

Newsletter of Temple Beth Torah
Wethersfield, CT
Vol. 19 No. 4

Special Interest Articles:

- Message from
Rabbi Seth
Riemer

Individual Highlights:

Message from the
Executive Committee

Annual Meeting on
June 8 at 7:00 pm

Shavuot Holiday
Study
May 23, 9:01 pm

Shavuot Message from Rabbi Seth Riemer

Hebrew is the language of the Torah, which is an important Jewish way to communicate with God. Yet, according to midrash (commentary on the Torah) when God spoke to Israel from Mt. Sinai, the divine voice went out not just to the Jewish people in the Hebrew language but also to the 69 other nations of the world, each people hearing God's voice speak to them in their own language. Moreover, as our Rabbis are at pains to point out, that divine Revelation—which Jews celebrate as the holy festival of **Shavuot**—did not take place in Israel (the Jewish homeland) but in a wilderness (probably the Sinai Peninsula) that, in those days, belonged to no nation: God's teaching thus belongs to everyone.

If divine teaching is available to all—Jews and non-Jews—alike and is accessible in any number of languages, what's the point of being Jewish and learning Hebrew?

The reason is that, despite God's openness to all of humanity, Jewish perspective matters. A couple of illustrations from real life might help to show this.

I was sitting, a few weeks ago, in my office at the Jewish High School of Connecticut and staring at my laptop screen as I started to write this column about Shavuot. In the adjoining classroom a Hebrew class was underway. The very engaging teacher was having a

Hebrew conversation with some intermediate level students, who sounded very excited by the opportunity to practice and improve their Hebrew in that way. Laughter interrupted and punctuated their dialogue. The students struggled to channel their ideas into the Hebrew vocabulary they know, and occasional English phrases forced their way into the sentences those students were forming, but I could tell that they all were having a good time. I was thinking how good it is to be able to develop that ability: knowledge of the Jewish people's ancient and living language.

A couple weeks before that, I was teaching Hebrew on a Sunday at TBT, and one of those important moments—the sort that, when they happen, make a person realize how precious Jewish learning is and how important the window of opportunity for that learning is—took place. I said something in Hebrew, and the student expressed consternation that I wasn't talking in English. ("Speak English! I don't know what you're saying!") He was thus insisting that I explain what I was saying in the only language he understands. Smiling, I refused, pointing out (in English, just to make sure my point was not lost on him) that we're Jewish and Hebrew is the language of the Jewish people. He is a clever child, but he didn't have a retort for that. Instead, I saw the wheels of thought turning in his mind.

He got my point: he is not just an American; his identity is more complicated than that because of his Jewishness, which he, like the students at my Jewish high school, recognizes as essential to who he is.

I *won't* go so far as to declare (along with the American-born Israeli kibbutznik with whom I spoke this past summer while I was visiting Israel) that all creative Jewish life in America is defunct, the reason (as he explained) being that American Jews don't speak a Jewish language in their daily lives. However, it does occur to me that the oxygen for our lifeblood as Jewish people is in some sense the Hebrew language, and without it we are bound to be culturally and spiritually anemic.

I invite you to a **Tikun Leyl Shavuot** (Shavuot study session) at **Barbara's and my house** at the start of the holiday, the evening of **Saturday, May 23**. The custom is to start late (at candle-lighting time, which is late this time of year) and study all night. *We won't go to that extreme* but will begin with havdalah, at **9:01 p.m.**, proceed to the festival candle-lighting, and then study for a couple of hours.

We will study Jewish texts. In order to help oxygenate participants' Jewish souls, I will lead a session on at least one Hebrew text (but will be sure to include an English translation!). **If you plan to come, please RSVP by contacting me at sethriemer@aol.com or 860-918-0213.** If you wish to do some teaching yourself on that occasion, be in touch with me about that.

Hag Same'ah! / May your celebration of the festival of Shavuot be a joyous one, filled with Jewish learning!

Rabbi Seth



Message from the Executive Committee

Projects under consideration

We would like to devote this month's Executive Committee column to reporting out some of your Board's concerns for maintaining the physical plant.

We all love the ambiance of the old building, and the charm of its location and history. However, we are facing some major, costly, renovations that cannot be reasonably pushed off into

the future much longer.

For example:

1. The front steps on the south side of the building are crumbling, and need to be repaired, replaced, or re-located (possibly to the North side of the building).

2. We need to build Handicap access at the back door entrance, which means completely re-designing the doorway and entrance.

Hampering our ability to go forward with these projects is the pending litigation regarding our insurance company's initial refusal to recognize our claim of storm damage from 2010. We are hoping for a favorable settlement/judgment in the coming months, but, should things not go our way in Court, we may have to take on repair of the tower as well.

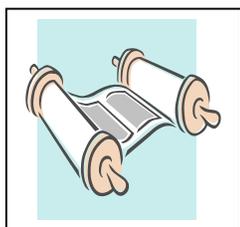
And, because the Synagogue is located in the Historic District of Wethersfield, we must deal with the Historic District Commission which must approve any proposed changes to the building or the site.

We have been fortunate, through the years, to have had some magnificent benefactors, among them AZ Soforenko, who donated the funds enabling us to re-roof the social hall portion of the building two years ago. And, throughout our history, there have been congregants who have stepped up to fund special projects like the paving of the driveway.

However, there are no guarantees that supporters will step forward again, and we cannot count on that kind of funding.

Additionally, this summer, we will need to repair/re-finish the floor of the social hall. The old wood floors need to be repaired, sanded and polyurethaned. We took on this project about five years ago doing it ourselves, but it was a stopgap measure, and we believe that we ought to have the floors done professionally this time. We are presently contacting a few contractors for prices.

