

Newsletter of Temple Beth Torah  
Wethersfield, CT  
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## Message from Rabbi

*I wrote these words on August 10...*

I'm sitting in the living room of my cousins' apartment on beautiful Kibbutz Tzuba, in the Judean Hills just west of Jerusalem. My El Al flight landed at Ben Gurion on August 6, shortly after the war with Hamas paused. A couple days ago the war was back on as Hamas restarted its campaign of missile terror against Israel, which responded with more attacks on military targets in Gaza. On Israeli TV the talking heads are (same as back in the States) at their endless self-serving analysis of the conflict, but I am not tuned into that right now. Instead, I'm savoring my remaining time here—I'll leave Israel right after midnight on Thursday morning, so I have a few more days to take into my soul the land and its people.

In September, at our first Shabbat eve service and again during the holidays, I will fill you in on my impressions of the political situation, Israelis' attitudes about it, and their view of how the world views them. This trip has already had a big impact on my thinking about Israel, what being Jewish means, and what we as a Jewish community in America can do to better understand and help improve the realities of life here. On those topics I have much to share with you. For now, my focus is on one important aspect of that big subject. I'm thinking about what it means to be *in* Israel and *among* people whose perspective on the world is, first and foremost, Jewish.

I want to connect that focus with another: the idea of *teshuvah* / "returning," which is central to the holiday period about to begin—Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and the time in-between, all of which together our tradition calls *aseret yemey teshuvah* / the "Ten Days of Returning." Jewish religion sees this "returning" as a spiritual sort of looking back at oneself in the "mirror": reexamining one's past actions so as to shape intentions that help one improve as a human being. It is an exercise in the discipline of moral self-scrutiny.

This spiritual and moral discipline applies to our sense of ourselves vis-à-vis other people: our relationships with and obligations toward others. To be a better person, I must do better in how I deal with and respond to other people struggling as I am to live in a spirit of love, compassion and justice. What exactly *is* our obligation, as a Jewish community living in the U.S., toward the Jewish community in Israel? What should we be doing to do right by our Israeli brothers and sisters? Israel holds, by some estimates, the world's largest Jewish community. Doing *teshuvah*, "returning" in the moral sense that Judaism emphasizes, cannot overlook the well-being of all those people, Israelis, who are members of your family and mine!

Here in Israel, the other day in Jerusalem and here on the kibbutz, I saw Jewish people walk by me as I sat drinking coffee or eating a meal, and I thought, "That woman/man/child looks/sounds/acts like people I know in America—she/he could be a member

of TBT!" In the basic human perspective, being a Jew here in Israel is not all that different from being a Jew in Wethersfield, Connecticut. And yet...

A chasm—cultural, experiential—separates us from Israelis. We don't speak Hebrew fluently and daily; they do. We don't have hostile neighbors and rockets aimed at us; they do. Their lives are always on edge—at a moment's notice the young men are summoned to the battlefield, and others directed by a siren's blare into air-raid shelters. Looking back at ourselves in the mirror of moral self-scrutiny, we contemplate a blurry or distorted image because we haven't looked carefully enough and thought hard enough about what we are looking at. Who are we, really, in relation to Israeli Jews? What do their safety and security *really* mean to us?

At any instant, with the push of a button, we can bring the far corners of the world onto our computer screens and into our sight. (With a push of a button, I will send this message instantly all the way from Israel to Susan Reuben, The Star's editor in Connecticut.) But that facility doesn't necessarily make the human connection—in this case, between the Jewish communities in Israel and America—any easier to identify.

Yes, I see there's a divide between my face staring into that mirror, and the mirror image staring back at me. All I can do to bridge that gap is hope, pray, reach out.

With love and wishes for a New Year of *shalom* for all of us and all who seek it,

Rabbi Seth

## Message from the Executive Committee

**From Your Executive Committee: a few thoughts from the sidelines about what's happening in the Middle East.**

Can you imagine living in Wethersfield, and having your arch enemy living in Newington, indiscriminately lobbing rockets at your town? It would be unimaginable! You are not so secure on your Hartford border, either, with the South End population looking to expand into your territory. Sure, they say that they are tired of being "second-class" citizens in a land they claim to be theirs. As a matter of fact, Wethersfield has no right to call itself a Connecticut town and be self-governed. The Newingtonites have pledged the destruction of Wethersfield and return of the Cove to Newington's control.

