream practice; as science fiction, though, Apocalypse has never been hotter. The entertainment industry has provided us with a steady stream of apocalypses, each with its sternly prophetic warning. “Eco-pocalypses” speak of global warming and robot uprisings of technological hubris, while zombie apocalypses inevitably reveal that the true monster is man. Terrible as they are, these visions are united in a kind of optimism: We can learn from our mistakes and be better. We can repent.

Is this such a moment? Separated from family and friends, anticipating our first remote High Holy Days, it’s hard to deny that we’re in a state of exile: from our holy places, from our loved ones, from our everyday lives. Many of us have been sick, or have grieved for someone cruelly taken by COVID-19; we’ve been lonely, anxious and exhausted. Still reeling from the last shock, we brace for the next.

But we only start to understand the scale of the disaster when we look past



the invisible borders of our community and see the devastation wrought on the most vulnerable—the elderly, the poor and, overwhelmingly, communities of color. By April 2020, Black and brown communities like Hempstead had reported almost five times the number of positive cases as neighboring majority-white towns like Garden City. We didn’t create these deadly disparities, but as Reform Jews we are obligated to address them.

With that in mind, here are the three insights that I believe COVID has granted us.

COMMUNITY IS OUR GREATEST STRENGTH

When the lockdown began, the Temple Beth-El family took steps to ensure that, even in isolation, no one would be alone. Clergy and staff mobilized teams of volunteers to bring necessities to vulnerable members, check in with other members by phone and create online opportunities to worship, study and shmooze. With Zoom came a new kind intimacy: Unguarded and exposed, we saw into each other’s homes—and sometimes into each other’s noses. Our focus wasn’t entirely on the TBE community: The Brotherhood continued, even expanded, its critical work with the Interfaith Food Pantry at St. Aloysius RC Church, while

Sisterhood organized communal baking drives to feed frontline health-care workers. Still, our attention was largely turned inward.

That all changed on May 25 when the murder of George Floyd, and the subsequent protests, shocked us into attention.

BUT JUDAISM CALLS US TO REACH BEYOND OUR COMMUNITY

Is there a *mitzvah* more profoundly Jewish than loving the stranger? Citing Talmud,¹ Rabbi Reuben Firestone notes that the Torah tells us to care for the stranger more frequently than it tells us to love G-d. Most commandments are given without justification, but here the Torah calls us to radical empathy—we must love the stranger because we were strangers ourselves.

But, here on Long Island, it can be hard to actually encounter a stranger—and that’s by meticulous design. Based on 2010 census data, Nassau is the most segregated county of its size in America. Of Long Island’s 291 distinct communities, the majority of Black residents live in just 11—a pattern Princeton professor Douglas S. Massey calls “hyper-segregation.”² It’s a shocking

1 In *Tractate Bava Metzia*, Rabbi Eliezer says the Torah warns against harming the stranger either 36 or 46 times, depending on who’s counting.

2 <https://projects.newsday.com/long-island/segregation-real-estate-history/>.



divide, built on groundwork laid by decades of institutionally racist housing policies: Redlining practices codified into standard practice by the Federal Housing Authority, Robert Moses’s slum clearance and parkway system, whites-only racial covenants that came standard in many Long Island developments and property-appraisal policies designed to artificially price certain neighborhoods out of reach.

Children of history, we lead lives profoundly shaped by what came before us. The consequences of hypersegregation are well-documented: For those 11 Black and brown communities, a set of interlocking vicious cycles in which limited access to critical resources—quality health care, sufficiently funded education, career opportunity and adequate housing—only serves to further entrench a community in poverty,

while in wealthier neighborhoods the exact opposite occurs. The prophet Leonard Cohen put it more succinctly: “Everybody knows the fight was fixed/ The poor stay poor, the rich get rich.”

COVID didn’t create this disparity, but it certainly exploited it—taking hold in places where living spaces were too cramped, health care was inadequate or inaccessible and most jobs opportunities were as low-paid essential workers. Like a boulder, the virus crushed anyone who couldn’t get out of its way. Little wonder that the slow, sadistic murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis served as a flashpoint, exploding long-simmering anger into public demonstrations that still continue.

