



# THE STAR

NEWSLETTER OF TEMPLE BETH TORAH ■ JULY/AUGUST 2017 ■ SIVAN AV 5777 ■ VOL. 20 NO. 6

## Message from Rabbi Seth

Can Jared Kushner and Jason Greenblatt, as emissaries of President Donald Trump, achieve a negotiated settlement of the so far intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict and thus secure peace between the two peoples? I hope so. While I have my doubts about whether this can happen, speculating on it as at least a possibility is enticing. I believe that miracles can and do happen.

The miraculous element in this case would go well beyond the obvious counter-intuitive supposition that Palestinians and Israelis would be willing to put aside their monumental policy differences and bitter mutual enmity enough to agree on the basics: recognition of the other's legitimacy, establishment of secure national boundaries, cessation of aggression and incitement.

Added to the challenge of surmounting those giant obstacles is the fact that neither Kushner nor Greenblatt has any experience at all in the field of global diplomacy. The situation they're assigned to address is one that has tested, bedeviled and defeated the most skilled mediators. Expecting these two gentlemen to produce results where others far more accomplished in the field have come up empty-handed does seem to be a whimsical pipe dream: they're easy to pooh-pooh!

And yet... And yet...

Look at the trail of evidence from Jewish history. You do know that, by the standards of rational social analysis and normative political assumptions, we—the Jewish people—should not even exist. Repeatedly over history, we have come close to extinction, only to roar back with decisive victories over enemies far more powerful than ourselves. Did anyone think David would kill Goliath? Who thought the nascent State of Israel, outnumbered and outgunned by all those Arab armies, would defeat them in 1948 and 1967? It couldn't happen, but it did.

Our very existence is thus, to a great extent, an embarrassment to—a thumbing of the nose against and mockery of—standard thinking about what is possible in this world. If, to begin with, we, the Jewish people, exist as a contradiction of what is plausible and realistic, why not entertain yet another—this latest—impossibility?

Messieurs Kushner and Greenblatt, I salute your effort, quixotic though it may appear. You are emissaries of a mere flesh-and-blood president, himself untested in high-stakes international power-brokering, but I remain open to the possibility that you're doing the bidding of a Higher Power...

## Message from your Executive Committee

We wish you all a very pleasant summer break...be safe and come back this Fall with a host of ideas for new initiatives that we can present to the Congregation with a special emphasis on recruiting new members to TBT.

YOUR input is needed, and your contacts need to be reached to help make that happen. Friends, neighbors, relatives, and workplace associates are all potential future members of TBT. We need to get the word out and understand that recruiting begins with the membership. There is no magic committee that can be formed to accomplish what YOU can do to talk to people you know.

We like to state that we are a “small, egalitarian community” featuring a liturgy that is based on Conservative Jewish doctrine with an active adult education program. We hold services every Friday evening with a community

Oneg Shabbat following each service. We have an active Sunday School with the older children being taught by Rabbi Seth the rudiments of Hebrew and key elements of the weekly service in preparation for their Bar/Bat Mitzvahs. The younger children are led by our own Michelle Cyr and are kept engaged with interesting Jewish-themed projects throughout the school year. Our Sunday School program can easily be expanded were there more young families involved in our community.

We are all too familiar with the negatives associated with Temple membership in today’s diverse society, but it is NOT impossible to buck the trend if we all pull together and make a concerted effort to find other, like-minded, Jewish families interested in furthering their family’s Jewish education and participation in a non-competitive environment.

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### Mazel Tov to the Sondik Family!

On Saturday, June 24th Samantha Sondik was called to the Torah to become a Bat Mitzvah at TBT. Samantha is a charming, high-spirited, articulate, and incredibly bright young lady! A college student masquerading as an eighth grader! Samantha is socially aware and committed to Tikum Olam, healing the world. She is very dedicated to her schoolwork, a hard worker, a loving sister and daughter.

