

*Newsletter of Temple Beth Torah
Wethersfield, CT
Vol. 18 No. 2*

Special Interest Articles:

- Message from
Rabbi Seth
Riemer
- New Year's
Greetings 5775

Friday Night
Services now
start at 7:00 pm

Bagel Brunch
November 9

Chanukah Party
December 21

Message from Rabbi Seth

An idea worth exploring came up during a conversation I had with some TBT members, including members of our Executive Committee. This conversation took place on a Sunday shortly after Yom Kippur and before Sukkot. The idea is to make some innovations to our services for the Days of Awe (High Holidays).

Specifically, what about shortening those services and at the same time making them more appealing to participants? I said that I'm on board with this proposal if it is what our membership wants, and I outlined a couple of ways in which such innovations could be arranged. (In a moment I'll get back to that subject by telling you what I consider to be the best of those ways.)

We've gone some distance along this path by our decision, a few years ago, to acquire an updated, user-friendly mahzor (holiday prayerbook). However, the way in which I conduct services remains more or less the same as before. The traditional ritual framework is based on a—to modern thinking—rather bizarre premise: animal sacrifice. We repeat prayers over and over again because our ancestors went to the Jerusalem Temple and made sacrifices there three times per day and on holidays made an additional sacrifice after the morning sacrifice and created an elaborate sacrificial protocol special

to Yom Kippur. Our prayer services are in fact a symbolic reiteration of those animal sacrifices, which stopped happening when the Temple was destroyed.

Thankfully, it's a bloodless reiteration. But wait—is its bloodlessness such a good thing after all?

I've told you I'm not a fan of animal sacrifices. Yet, in putting all that ritual slaughter on hold (for Orthodox Jews—until the Messiah comes and sacrifices are restored; for the rest of us—permanently) and substituting prayers (which are not very exciting by comparison with killing animals and burning them with incense on an altar), we may have lost sight of religion's sensory, visceral appeal. The bloodlessness of our post-Temple religious practice leaves many of us cold, and the longer we live without the physical sacrifices our ancestors performed, the more we—or many of us—become detached from our religious heritage. We need something to help us reconnect with it.

The innovations I am proposing could help us get back to the ancestral feeling of connection with God. Thus, instead of endlessly repeating the prayers, why not do them once during each holiday prayer session (evening, morning, and, on Yom Kippur, afternoon) but, instead of just going over them by rote, actually say them—I mean, express the feelings and intentions those prayers are intended

to bring out. Using our mahzor to guide us but not thinking ourselves obligated to slavishly repeat every word, we could focus on and draw out the themes of the most important prayers. A group of TBT members, working with me and the mahzor, could plan the shape of each service. Whatever is valuable in the repetition of and variations on the basic pattern could be expressed through a ritual improvising creatively on those traditional themes.

And whatever we want to keep intact, we could keep intact. The point is that decision-making is in our hands: we have the freedom to define for ourselves what we believe to be in our best interest as a Jewish congregation—and that choice certainly includes how we define our ritual life. Think about that!

Thoughts from your Executive Committee

Instead of using this space in the STAR to alert you to what's happening at TBT, which has been our traditional format, we'd like to take this opportunity to discuss the FUTURE of TBT: how we might attract more members, and make our current members feel more engaged.

As was stated in the movie "ET:" "We are not alone..."

We are mindful that the organized Jewish communities in the Greater Hartford area are, like us, struggling to attract new members. We know that there are those among us who have literally given up attending Jewish services and participating in synagogue activities. The reasons are many and varied and surely include mixed marriages, disaffection with the organized religious practices of their parents generation, singles and LGBT community members who may feel left out, and those feeling financially strapped in a tough economy.

TBT is in the same position as so many congregations across this country. We get a new member here and there, but, at the same time folks retire or move away, or choose to leave due to economics. We are appealing to our membership-at-large to help us chart a

course that will yield new members. Must we expand our School program to attract younger families? Do we put out the word in the singles community by working with our local colleges and universities, inviting them to Friday night services and special TBT events? Do we provide leadership and sponsorship of otherwise disaffected groups to bring them into the fold?

We are currently examining our liturgy with the goal of modernizing our traditional services and, hopefully, we will positively affect our participation numbers.

We have a lot of questions, but few answers. Everyone is busy. No one has extra dollars to spend, and season after season we stumble forward, enjoying the High Holidays, and the inspiring work of our Rabbi Seth. But we can do more. We look forward to engaging our TBT family in a dialogue to tap your ideas and suggestions as to how we can effectively grow our Congregation. If we can begin to attract new members, your Executive Committee will have earned its keep.