LOVE THE STRANGER. SEEK JUSTICE. FIX STUFF

As Jews, our highest obligation is to *not* accept the world as it is. Where pain



which it aspires until we address ongoing racism in all sectors and at all levels of society. We remain in solidarity and action with the NAACP's urgent #WeAreDoneDying campaign, whose policy demands we cover areas of criminal justice, economic justice, health care and voting, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disproportionately impact Black Americans. As the NAACP says, 'Senseless hate crimes and incidence of COVID-19 cases and deaths spreading throughout the Black community display the continuance of systematic racism and privilege granted to white people in America.'

American Jews are justly proud of their historical association with the Civil Rights Movement, but we live now. This fight is our fight, because to love the stranger as ourselves is to fully embrace the fact that Black lives matter as much as our own. We must understand that the most furious anger is born of broken hearts. Then we must reach out to our Black and brown neighbors, listen to their stories, be guided by their truths and build a better Long Island.

In the end, I don't know if this is any sort of apocalypse, but it doesn't matter—from across the centuries, Judaism's prophetic voice still calls us to act now, to push back the darkness. In a similar moment in Tolkien's *Fellowship of the Ring*, Frodo and Gandalf speak for all of us:

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo.

"So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us." ❧

exists, we are called to heal; where things are broken, we are called to *tikkun olam* or repair the world; and where we bear witness to pervasive systems of abuse, we are called to break the cycle. We must move out of our comfort zones, examine our own biases, confront racism where we see it and work in alliance with our neighbors to realize the country we want to see.

So in this critical moment, informed by the highest moral aspirations of our tradition, the Reform movement calls us to action. On May 30, Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and senior vice president of the Union for Reform Judaism, issued a statement that reads, in part:

"The national rage expressed about the murder of George Floyd reflects

the depth of pain over the injustice that people of color—and particularly Black men—have been subjected to throughout the generations. In recent months we have seen, yet again, too many devastating examples of persistent systemic racism, leading to the deaths not only of Mr. Floyd but of other precious souls, including Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery.

"We remember others before them: Eric Garner. Tamir Rice. Trayvon Martin. Sandra Bland. Oscar Grant. Philando Castile. Walter Scott. Terrence Crutcher. Samuel Dubose. Michael Brown. The list feels endless—and so, too, is our despair. But as we recite the Mourner's Kaddish for them all, we say now, again: 'We will not sit idly by.'

"Our country simply cannot achieve the values of 'justice for all' to

ADVOCATING FOR LGBT INCLUSION WITH HERB BY MY SIDE

Temple Beth-El has long been known for its activism on human-rights issues, so in 1987 when the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC)—now known as the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ)—convened a committee to draft a statement on gay rights, TBE was significantly represented. The resulting Resolution of Support for Gays and Lesbians said, in part:

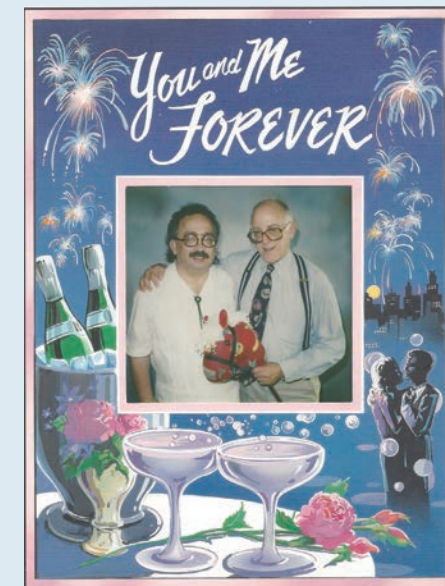
"God calls upon us to love our neighbors as ourselves. We have welcomed [gays and lesbians] into the UAHC congregations with special outreach, but we must do more.

Therefore, be it resolved that UAHC:

1) Urge its congregations and affiliates to:

- a) Encourage lesbian and gay Jews to share and participate in the worship, leadership and general congregational life of all synagogues.
- b) Continue to develop educational programs in the synagogue and community which promote understanding and respect for lesbians and gays.
- c) Employ people without regard to sexual orientation."

Rabbi Jerome K. Davidson and Marjorie Kurcias served on that committee; so did John Hirsch-Leiman and his husband, Herbert Hirsch-Leiman, who passed away on April 9. The two were an unstoppable team, traveling to temples all around the country to set up gay-inclusion committees. In the spirit of this issue's theme, *Change, Shema* asked John to share some of their story.