Tracey and Moshe, and her whole family have so many reasons to be proud of Samantha, as is the TBT family. We wish her only the best as she continues on her journey as a member of TBT and the Jewish community. **Mazel Tov!**



## **JUNE 2017 - TEMPLE BETH TORAH BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**Participants:** Cecile Bronfin, Mark Gould, Deb Hammer, Phil Lohman, Fred London, Rhoda London, Eliot Mag, Kathi Mag, Ellen Sue Moses, Susan Reuben, Rabbi Seth Riemer, Helene Rosenblatt, Sallyanne Scott

Minutes of May 2017 accepted as submitted.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL: A “Star” article will spotlight new teacher Michelle Cyr.

ADULT EDUCATION: Book Club will meet this Thursday.

THE STAR: Raves for design aesthetics.

MAINTENANCE/BUILDING: 1) Gary Evans re-opened front bathrooms. 2) Flag bracket reinstalled - measure to buy a new flag approved. 3) Discussed affordability of re-siding building and upgrading gutters. Integrity of current siding questioned. 4) Cracks in outer side door is “patchable.” 5) Harold Nevins filled in the space left where broken tiles were removed from the floor by the coat room entrance - still needs to be painted . 6) Classroom floor tiling failing - we may need to paint underlying plywood with deck paint. 7) TBT Library is languishing out of view in a classroom. Discussed whether to throw away books or sort through them. If a large trash receptacle is needed, Dave Forrest may be able to secure one. 8) Need to address dismal looking classrooms for safety and aesthetic concerns. 8) Sofer’s skills are needed. Rabbi Seth and Kathi Mag can refer us to one. 9) Dave Forrest will check on exposed nails in the Social Hall accordion doors. Idea posited to discard these hard to use doors and replace them with room dividing screens. However, the ceiling track for the hanging accordion screens would be an eyesore if not removed.

RENTALS: Tai Chi teacher planning to re-start class.

PUBLICITY: 1) Need follow up on our Facebook page.

- 2) Mara Dresner, expert in marketing, is offering TBT volunteers a training workshop on effective publicity methods. Acting immediately would give us an advantage on High Holiday membership campaigns.

### **BOARD NOMINATIONS CHAIR REPORT:**

Cecile Bronfin presented this slate of nominees for the 2017 to 2018 Board.

The slate was approved in toto:

- Rabbi Seth Riemer
- Executive Committee: Sallyanne Scott, Kathi Mag, Carol Gershenson
- Treasurer: Barry Goldberg
- Recording Secretary: Carol Gershenson
- Corresponding Secretary: Kathi Mag
- Financial Secretary: Sallyanne Scott
- Publicity and Friday night announcements Deb Ehrlich: (Back Up: Carol Gershenson)

***MORE.....***

- Board of Education: Barbara Checknoff  
Head Instructor: Rabbi Seth Riemer  
Religious Studies Instructor: Michele Cyr  
Adult Education: Cecile Bronfin
- Memorial Park: Barry Goldberg
- Building Chair: Gary Evans
- Building Committee: Dave Forrest and Kathi Mag
- Gardening: Kathi Mag
- Membership: Eliot Mag
- The Star: Ellen Sue Moses and Phil Lohman
- Torah Study, Building Rental, Webmaster: Deb Hammer
- Ways & Means Chair: Judy Gold
- Ways & Means Committee: Rhoda London and Helene Rosenblatt
- Receiving Phone Calls: Rhoda London
- Kol Nidre Appeal: Barry Bronfin
- Board Meeting Facilitator: Kathi Mag
- Trustee: *positions open*
  
- High Holiday Committee: Rabbi Seth Riemer  
Barbara Checknoff, Cecile Bronfin, Carol Gershenson,  
Judy Gold, Kathi and Eliot Mag, Fred London, Sallyanne  
and Barry Scott, Susan Reuben
  
- Nominating Chair: Cecile Bronfin
  
- Miscellaneous: Phil Lohman and Ralph Horowitz

## OTHER NEWS:

- Ellen Sue Moses will send members TBT membership list.
  