There is also the story of the scorpion and the frog. Both were on the banks of the Tigris River when the scorpion pleaded with the frog to "give him a lift" across. The frog demurred, stating that he didn't trust the scorpion NOT to bite him. The Scorpion countered: "why would I do that?? We would both die!" Thinking that the scorpion's argument made sense, he said: "OK, hop on!" In the middle of the river, the scorpion stung the frog, and as he was dying, the frog cried out: "Why did you do that?" The scorpion replied with a shrug: "*IT'S THE MIDDLE EAST, WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?*"

What the Israelis are experiencing on their home turf would not be tolerated in the United States (or anywhere else in the world for that matter). Just imagine the Mexicans lobbing rockets into Texas and

California because we will not emigrate their refugees, or, for whatever reason given. In short order, there would be no more Mexico as we know it!

So what to do? I don't know if there is anything that we can do that will defuse this situation while Hamas rules Gaza. In the years of relative quiet, where Israel and other countries were shipping concrete for re-building the crumbling (and previously destroyed) infrastructure, we learn now that Hamas was diverting those resources to build reinforced tunnels to move personnel and materiel closer to the Israeli border for the purposes of conducting abductions and other acts of sabotage in Israel. It is hardly unreasonable to deny Israel the opportunity to dismantle those tunnels and destroy as many rockets as can be found.

What of the human cost? It is undeniably sad to have women and children and old men put in harm's way in the name of jihad. The reality on the ground is that while Israel puts its soldiers in harm's way to protect its citizens, Hamas puts its civilians in harm's way to protect

Hamas fighters. And, of course, Israel is not buying the propaganda that Hamas is spewing and neither should the world.

The dangers are very real. There is unrest in the Palestinian territories of the West Bank, which could destabilize the whole region, which with the conflict in Syria and spread of ISIS's influence in Iraq looking to form an Islamic Caliphate, the US is but steps away from armed "support" in the region which most Americans would have difficulty with after our forays into Iraq and Afghanistan.

What can we do? As Jews and US citizens, I believe that we must support the State of Israel, each individual in his own manner. As a Jewish Community, we ought to call for solidarity with Israel's leadership, and, at the same time, support calls for a cease fire that includes disarming Hamas. Unless the citizens of Gaza vote Hamas out of office, they will not willingly give up power, despite their shrinking base of support.



## Sukkot Pot Luck

Our Annual Sukkot (booths) Pot Luck is scheduled for Friday evening, October 10, 6:30 pm. We will start with a short version of Erev Shabbat (eve of the Sabbath) service. Afterwards, depending on the weather, we will eat in or out, among the stars and the mosquitoes (bring some spray).

## Simchat Torah

Rejoice in the Torah on Friday, October 17, 7:00 p.m. This marks the end of one cycle and the beginning of the next cycle of reading the Torah. Let's get a great turnout and dance with the Torah and see it unwrapped around the sanctuary.

## High Holiday Food Drive

Our annual mitzvah (good deed) at this time of year is our High Holiday Food Drive. Flyers and grocery bags will be available in the entry as you leave TBT on Rosh Hashanah. The local food banks welcome all types of healthful, non-perishable food items. Our goal is for each

family to return at least one bag, filled with non-perishable food items or donate some money, by Yom Kippur. The bags of food will be distributed to the Wethersfield Food Pantry.

Your generous donations are greatly appreciated.

## Holiday Calendar for September and October

### September

- 5 First Shabbat service of the season, 7:30 p.m.
- 24 Erev Rosh Hashanah service 7:30 p.m.
- 25 Rosh Hashanah 9:00 a.m. services 10:00 a.m. Jr. Congregation 12:30 p.m. Tashlich (toss sins into the water) at Cove, after services, meet at TBT
- 26 Rosh Hashanah 9:00 a.m. services
- 28 Memorial Service at the cemetery 11:00 a.m.

### October

- 3 Kol Nidre 7:30 pm
- 4 Yom Kippur 9:00 a.m. service 10:00 a.m. Jr. Congregation 5:10 p.m. afternoon service 7:10 p.m. Havdalah
- 10 Shabbat service then Sukkot Service and Pot Luck in the Sukkah 6:30 p.m.
- 17 Simchat Torah & Shabbat 7:00 p.m.

