

# Congregational Update

MARCH 2025

## In This Issue:

- An Important Announcement about our Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC)
- Building, Community, and Program Updates
- Upcoming Events



## From the Visioning Team

As March arrives, we want to again share some news about TBE's Vivid Vision process.

As you know from the earlier communications we have shared, as well as reports at key meetings and sermons by Rabbi Stoller, Temple Beth-El is in the middle of a significant and exciting Visioning Process. We recognize that this is a moment of profound change on every level, including in our town, and we are working proactively to ensure a vibrant, dynamic, future for Temple Beth-El and its members.

This update covers developments on all three facets of our strategy since January:

- We are reviewing alternatives for the best use of **our building and property**. Without taking any options off the table, we are focusing on remaining in our current building, within a smaller footprint.
- Our **programmatically expansion** is well underway. We hope you have noticed the increase in TBE programs on all fronts.
- We continue to explore **partnership/consolidation** with Temple Tikvah of New Hyde Park.

You will find more details about these developments below. We will continue to share news from the Visioning Team on a regular basis. Please feel free to reach out to any of us with any questions.

Jordana Levine, President  
Gary Slobin, Visioning Team Chair  
Rabbi A. Brian Stoller  
Stuart Botwinick, Executive Director

# Important Announcement: Early Childhood Education Center

As you know from our [earlier updates](#), Temple Beth-El is taking this moment of change in Great Neck and the larger community to look closely at our congregational needs, asking how we can best serve our membership and advance our values into the future.

That requires a clear-eyed understanding of the financial realities of TBE now and into the future. It is becoming increasingly clear that selling our building and leasing back the smaller space we need to meet the needs of TBE today is the best option for TBE moving forward. Doing so will allow us to continue to serve our members, to grow responsibly, and to achieve strong financial sustainability.

While TBE was interested in retaining the school wing/chapel/main office spaces as our primary space in any sale/leaseback agreement, we had to be open to all options. As of today, every interested buyer has been clear that the school wing is necessary for them.

**That is why the Board has made the difficult decision to close TBE's Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) at the end of this school year.** "Difficult" not because the decision itself was particularly challenging, but because the ECEC has been a part of TBE for so long.

The question that the Board considered was not whether the ECEC provides a high-quality program. Everyone agrees that it does. The question was: Is running the school, which would require TBE maintaining the school wing, consistent with advancing our vision for the future, which will almost certainly involve selling our building and renting back the space we need?

We are proud that our ECEC has contributed to the formation of a generation of Jewish children in Great Neck as well as helped create a close-knit community of young families. We are incredibly and especially grateful to our director, Karen Wasserman, our teachers, and staff and to you and all the families who have entrusted TBE with their children throughout the years.

We know that the ECEC and its staff are well loved, and that it has made a tremendous contribution to TBE over the years. Closing the ECEC is a loss, but it is necessary for the sale of our building and, therefore, for the long-term sustainability of Temple Beth-El

# Our *Bayit* (home/building)

We are starting to get a clearer picture of the best options for TBE's physical home. We are increasingly confident that we will be able to find partnerships that will allow us to make much-needed progress toward greater financial stability while giving TBE a physical home that makes sense for us today and into the future.

As you know, we have been working with the real estate advisory firm of Marcus and Millichap, and they have brought us several promising proposals, **all of which include TBE selling our building while "leasing back" the space we need. This will give us a smaller, more manageable footprint, and will generate a significant financial reserve.** Our architects at Mojo-Stumer are already engaged in helping us plan for an exciting design for the new space.

We will keep you informed as our process moves forward. Once we have a recommendation to make, we will, of course, bring it to the full membership for consideration.

# Our *Kehilla* (community)

As we have discussed in previous updates, we are in **conversation with Temple Tikvah of New Hyde Park about a possible consolidation.**

In late January, Temple Tikvah hosted us for a Kabbalat Shabbat service that was lovely, warm, and inviting. The TBE members who attended felt welcome and comfortable. If you would like to get a feel for what services are like at Temple Tikvah, you can visit their [YouTube page](#), where their shabbat services are streamed and archived.