- Rabbi Seth will be switching from his role as a regular classroom teacher for our older children to a Hebrew Instructor for all the children once we find a new teacher for the older children.
  
- We discussed how to create a sense of belonging in the TBT “family.” Rabbi Seth suggested a weekend retreat where we have the time and space to connect and generate ideas on how TBT can provide meaningful additions to the people who come here.

Another suggestion for TBTers for pure fun is a Movie and Pizza event.



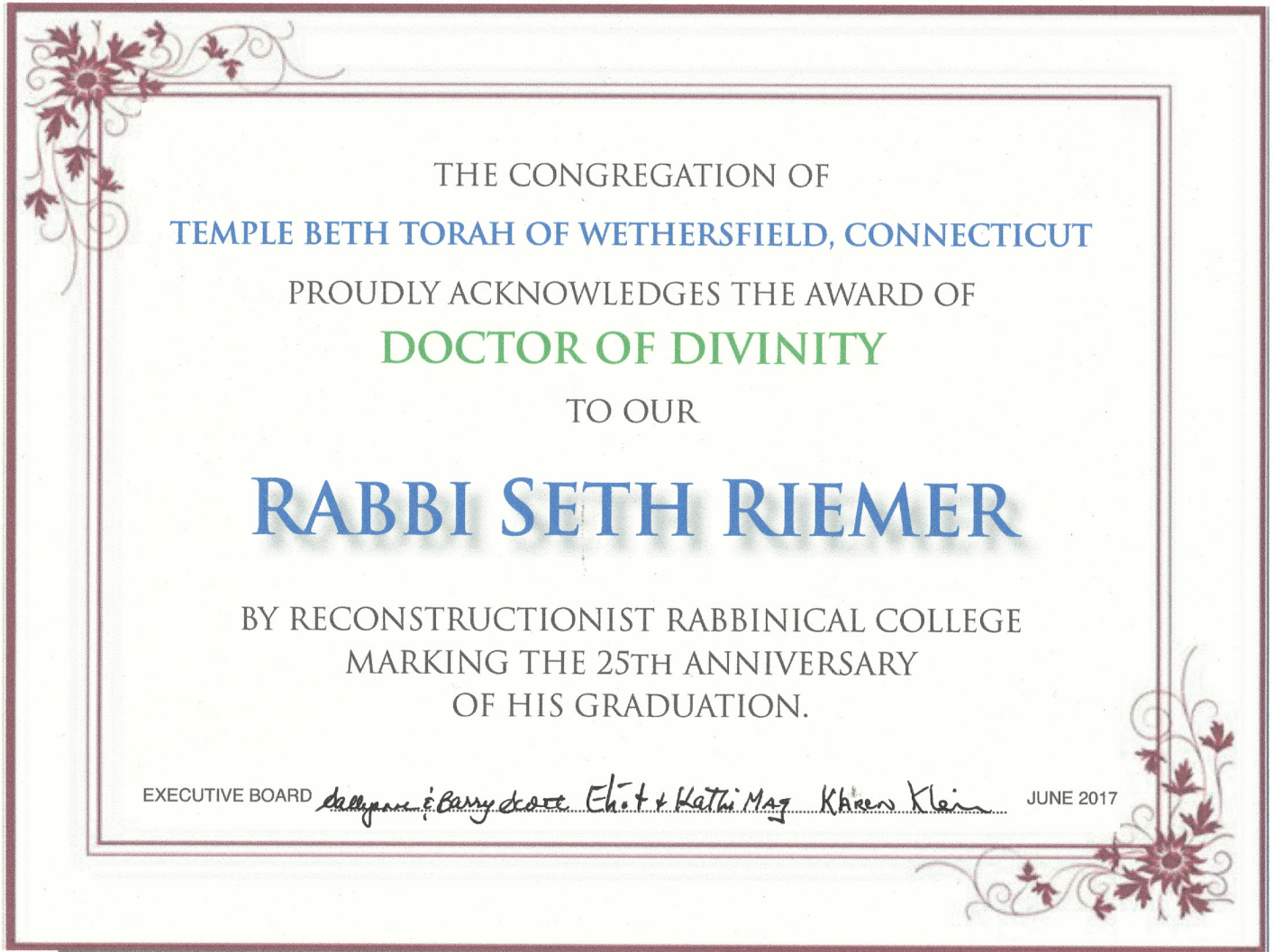
We wish **Kathi and Eliot Mag** a

**big Mazel Tov** on their 50th wedding anniversary on

June 25th and another **big Mazel Tov** to **Harold and Rita**

**Nevins** on their 60th wedding anniversary on June 30th.

The Executive Board presented Rabbi Seth with a certificate of recognition and appreciation upon the occasion of his receiving the honorary degree of DOCTOR OF DIVINITY.



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## TBT Book

The TBT Book Club will meet early in September to discuss Michael Chabon's novel "Moonglow".

All are welcome.



## Our New Religious School Instructor

**Michelle Cyr** has enthusiastically stepped in as our new Religious School educator. She is taking charge of our youngest students. We are fortunate to have Michelle serve in this capacity to share her lifetime love of Judaism and TBT.

You could say that TBT is “in her blood.” Among TBT’s founders were Michelle’s grandparents, Ann and Bill Goldberg, and her aunts and uncles, Bertha and Garson Goldberg, and Tillie and Lou Sitcovsky. Her mother, Andie Goldberg was an active and beloved member of the congregation. Her father, Barry Goldberg, is serving as our treasurer. It is interesting to note that Michelle has a special place in TBT history. She was the very first baby named at TBT and she went on to become a Bat Mitzvah here as well!