BY JOHN HIRSCH-LEIMAN

My darling Herbert left me on the first day of Pesach this year. While not unexpected, as he had been ill for some time, his death still took me by surprise. We had been together for 53 years, sharing good times and bad, friends and adventures. Inspired—then mentored—by Rabbi Davidson, we were also activists, working with others within the Reform movement to secure full inclusion for gays and lesbians in congregational life. Our time together is part of a long story of social change in the Reform movement.

If you had known Herb as a boy, you might never have suspected that he would become an activist. Always brilliant, he was an Eagle Scout and a scholar—enrolling at the University of Chicago at 15 and graduating at an age when most of us were finishing high school. In 1953, after earning a second degree and finishing law school, Herb enlisted in the U.S. Army. He returned two years later to begin a law practice in Hempstead but remained in the reserves for years.

I don't believe that sexual orientation played any role in his life at that point.



Herb was, if anything, a nerd: a quiet, solid person—with numerous other quiet, solid, intelligent nerds to fill his life. His friends were gay and straight, from law school and the army. It was one of his army friends, Hugh, who set us up on a blind date in 1967. I had been a marching-in-the-streets social activist since high school, and Herb was still military—but we proved that differences do attract because it was love at first sight.

Over the course of the 1950s and '60s, gay life slowly became less clandestine and more social. One hotspot was Fire Island, where Herb owned a place in the community of Kismet. Having a beach house has always come with a load of houseguests, and Herb had plenty. But that April, I was the latest. I made myself at home right away, taking over the kitchen, mending a torn mattress, flying a kite. Somehow, this endeared me to Herb—he could tell I was housebroken. We spent that summer courting, getting to know one another and taking long walks on the beach.

We discovered early our shared affinity for Judaism; and in 1978, when



we moved to the suburbs, we joined Temple Beth-El. It was liturgically Reform enough for my tastes and liberal enough to have hired the first ordained female cantor, Barbara Ostfeld. Jerry Davidson and Membership Chairman Dan Rubin made us feel welcome from the first evening we walked in, a momentous day in our lives.

With Herb's encouragement, I took my first steps down the road of moving UAHC to welcome gays and lesbians into mainstream religious life. It was like that first night in the Kismet kitchen—I became passionately, almost religiously, obsessed with the cause.

In 1987, I wrote to Rabbi Alexander Schindler, then president of UAHC, a long letter in support of accepting gays and lesbians as fully participating members of mainstream congregations. After speaking with Rabbi Davidson, Rabbi Schindler had Al Vorspan, his vice president, set up a meeting. It turns out that Al Vorspan and his wife were already friends with Herb's brother from the South Shore. It helped prove my point that, whether they know it or not, everyone knows someone gay or lesbian. Rabbi Schindler appointed me to the Committee on the Changing Jewish Family.

So I began my life as an openly gay man in the Reform movement with Herb on my arm—or with me on his. He was there when I spoke at the the 1987 Biennial in Chicago, introducing 5,000 Reform Jews to gay and lesbian issues. Herb was so proud of me that day.

Coming out in the 1980s could pose a real risk to one's career, but when



I began to travel and speak nationally about the place of gays and lesbians in mainstream congregations Herb was always with me. I frequently introduced him as my chauffeur, until one evening a woman in the audience actually believed me. The truth is, it was never a secret that Herb was my spouse. One time, I was invited to speak at a symposium at the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue. As we entered the temple, I asked Herb if he was OK with my participation since I didn't want to compromise him in any way. "It's a little late for that," he responded.

Our activism grew. I was named to the national board of the UAHC and chair of the Gay and Lesbian Task Force, while Herb worked on outreach. I served two terms on the national board, then Herb served two more. We attended 12 or more URJ Biennials; where I went, he went and vice versa. For more than 25 years, Herb and I led the Greater New York Council of Reform Synagogues contingent in events like New York City's Gay Pride March, as well as marches on Long Island. They were wonderful, joyous times. In 2004, perched on the back of a convertible and wearing matching striped shirts, we were honored to be grand marshals of the Long Island parade.