*Temple Tikvah Sanctuary*



We are pleased to have received a **targeted grant from the UJA-Federation of New York** to advance the process of exploring a new relationship between our two congregations. It is gratifying to see the extent to which such an important organizational partner has embraced our new vision.



*Dale Glasser*

With UJA-Federation's support, we have hired Dale Glasser Training and Consulting to assist both TBE and Temple Tikvah moving forward. Dale has served as Senior Director, Consulting and Community Development for the Jewish Federations of North America, a Jewish Big Brothers case worker, JCC executive, congregational executive director, and, for 16 years, worked to enhance congregational life in communities throughout the United States and Canada as the senior management consultant to the nearly 900 congregations of the Union for Reform Judaism.

We are excited about the possibilities that a consolidation with Temple Tikvah will create for TBE. It will make us a larger and stronger congregation. More specifically, Temple Tikvah has a strong religious school program to complement our own. Further, a partnership would allow TBE to extend its geographic range beyond Great Neck and more deeply into the North Shore and Eastern Queens.

## *Our Tochniot (programs)*

January's **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. program** was inspiring and moving. You may be interested in this [Newsday article](#) on the event.



Our recent **"Musician-in-Residence" weekend with Jacob "Spike" Kraus** brought one of the most exciting performers and

teachers in contemporary Jewish music to TBE. Kraus joined us for Erev Shabbat services and for a special musical Shabbat morning service honoring Joanna Stolove. He also led a fascinating Torah study, presented a unique shiur (class) on "The Spirituality of Secular Music," and spent time with students in The Kehillah Project.

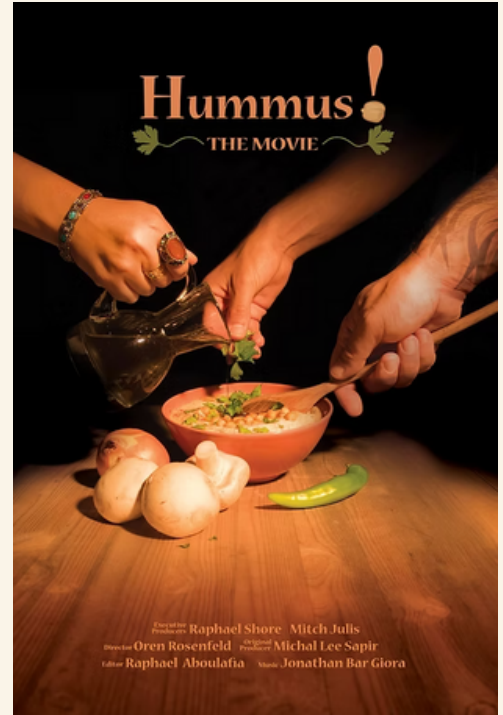


*Jacob Spike Kraus*

Our **programmatic expansion** continues. TBE has just received a **significant new donation**, a strong vote of confidence in our new vision. It will create an exciting "matching grant" program for the vital work of our Miriam & Moses Center for Pluralistic Adult Jewish Learning.

# Coming Attractions

- Our upcoming events with **Gold Coast Arts Center**:
  - April 2: *American Yiddish Theater: A Musical Overview* with Zalmen Mlotek
  - May 15: *Hummus the Movie* with Culinary Demonstration and tasting with Lenny Messina from Lola of Great Neck



- Our upcoming **Susan Stumer Cultural Arts Fund celebration**:
  - May 8: A Rooftop Cocktail Party and Concert with Elana Arian
- Our upcoming **Miriam and Moses Center for Pluralistic Jewish Learning** Purim event:
  - March 11: *Purim: The First Jewish Holiday* with Rabbi Joe Skloot, Rabbi Aaron D. Panken Assistant Professor of Modern Jewish Intellectual History at HUC-JIR/New York



Elana Arian