Michelle shares her knowledge on Sunday mornings with her energetic students by first presenting a Hebrew lesson, then by reciting prayers over the grape juice and challah, and lastly by doing activities that teach about Jewish customs and culture. At times, the lessons may be presented as games such as Jewish bingo. At others times, a deeper understanding of events are illustrated by lessons that connect to experiences. A lesson about Israeli Remembrance Day was tied to the information learned from the Israeli emissaries who visited the school.

Michelle lives in Newington with her husband, Bill Cyr, and her two cats, Socks and Sunshine. These ten year old feline brothers were adopted together and are well loved members of the Cyr household. When not teaching at TBT, Michelle enjoys time with family and friends, traveling, attending country music concerts and going to fall fairs.

# The Secret Jewish History of Downton Abbey

**THIS LIFTED WITHOUT PERMISSION  
FROM FORWARD NEWSPAPER...**

## **WHO KNEW?**

Millions of TV viewers across the world continue to be enthralled by “Downton Abbey.” The BBC series chronicles the lives of an Edwardian noble family — and their host of loyal servants — forced to adjust to modernity as it ends the Victorian era and ushers in the revolutionary changes brought on by World War I.

But few viewers probably know that there is a strong Jewish connection in the history that inspired the series.

The Crawleys, the aristocratic family depicted, and their chateau and surrounding grounds, Downton Abbey, are loosely based on the real aristocratic Carnarvon family, their hereditary seat, Highclere Castle, and the accomplishments of the fifth Countess of Carnarvon, who was in fact half Jewish. In fact, the series is partly filmed in and on the estate, which is still in the hands of the eighth Earl of Carnarvon.

So what’s the Jewish connection? Well, Highclere Castle and the fortunes of the Carnarvon family are inextricably linked to the legendary British Rothschilds. The Carnarvon family legacy might not have survived intact into the 21st century were it not for the heavy financial support provided by Alfred de Rothschild during the decades immediately preceding and following World War I.