Rabbi Jerry Davidson remained our mentor throughout our involvement in the UAHC/URJ and in all of our activities with Reform Judaism, but perhaps the most intimate role he played in our lives was officiant at the first of our three weddings.

From far left: John and Herb celebrated marriage equality at an Oneg Shabbat on June 26, 2009 (*photo by Barbara Herman*). The pair (back left) celebrated Herb's birthday at Jackson Hole with members of the Greater New York Council of Reform Synagogues on October 12, 1994. Herb focused on work in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in March 1949. Young Herb was all smiles. The couple commemorated their 20th wedding anniversary in 1987. The duo traveled to Washington, DC, with the Greater New York Council of Reform Synagogues for a final showing of the AIDS quilt.



At TBE's Religious School, I had taught 35 years' worth of fifth graders about the *ketubah*, the formal Jewish marriage contract, before Herb and I decided we wanted one for ourselves. We went to Vermont, where Rabbi Davidson fulfilled our wish and solidified our relationship by joining us in a civil-union ceremony. Later, when same-sex marriage became legal in Canada in 2008, off Herb and I went to Toronto where a judge who was also a dear friend performed the rite.

But it wasn't until 2012, when finally sharing our joy with friends and family we could have a real wedding at Temple Beth-El. Rabbi Devorah Marcus and

Judge Ira Warshawsky officiated over a ceremony complete with all the trimmings: a chuppah, live music, flowers, brunch, a three-tiered wedding cake with a two-groom topper and, of course, a beautiful handmade *ketubah*.

Throughout our days as *makher*s in Reform Judaism, we met so many other *makher*s who started as colleagues but became dear, dear friends. We were always accepted and generously cared for, respected and loved. Our lives together at Temple Beth-El have been beyond our hopes or expectations. For more than 40 years, Temple Beth-El has been our true home, and dear friends

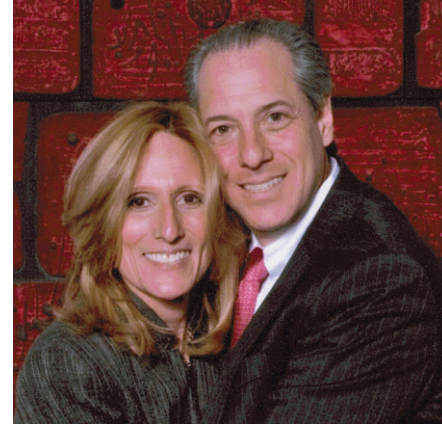
we have made are our family. From that first Shabbat, Herb and I felt accepted, welcomed and soon loved. Thank you, Jerry Davidson, you encouraged us.

Herbert was a quiet man but he found his voice, and he helped make the movement for full acceptance of gays and lesbians in mainstream congregations a success. He was a wonderful attorney who balanced out my artsiness, and he made it possible for us to be recognized as family—at temple, at the URJ and elsewhere. Everyone who met him in any of those venues loved and respected him—and feels his loss. I miss him beyond words. 🌈



PEOPLE WANT TO HELP: A CONVERSATION WITH JANE AND GARY STONE

BY STUART BOTWINICK



Residents of Great Neck for 22 years, the Stones have been members of Temple Beth-El since 2003. After beginning her career as a Wall Street executive, Jane spent the last 25 years working as an examiner at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Gary worked in computer programming and as a Wall Street trader before moving to Bloomberg, where he has worked for the last 19 years. Their daughter, Rachel, 19, is a sophomore at Indiana University, and their son, Ben, 21, recently completed job training and is seeking an apprenticeship in plumbing and heating and air conditioning work.

SHEMA: So, tell us your story.

Gary Stone: We look at our lives as a journey—a strange one, but there’s nothing we’d change and everything that’s happened has meaning. I’m from Boston; Jane is from Queens. We met on a Number Four, Lexington Avenue, subway train. We’re very different but share a mutual respect for each other, and we work hard to find common ground. It’s a real partnership.

Jane Stone: Gary and I both come from modest backgrounds. My father, who lived with us until he recently passed away at 90, was a dress salesman in the Garment District. Both families stressed the importance of education and charitable giving. Just as our families taught us the value of writing a check, we’ve come to understand the importance of giving our time—it’s become a fixture of our association with Temple Beth-El.

SHEMA: How did you come to be part of the Temple Beth-El family?