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## Golden Book

### In Memory of Cy Levine by

Walter and Carrie Leib  
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Gerald Berg  
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Herbert and Marcia Slotnick  
Edward Kerekian  
Charles and Ellen Mandelberg  
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## Cemetery Service

*TBT Memorial Park will hold Annual Yizkor Service at the Park on September 28, 2014 at 11 a.m. All are invited to attend and participate in prayers for our departed loved ones which will be led by our Rabbi Seth Riemer. Service will start promptly at 11 and conclude about 11:30 a.m.*

## Cemetery Plots

Many new members of TBT are not aware that we have a beautiful park-like cemetery in Wethersfield available to our membership at a reduced price, which includes perpetual care.

We must emphasize that all our membership is offered burial in the Memorial Park. Your estate planning is not complete if you have not considered making a purchase. Contact Barry Goldberg for further information and a tour of the Memorial Park.

### Oneg Shabbat Schedule

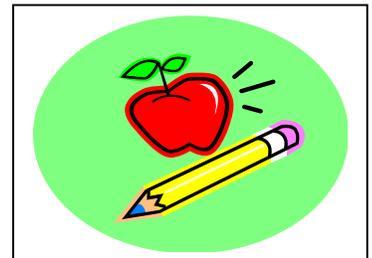
Sept. 5 Sallyanne and Barry Scott	Nov. 14 Ellen Sue Moses and Mark Gould
Sept. 12 Judy and Marty Gold	Nov. 21 Heather and Darryl Latorra
Sept. 19 Cecile and Barry Bronfin	Nov. 22 Fred and Susan Cohan
Sept. 26 Kathi and Eliot Mag	Nov. 28 Thanksgiving Break, no services
Oct. 10 Sukkot Pot Luck in the Sukkah	Dec. 5 Ralph and Maureen Horowitz
Oct. 17 Deb and Joe Hammer	Dec. 12 Michael and Nancy Hoss
Oct. 24 Andie and Barry Goldberg	Dec. 19 Susan James
Oct. 31 Carol Gershenson	Dec. 26 Winter Break, no services
Nov. 7 Marlene Ellenberg	Jan. 2 Winter Break, no services

Shalom! This is the TBT Oneg Calendar. If you cannot participate on your "Host" date, please switch with someone else or find a substitute! As a Host, you will need Kedem Grape Juice and a challah. You can also bring cake or brownies, fruit, soda, seltzer, cider, etc. or whatever else you feel like sharing. Tablecloths are in the kitchen, upper cabinets about 3 down from the refrigerator. If you use a cloth one, just please take it home, wash it and bring it back the next time you come to TBT. In the lower cabinets to the left of the sink, you will find napkins, dessert plates, plastic cutlery and hot and cold drink cups. We should also have ample small wine/juice cups. Just before services are over, count heads and pour the juice. On a typical Friday night we'll need enough for about 15 - 20 people. Thanks for cleaning up when you are done!

### Sunday School and Challah schedule

TBT school calendar for Fall 2014. Classes meet Sunday mornings 9 – 11 a.m. Teachers: Rabbi Seth Riemer and Tricia Bonse.

- Sept.** 7 Latorra, 14 Evans, 21 Sondik, 28 Lev
- Oct.** 5 Brody, 19 Rose, 26 Latorra
- Nov.** 2 Evans, 9 Sondik 16 Lev, 23 Brody
- Dec.** 7 Rose, 14 Latorra  
21 Evans/TBT Hanukah Party



The children should plan to attend services with their families on Shabbat, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot and the pot luck supper, and Simchat Torah to march with flags. There will be a children's service on the first morning of Rosh Hashanah and the morning of Yom Kippur. There will be a Chanukah party with lots of latkas.



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Do you shop at Stop and Shop, Big Y and/or Stew Leonard's? If you purchase your groceries with gift cards that you buy from us, then we will earn 5% from Stop and Shop, 6% from Big Y (October and April) and 10% from Stew Leonard's (November to December). If you already have a shopping card from Crown Supermarket, recharge your card at the cashier and they will send us a check.

This is a fundraiser, with no extra cost to the shoppers, you pick the face value and send us a check for that amount. When you order \$500 worth of gift cards in this Jewish calendar year, you will get a copy of the Stew Leonard cook book as a thank you gift, one per household, while supplies last. The next order will be for Stop and Shop and Big Y. The deadline is September 15. The deadline for the Stew Leonard's order is November 15. To ensure that we meet the minimum purchase level, we only order a few times a year. Consider ordering enough cards to last you awhile. Contact Susan Reuben or Judy Gold to order.

**TEMPLE BETH TORAH**  
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