By the last decades of the Victorian era, many ancient British aristocratic families, finding it impossible to maintain their castles and their opulent lifestyles, resorted to marrying off their male heirs to wealthy American and European heiresses. Winston Churchill was the son of just such a union, when his father, Lord Randolph Spencer Churchill, not having inherited the estates nor the title of the Dukes of Marlborough, married Jennie Jerome in

1874, the beautiful young daughter of American multimillionaire financier, speculator and sportsman Leonard Jerome.

So it was also with George Herbert, the fifth Earl of Carnarvon, scion of one of the noblest of British families, when on June 28, 1895 he married 19-year-old Almina Wombwell, the lovely and vivacious illegitimate daughter of the fabulously wealthy Alfred de Rothschild and his long-time French mistress, Marie Wombwell.

Marie Boyer was the daughter of a Parisian banker when she married Frederick Wombwell, son of a baronet, a heavy drinker and notorious gambler, possibly even a thief. She had been estranged from him for some years when she met Alfred de Rothschild and became his mistress. Alfred was one of the three sons of Lionel Rothschild and the grandson of Nathan Mayer Rothschild, who had established the Rothschilds’ British family fortune by financing Britain’s war against Napoleon.

Alfred was an aesthete, a financial supporter and close friend of the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII. His lavish lifestyle, generosity to friends, philanthropy, and his brother Nathaniel’s ennoblement as the first Baron Rothschild, had made him acceptable in the highest social circles in Britain. Regardless, he remained — like his brothers — a practicing Jew, attending and supporting his synagogue and other Jewish institutions.

He never married and lavished all his parental affection, and his wealth, on his only child Almina (the unusual name is an amalgam of her father’s name and her mother’s nickname, Mina). He maintained Almina and her mother in luxury and even had Almina presented at court by Sir George Wombwell and his wife Lady Julia, the brother and sister-in-law of Almina’s mother’s late husband. By offering an immense dowry and the promise of continuing financial support, he was able to secure her entrance into the highest levels of British society.

***MORE.....***

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Almina became one of the great aristocratic hostesses. She turned Highclere Castle into one of the great Edwardian pleasure palaces with splendid parties that attracted the Prince of Wales and the elite of the era. She also used her father's generosity to modernize Highclere Castle, bringing electricity and modern plumbing, and redecorating and recovering many parts of the castle that were beginning to show the wear and tear of time.

She also financed the modernization of the vast Carnarvon estates and, with Rothschild money, supported her husband's many experiments with modern technology, especially the motorcar and the new flying machines. Some of the earliest English experimental flights were undertaken with the fifth Earl's participation and sponsorship on the grounds of the Highclere estate.

Most of all, she supported her husband's Egyptian archeological expeditions, braving Egypt's heat and primitive facilities out in the desert, and carefully looking after and guarding his fragile health.

For years the fifth Earl, an avid collector of Egyptian artifacts, had supported archaeologist Howard Carter's attempts to find an undisturbed tomb of the Egyptian pharaohs. It had cost the Earl a good part of his inherited fortune until Almina began to provide her father's money. When Alfred Rothschild passed away in 1918, he left his sumptuous London residence, Seamore Place, and most of his fortune to Almina (against the wishes of the surviving British Rothschilds) enabling her to support her husband's final exploration in the Valley of the Kings. In November 1922, he and Carter finally found the fabulous undisturbed tomb of Tutankhamun, and excavated it in February 1923, making the Earl world famous as journalists from around the globe covered the event. Tragically, two months later Lord Carnar-

von was dead from blood poisoning. Almina had flown from England to his bedside to try to nurse him to health as she had done on previous occasions, but it was too late.

Almina's nursing talents were probably her most famous skill. During World War I, she used her father's money to turn Highclere Castle into a recuperating hospital for wounded British soldiers and developed pioneering methods of recuperative healing. When the Castle became too small, she leased Bryanston Square, a large Mayfair property in London. Wearing one of the trim uniforms she had designed for her nurses, she became a hands-on hospital administrator. In 1927, she was again instrumental in creating a third hospital in London, which she named in memory of her father, Alfred de Rothschild.