JS: Gary had a Conservative synagogue upbringing. I was raised more culturally Jewish, but when we began raising a family in Great Neck we decided to

connect with a temple. As we met more people in the community, we realized that many we liked and respected belonged to Beth-El. These were people we wanted to be with outside of work, who would become part of our lives. So we decided to join and quickly felt that we made the right choice.

GS: We participate in Friday night Shabbat services, but our involvement is primarily through philanthropy—making a difference in the community. We want to help the temple inspire others and do good in the community, so we support the small groups TriBE program which assists others in finding their “cause or passion” to help make our community a better place.

SHEMA: What are you most proud of at TBE?

JS: Four years ago, we learned that while local students in need receive free meals during the school year, the program isn’t offered in July and August—so we started the summer breakfast/lunch replacement program. Once we started, some of the members of the other

temples on Old Mill Road reached out to us so they could help with the effort.

GS: No child should ever go hungry. A need existed in our community and people wanted to help—both in our backyard. We’ve often given to national causes or personal interests that affected us, but we saw a need in our own town. Addressing it would not only take money but time and purpose. Time is our most finite resource—we felt compelled to use some of it to make a difference.

JS: Meeting TBE’s Susanne Marcus and Bertha Del Carpio of the St. Aloysius RC Church Interfaith Food Pantry was life changing for us and our kids. They were the ones who helped us identify the need. We admire their allegiance to service and dedication to eliminating food insecurity among the vulnerable in our community, especially children.

GS: Having experienced our own challenging journey to create our family, we wanted to assist Susanne and Bertha in their efforts but focus on the children. It transcended religion or politics—it was our community. In one of our efforts, we worked with the church and the schools to provide snacks for summer school kids, drawing in a whole team of shoppers, packers, delivery volunteers and coordinators—all critical to the effort’s success. We made mistakes and learned a lot.

I’ll never forget the card we received from one of the summer school students: “Sometimes my mind wanders when I am in class, but then I have a

snack and it helps me refocus. Thank you for the donation.”

JS: Our own children required support to find success, so we recognize that others may need that support. Sometimes, it’s just making sure they have a snack. Through our work, we hope to provide it.

GS: We started getting involved when Rachel was studying for her Bat Mitzvah and noticed that kids in the community were having trouble getting enough to eat and were taking clothes from the school lost and found. She couldn’t believe there was food insecurity in our community. She asked if she could donate her Bat Mitzvah gifts to the Interfaith Food Pantry at St. Aloysius. This inspired Jane, who realized that it was a long-term problem and we had to act.

JS: On the back of a napkin, Gary ran some numbers to fund a “proof of concept,” figuring out how many families, how many meals. We decided to skip the vacation, because this was important.

SHEMA: Are your temple efforts focused entirely on serving the food insecure?

JS: We also enjoy our TBE work with a local group home for people with special needs. We know the challenges that families have when trying to integrate their children into the community and create social events for them. With Sheila Aronson, Laurie Haber and TBE help, we have quarterly events at the temple for adults from the Great Neck Spirits, a local special-needs basketball program.

SHEMA: How can someone get involved?

JS: When you see a problem, don’t keep it to yourself—talk to someone. If you discover an underserved group, talk to your temple friends, leaders both at the temple and in the local community,



From far left: Jane and Gary Stone have been members of Temple Beth-El since 2003 and have been very involved through philanthropy. TBE volunteers filled shopping bags to help feed 40 families during school vacation at a Great-Full event last June (photo by Barbara Herman). The Great Neck Spirits had fun cooking. Jane Stone spotlights all the food that was set out for bagging.

TBE’s Director of Engagement Jaqui McCabe and the clergy. The solutions come from us. A lot of people want to get involved. The hard part is just getting started. It doesn’t need to be big or perfect. In fact, it won’t be perfect. You figure it out as you go. It just needs to start. Little things we do can make a dramatic impact.

We’d love to get more people involved in this work. If you can make phone calls, do some shopping or help pack bags, we need you. If you want to take a lead role, even better. Gary and I hope to get more people involved, so we can dedicate time to working with others to solve some other problems. COVID-19 has helped identify new—and exacerbate old—problems that need new solutions.