Eliot & Kathi Mag, Barry & Sallyanne Scott, Karen Klein

NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS 2014/5775

Rabbi Seth Riemer, Barbara Checknoff,
Calmen, Ezra & Hadassah Riemer

Cecile and Barry Bronfin, Michael, Lesley, Ian
and Tabitha; Wendy, Brian and Eleanor; John,
Barbara, Johnny and Willy
Alice Burstein and Family
Mara Dresner
Marlene Ellenberg and Family
Carol Gershenson
Judy and Marty Gold; Monica, Lee, Jack and
Adam; Debbie, Aaron, Ryan and Zachary

Andie and Barry Goldberg; Michelle and Bill Cyr
Debra, Joseph, Sam and Lily Hammer
Maureen, Ralph, and Hannah Horowitz
Karen and Bob Klein
Phil and Geraldine Lohman
Ina London
Rhoda and Fred London
Rita and Harold Nevins
The Reuben Family
Harriet and Leo Rosen; Nancy Stillman, Amy
Hurley, Debra Lopez and Rebecca Stillman
Helene Rosenblatt
Mira and Barry Schlein and Family
Sallyanne and Barry Scott, Todd and Aaron
The Waltmans

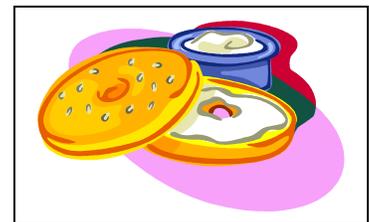
Attention All:

The Executive Board of TBT has decided that Shabbat services will now be starting at **7:00 p.m.** Hopefully, our new start time will allow more families with young children to attend on a more regular basis.

Bagel Brunch

We will be having a Bagel Brunch on Sunday, November 9th at 10:00 a.m. in the Social Hall. Everyone is invited to attend. Please mark your calendars and join us in celebrating!

Please RSVP by November 5th for the Bagel Brunch to Judy Gold at 860-521-0334 or goldjrg88@gmail.com



Calendar

November

- 2** Sunday school, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Challah - Evans
- 7** Erev Shabbat, Friday night
services 7:00 p.m.
Oneg - Ellenberg
- 9** Sunday school, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Challah - Sondik
- 9** Bagel Brunch 10:00 a.m.
- 14** Erev Shabbat, Friday night
services 7:00 p.m.
Oneg – Moses & Gould
- 15** Torah Study 9:30 am
- 16** Sunday school, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Challah - Lev
- 21** Erev Shabbat, Friday night
services, 7:00 p.m.
Oneg – Latorra
- 22** J. Latorra Bar Mitzvah
- 23** Sunday School 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Challah – Brody

December

- 5** Erev Shabbat, Friday night
Services 7:00 p.m.
Oneg – Horowitz
- 7** Sunday School 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Challah – Rose
- 12** Erev Shabbat, Friday night
Services 7:00 p.m.
Oneg – Hoss
- 13** Torah Study 9:30 a.m.
- 14** Sunday school, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Challah – Latorra
- 16** First Night Chanukah
- 19** Erev Shabbat, Friday night
Services 7:00 p.m.
Oneg – James
- 21** Sunday school, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Challah – Evans
- 21** Chanukah party 11:00 am

Tips for Oneg or Challah Host

As the Oneg Host, you will need Kedem Grape Juice and a challah. You can also bring cake, brownies, fruit, soda, seltzer, cider or whatever you feel like sharing. If you cannot participate on your "Host" date, please switch with someone else or find a substitute. There are signs in the kitchen to help you locate paper goods and tablecloths.

As the Challah host at School, please bring in a Challah. Place it on a platter, sliced. Please pour some grape juice from the refrigerator into enough cups for the students and teachers. Just before you take your kids home please help with cleaning up.

Shopping that helps to support Temple Beth Torah

We are now taking orders for Stew Leonard's. They will let us have 10% of our order of gift cards, with a minimum order of \$1000. We will be ordering November 21. Let Susan Sackler Reuben know how much you want. Several of our members order for the whole year at once. That's an idea to consider.

Temple Beth Torah

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Scott, Rabbi Seth Riemer and
Barbara Checknoff

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Kathi Mag

Artist-in-Residence

Phil Lohman with Ralph
Horowitz

TempleBethTorahWethersfield.
org

Golden Book

In Memory of
CY LEVINE
By Judy and Bob Cohn

In Honor of
The 50th Wedding Anniversary of
RHODA & FRED LONDON
By the Londons

AVAILABLE FUNDS

- GOLDEN BOOK –
Minimum donation \$10.00

- PRAYERBOOK FUND
Bookplate put inside front cover
of Siddur \$36.00

- EDUCATION FUND

- RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY
FUND

- MEMORIAL BOARD –
Engraved metal plate with name
of deceased - \$200.00

Make checks payable to Temple
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Rhoda London
516 Coppermill Road
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