The Bryanston Hospital was visited by King George V and Queen Mary, Lord Kitchener, and other military and political leaders, and Almina received appreciative written commendations and thanks for her hospital work from the inspector of military orthopedics, Sir Colonel Robert Jones. However, she was never officially honoured by any medal or award, or, for that matter, a series on the BBC.

However, the use of Highclere Castle and Lady Almina's conversion of the Castle into a convalescent hospital for wounded British soldiers — emphasized in the early episodes of "Downton Abbey" but credited to the character of Matthew Crawley's energetic mother, a doctor's widow, rather than the mistress of the house — becomes an indirect tribute to the remarkable 5th Countess of Carnarvon, a daughter of the fabulous British Rothschilds.

*Adam Fuerstenberg is professor emeritus at Ryerson University.*





## DONATIONS

### Donations from Sallyanne and Barry Scott:

1. In honor of Barry and Lynn Goldberg's wedding, and
2. In memory of Sarah Langer, mother of Al Langer

### Donations from Eliot and Kathi Mag:

1. In honor of Samantha Sondik's Bat Mitzvah,
2. In honor of Leslie and Chris Poland's 20th anniversary, and
3. In honor of Barry and Lynn Goldberg's wedding
4. In honor of Rabbi Seth Riemer's academic honors

## TEMPLE BETH TORAH

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

Treasurer: **Barry Goldberg**

Financial Secretary: **Sallyanne Scott**

Recording Secretary: **Carol Gershenson**

Corresponding Secretary: **Karen Klein**

Trustees: **Susan James and Leonard Lev**

Publicity: **Debra Ehrlich**

Membership: **Karen Klein**

Board of Education: **Barbara Checknoff**

Head Instructor: **Rabbi Seth Riemer**

Religious Studies Instructor: **Michele Cyr**

Adult Education: **Cecile Bronfin**

Memorial Park: **Barry Goldberg**

Building Chair: **Gary Evans**

Building Committee: **Kathi Mag**

Gardening Chair: **Kathi Mag**

The Star: **Ellen Sue Moses, Phil Lohman,**

**Harold Nevins, Elder Stringer**

Torah Study, Building Rental and Webmaster:

**Deb Hammer**

Ways and Means Chair: **Judy Gold**

Ways and Means Committee: **Rhoda London and Helene Rosenblatt**

High Holidays: **Rabbi Seth Riemer, Barbara Checknoff, Cecile Bronfin, Carol Gershenson, Kathi and Eliot Mag, Susan Reuben, Sallyanne and Barry Scott, Fred London**

Nominating Chair: **Cecile Bronfin**

Miscellaneous: **Phil Lohman and Ralph Horowitz**



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# **HONEY CAMPAIGN**



Sorry for the repeat but the Honey fundraiser notice did not look/function great on a phone screen, so we're providing this "short and sweet" (pun intended!) link to our order page.

To order honey, go to **HONEY ORDER LINK**, and follow the step-by-step instructions.

Order by July 24, 2017 to avoid a \$4.00 per jar shipping fee.

If you should lose track of this email, you can always go to the TBT website homepage and click on the honey jar to get started.



# **The Bob and Karen Klein Building Fund** **continues on its way...**

**many thanks to our members for their contributions**

**Helene Rosenblatt,  
Carol Gershenson,  
Rhoda and Fred London,  
Debra and Joe Hammer,  
Joe and Janet Rosenblatt,  
Mara Dresner,  
Ellen Sue Moses and Mark Gould,  
Kathi and Eliot Mag,  
Sallyanne and Barry Scott,  
Bob and Karen Klein,  
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Cecile and Barry Bronfin,  
Barry Goldberg,  
Kristy Notarangelo and Leonard Lev,  
Gary and Sara Evans,  
and Leslie Levine**

**Let this campaign continue !!!!!!!**