GS: There’s always more to do. TBE members can bring projects to the next level or start new projects. We think the TriBEs small-group initiative can make a real impact, focusing on philanthropic purposes—and we could incubate other projects.

SHEMA: What’s something that surprised you about Temple Beth-El?

JS: We are somewhat private people. I have Crohn’s disease and when I wasn’t well in 2016–17, we hardly told anyone. We didn’t want to be a burden. We were wrong. I learned about the number of friends I have at TBE. My circle of friends is something special. So many people came to support us and make sure we were OK. We don’t have a big

family nearby, but out of pure friendship people came to the rescue. Our rabbis were there from the start—Rabbi Tara even lay in the bed with me when I was at home recovering from major surgery.

GS: The people in this temple naturally want to help. When Jane was in the hospital, we learned that by not talking about what was happening we were being selfish denying people the opportunity to express their caring. I think that experience is why we agreed to do this interview. I guess we decided that we needed to tell our story so that others could develop theirs.

When there are other needs, talking to others can help, too. Talking can inspire people and help them grow, help their families grow and allow them to impart important things to their children. Maybe they need career advice or have always wanted to do something but don't know how. Asking for help can be uncomfortable, but by telling people what's going on in your lives you give them the chance to respond—and people want to respond.

It doesn't just have to happen when there's a death in the family or because someone's sick. We have a lot of people who have built successful businesses. They're an incredible resource—not just for talking about their own success but to help with business brainstorming, like figuring out how to retool after the pandemic. A half hour conversation with a few of our members could make a significant difference.

SHEMA: Does TBE impact you outside of your temple involvement?

JS: My TBE connection has taught me about Judaism and its impact on my life, work and communal responsibilities; it's allowed me to recognize subtleties about being Jewish in the workplace and the greater world.

SHEMA: What would you tell a friend about Temple Beth-El?

GS: We would recommend TBE highly. It's attracting a more open and

accepting community that stresses the equality of women, as we see when women of multiple generations read Torah at a Bat Mitzvah—some for the first time. Great Neck's diverse Jewish community can find a home at TBE. Moreover, the temple is working to forge a larger community, creating opportunities for dialogue and finding common cause to solve community problems. I'm proud of our clergy and their visibility.

JS: I find it to be a comfortable, unpretentious atmosphere where no one is turned away. I see all kinds of people at Friday night services. Some dress up, some don't—and that's OK. TBE's leadership and infrastructure enable you to discover things about yourself and things you care about that you didn't know existed. The thank-you notes tell us that TBE is having a dramatic impact on those kids' summer—and maybe their school year or their lives. It's an indescribable feeling. 🌟



Grocery shopping kicked off a Great-Full weekend of food packing for Great Neck students who would otherwise miss school lunch during February break in 2018.

BOOK REVIEW

ARIEL SAMSON: FREELANCE RABBI

BY MANISHTANA



My book suggestions until now have been about works I've read, understood and happily recommended, adding, where possible, a side of insight or critique. Writing this issue's column, though, presented me with an unexpected challenge: What, I wondered, was a reader to do, face-to-face, with a book that requires a 15-page glossary on Kindle?

The best thing, I decided, was to admit I was uncomfortable—and forge ahead anyway. So let me offer you the chance to jump into something witty, difficult, snarky and provocative. A 2018 Finalist for the National Jewish Book Award's Goldberg Award for Debut Fiction, *Ariel Samson: Freelance Rabbi* is a semiautobiographical novel which tells a fast-paced, irreverent tale of personal and public journey toward meaning.

It's not as if the author hasn't anticipated my hesitation. With a pen name that literally means “why is this different,” MaNishtana has written a deeply personal novel about a character whose experience is quite different from my own. Male, Black, born an Orthodox Jew, the hero of this novel is a science-fiction nerd raised in an observant Jewish home who nevertheless has more than a glancing familiarity with the marijuana plant. Fluent in Hebrew, Yiddish and the shibboleths of Orthodox observance, he is also a rabbi. Hoping I could get to know his point of view, I had barely dipped my toe into the first chapter when the narrator grabbed me by the ankle and dragged me into the deep end.