We welcome the input of our membership, and should any of you have any ideas regarding the above-mentioned renovations, and how we might begin to finance such work, we welcome your input. Feel free to call any of your Board Members directly, or to attend the next meeting of the Board, scheduled for May 11 at 7PM in the social hall.



Torah Study May 9 and June 13

Join Rabbi Riemer in a Torah study to read the week's Torah portion and then discuss the story. The next two will be on May 9 and June 13 at 9:30 a.m.

RSVP to Deb Hammer for a headcount for refreshments. Sponsors are welcome.

Friday Night Services at 7:00pm; Oneg Hosts

Our congregants take turns bringing the snacks and drinks to share after the Friday night services. Suggestions: Challah, tea, grape juice, fruit salad, bite sized snacks – brownies, cupcakes, sliced cake

May 1 Brody	May 8 Rose	May 15 Notarangelo/Lev
May 22 Sondik	May 29 Ehrlich	
June 5 Nevins	June 12 Gold	June 19 Evans
June 26 Stillman		

Kvell Corner of Pride

Hannah Horowitz, daughter of Ralph & Maureen, recently returned after 2 months in South Africa. She was at the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research Pretoria campus. Hannah actively participated in a research project entitled "Characterizing Short-Lived Climate-forcing Pollutants in South Africa." Hannah was working at the CSIR Pretoria campus as a "GROW with USAID Research and Innovation Fellow". Hannah is a 4th year Grad student at Harvard where she is pursuing her PhD in Atmospheric Chemistry.

Hannah presenting her research to the South African Weather Service.



Honey from the Heart

Judy has contacted ORT Atlanta about their fundraiser, "Honey from the Heart". Honey for the High Holidays can be purchased through their website, opening at the end of May. The jars will be \$11 each, and \$4.25 will come to our Temple. Free shipping on orders placed by July 7.

School Challah schedule

We ask the families of the students to take turns bring in challah and juice for a snack break. The students learn to say the blessings for them. We would appreciate if the challah is sliced, and the juice is poured. Thanks.

May 3 Brody	May 10 Evans	May 17 Sondik
May 31 Rose	June 7 Brody	June 14 Rice

Temple Beth Torah

130 Main St.
Wethersfield, CT 06109
(860) 529-2410

Rabbi Seth Riemer
(860) 665-8014
sethriemer@aol.com

Executive Committee:
Sallyanne and Barry Scott,
Kathi and Eliot Mag, and
Karen Klein

Treasurer:

Barry Goldberg

Recording Secretary:

Carol Gershenson

Corresponding Secretary:

Rhoda London

Trustees

Ellen Sue Moses and Mark
Gould

Memorial Park

Barry Goldberg

Building

Kathi Mag, Gary Evans

Publicity

Debra Ehrlich

Education

Bert and Jeanne Woodcock

Membership

Karen Klein

Star Editor

Susan Sackler Reuben

**Torah Study, Building Rental
and Webmaster**

Deb Hammer

Ways and Means

Judy Gold

High Holidays

Cecile Bronfin, Kathi and Eliot
Mag, Carol Gershenson, Fred
London, Sallyanne and Barry
Scott, Rabbi Seth Riemer and
Barbara Checknoff

Nominations

Cecile Bronfin

Artist-in-Residence

Phil Lohman with Ralph
Horowitz

TempleBethTorahWethersfield.
org

Golden Book

BUILDING FUND

In Memory of
ANDIE GOLDBERG
BY

Marlene Ellenberg
Sallyanne & Barry Scott
Gloria & Stanley Zwirn
Marvin Janow
Pat & Joe Laurito
Nanette & Harris Lifshitz
Jane Nash & Family
Rita & Harold Nevins
Mira & Barry Schlein
The Silvernale Family
Carol & Stephen Welk

In Memory of
NATHAN NEVINS
BY

Sallyanne & Barry Scott
Karen & Robert Klein
Mira & Barry Schlein

In Memory of Our Good Friend
ANDIE GOLDBERG
From Her Friends

In Memory of
JANICE LEVINE ROSENBLATT
By Helene Rosenblatt & Brother &
Sister-in-law

In Memory of
STANLEY & JANICE ROSENBLATT
By Helene Rosenblatt

GOLDEN BOOK FUND

In Memory of
ANDIE GOLDBERG
BY Helene Rosenblatt

In Honor of Birth of Baby Boy to Sarah
& Matthew Forrest
BY Judy & Marty Gold

For The Yartzeit of
DAVID HAROLD GOLDBERG
HILDA LONDON
BY Rhoda & Fred London



Owned And Operated
By NRT Incorporated.

Maureen Horowitz, ABR, GRI
REALTOR®

(860) 205-9678 Cell, (860) 722-3063 VM
(860) 563-1010 Office, (860) 563-4303 Fax
maureen.horowitz@cbmoves.com



RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE

1331 Silas Deane Highway
Wethersfield, CT 06109

ColdwellBankerMoves.com



 Garden Design by Susan

Susan Sackler Reuben
Connecticut Certified Master Gardener

25 Howland Road West Hartford, CT 06107
860 561 2104 ssreuben@snet.net

Annual Meeting Monday June 8, 7:00 pm

We invite all Temple members in good standing to join us at the annual meeting. The slate of officers will be presented.

Fundraising while Shopping

Calling all grocery shoppers! We have a great fundraiser throughout the year. We sell gift cards for Stop and Shop, Big Y, Stew Leonard's and Crown Supermarkets. These are also called shopping cards or scrip. You pay the face value and the Temple gets 4 to 10%, depending on the store. Send an email to ssreuben@snet.net if you are interested.

TEMPLE BETH TORAH
130 Main Street
Wethersfield, CT 06109