But it was the novel's humor and lightning pace that made me hold my breath and take the plunge. Before the end of the second page I knew that the hero, an innovative rabbi and target of attempted murder, had shown up at an awards ceremony unprepared with a speech he was to give and was contemplating fortifying himself with a dose of Kosher Dutch courage—“a perplexing vintage smelling faintly of overcooked raisins wrapped in Band-Aids, blending scintillating notes of acetone and a dead human foot. With a spiteful cherry finish.”

Ariel, the 28-year-old new rabbi in search of a proper job and a relationship, is someone you will empathize with, despair of and cheer for—even if you struggle to keep up

with him. When he gets a television writing job and creates a character that parodies himself, you may feel uncomfortable. He will take you into a very intimate look at how some Jews can be stubbornly inhospitable to anyone who seems different and where white Jewish culture can be blind to its racism and defensiveness.

This character also has faith in our people that goes beyond his frustrations and the prejudice he encounters. Teaching a new convert, he tells him: “...remember, that [the Jews] can be a great people. They wish to be. They only lack the light to show the way. So sometimes your job is to be that light.

“‘That message is so profound,’ remarked the man's mother, ‘what is that? Psalms? Proverbs 3:1?’

“Ariel half-shrugged, sheepishly, ‘Superman 47:18.’”

So, what other books have you read lately that made you stretch your knowledge and perspective? As we begin a new year, let's commit to finding the voices we haven't read before, especially voices within our own shared Jewish community. 🌟



MUCH ADO ABOUT NOSHING

By Doctor Aleph

Last issue, Agatha Schvitzky, professor of crime fiction, found her favorite book titles had been surreally Semitized. *This is someone’s weird idea of a Jewish joke*, thought Agatha. *I’ll clear my head with some matzo ball soup at the Café Edison*. But when she got to the Theater District, she knew something wasn’t kosher—her favorite plays and musicals were suddenly all about Jewish cooking! Based on the clues below, can you identify the new names of the shows?



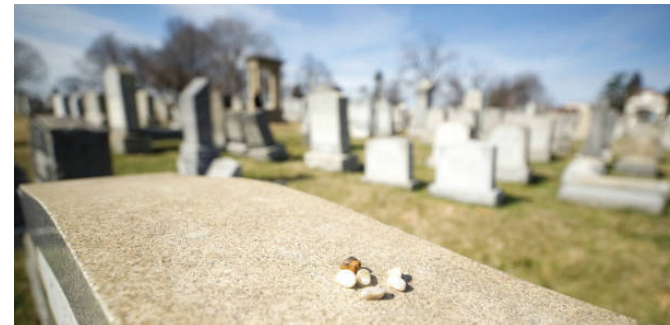
Example: In this musical, an old man scandalizes his small Spanish town by making heavy kosher wine.	<i>Manischewitz of La Mancha</i>
1. A prisoner waxes nostalgic about the sublime potato pastries served by his favorite movie heroine in this musical.	
2. This musical revolves around a special Baghdad variety of a sesame-based confection.	
3. The operatic tale is about a murderous barber and the girlfriend who turns his victims into sauce for falafel.	
4. This bio-musical tells the story of a Lower East Side pastrami visionary.	
5. In this musical, Commodore Perry teaches Tokugawa, Japan, about what is and what isn’t kosher for Passover.	
6. Attention must be paid to this classic American tragedy surrounding a soda-water vendor.	
7. This musical revue focuses on the career of a groundbreaking theater director/producer who was also a stuffed, fried crepe.	
8. In this comedy, a New Yorker is held captive on a street populated by spiral cinnamon danish.	
9 This is an affectionate musical tribute to everyone’s favorite organ meat.	
10. In this musical, a man is increasingly certain that a pot of chicken fat is talking to him.	

CLUES

<i>Pacific Overtures</i>	<i>Do I Hear a Waltz?</i>	<i>The Rocky Horror Show</i>	<i>Oliver</i>	<i>Sweeney Todd</i>
<i>Prince of Broadway</i>	<i>Cats</i>	<i>Kiss of the Spider Woman</i>	<i>Death of a Salesman</i>	<i>Prisoner of Second Avenue</i>

ANSWERS
1. Knish of the Spider Woman
2. The Iraqi Halvah Show
3. Tahini Todd
4. Katz
5. Pesachich Overtures
6. Death of a Seltzerman
7. Blintz of Broadway
8. Prisoner of Schnecken Avenue
9. Oy, Liver! or Ah, Liver!
10. Do I Hear a Schmaltz?

PREPLANNING AT BETH MOSES CEMETERY



In our tradition, when saying “Happy Birthday,” people may wish their loved ones the blessing that they live to be 120 years old. Few will see this age, and everyone will one day face the reality that our earthly journey will come to an end.

The sages of the Midrash, the early interpreters of the Torah, had important wisdom for thinking about our end of days. In fact, they advise us to purchase a burial plot even while we are still alive and well. It is sometimes said that doing so will actually bless one with a long life. On a more practical level, purchasing a grave avoids a burden for a loved one. Sometimes this is a parting gift to those around us.

Our Temple Beth-El family is blessed to have its own sections of the Beth Moses Cemetery in Farmingdale. In the coming year, the purchase price for our plots will increase as we continue investing in care and upkeep of the property.

Please consider purchasing graves for your family. Plots are only available for purchase by temple members, but can be used for your extended family. Single graves are available, and there are also plots for any number of graves, including 20+. Stuart Botwinick, our Executive Director, is happy to tour the grounds with you.

For additional information, please contact Joy Palevsky in the main office at jpalevsky@tbegreatneck.org. or 516-487-0900, ext. 115. 📞



To my friends at Temple Beth-El
Shana Tova!
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Understanding.

We sit on the same side of the table as our clients, and provide advice based on a deep understanding of their needs. Creating long-term relationships that are built on trust is our ultimate goal.

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SO LONG, FAREWELL

The Temple Beth-El family said farewell to Rabbi Elle Muhlbaum and Cantor Vladimir Lapin late last spring. Congregants thanked them for their contributions during a Caravan of Well Wishes car parade in the temple parking lot and honored them at a Special Farewell Erev Shabbat Service, which concluded with a slide show of heartfelt messages.

COMPILED BY SHERI ARBITALJACOBY



Temple Beth-El is Great Neck's **first synagogue** and the largest home to liberal Judaism in our community. **Our temple is changing lives now—and building toward a strong future.**

Today Our Annual Campaign, the Eternal Light Initiative (ELI), is vitally important to the synagogue, ensuring the delivery of our day-to-day programs and wide-ranging services throughout 2020–2021.

TEMPLE BETH-EL OF GREAT NECK

Who We Are



1

new Religious School, Kulanu, was founded in partnership by Temple Beth-El of Great Neck and Temple Israel of Great Neck.



3

TBE clergy now lead us in prayer, song and learning—Rabbi Tara, Rabbi Meir and Cantor Adam, the eighth cantor of our congregation.



15

TriBEs have been connecting regularly, building strong bonds within our TBE community, through these small groups.



198

students from pre-K to Grade 12, transitioned from in-person classes to online studies during this past year.



300+

homemade desserts were baked for local Families in Need and 600 were made for Essential Workers, organized by TBE Sisterhood.



500+

Chesed Caring and *Kaddish* calls were made to congregants facing loneliness, illness or loss. More are being made every week!



600

families from across Nassau County and Queens—and even some from out of state!—call Temple Beth-El home.



1,000s

of pounds of nutritious food were delivered to the Interfaith Food Pantry at St. Aloysius RC Church by TBE Brotherhood.



6,000+

online views of Shabbat, Havdalah and tot Shabbat services as well as adult master classes have been enjoyed since the pandemic began.

Tomorrow What will be your legacy?

As part of our planning for the future, we look beyond ourselves to the next generation.

In Jewish tradition, on the Yahrzeit date (the anniversary of someone's passing), we remember and read the names of loved ones who came before us.

Beyond a Yahrzeit, we are so honored that every year TBE members pledge to be remembered for their ongoing impact, well beyond their lifetime.

A bequest is one of the easiest and most significant ways to leave a legacy. Even if you're someone of modest means, your gift can go a long way.

As we look beyond our 90th anniversary and start the next 90 years, make a pledge to our Jewish community.

Naming Opportunities

Consider having your name or that of a loved one added to a temple space, a meaningful program or the title of a clergy position at TBE. Immemorially, a gift to the temple can ensure the perpetuation of our Jewish community and tie a special name to something holy and important.

Every Gift Matters Can we count on you?

Learn more by contacting Stuart Botwinick, Executive Director, at 516-487-0900.