



# THE STAR

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER/ DECEMBER 2018  
CHESHVAN-KISLEV-TEVET 5779

TEMPLE BETH TORAH, 130 MAIN STREET  
WETHERSFIELD, CONNECTICUT

## Message from Rabbi Seth Riemer

This Fall has been a busy time at TBT.

Our spiritually intense holiday season—Rosh Hashanah through Simhat Torah—came and went very fast (from my perspective) but slowly enough for me to savor those rituals and celebrations and enjoy your company through them.

The beney mitzvah services of Julianna Rose and Sam Evans, six weeks apart, filled our synagogue with joyous energy and appreciative guests. These two teenagers stepped up to their responsibilities as Jewish adults and shone with their wit, poise and confidence as prayer leaders and teachers of Torah.

The October Sunday event to honor my ten years with you at TBT was a powerful, touching reminder of all the reasons I enjoy being—and am honored to serve as—your rabbi: your outpouring of affection for me evinced the kindness and love that religious community at its best manifests.

A Shabbat eve service in which we showed solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Pittsburgh—as clergy and other friends from Wethersfield and Rocky Hill showed solidarity with us—touched many hearts. I thank Barbara for spurring us into action on that event and, with hands-on support from synagogue members, taking ownership of it from start to finish. Her decision to open wide the synagogue's front doors was compelling in its symbolism reflecting Reb Nahman's teaching: "The important thing is to be completely unafraid."

In all this activity what is the encompassing lesson? Although the post-millennial era of American life has seen a loosening of formal religious ties and, for Jewish people, a rise in existential threat, we still want to be together: the wish to belong—to congregate, celebrate, mourn, learn and remember as extended family and tribe—remains a meaningful, life-affirming force for us.

We are truly blessed by our association with one another. I am thankful for it and for you.

Looking forward to Hanukah, I offer my wish for divine light that fills your hearts and homes with courage, love and joy.

So nice we are  
running this  
again!

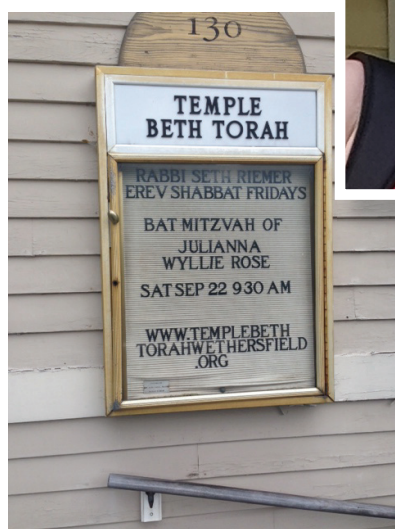
# TBT B'nai Mitzvah news

**Julianna Rose and Sam Evans** are TBT's two b'nai mitzvah students this year. Rabbi Seth has enjoyed working with both. Their thoughtful, patient engagement with the learning process has been impressive and Rabbi Seth has seen their commitment to it grow from week to week over the course of the past year as he worked with them in their preparation for this special event.

Both Julianna and Sam are eighth graders and excellent students, Sam at Silas Deane Middle School in Wethersfield, Julianna at Bolton Center School in Bolton. Each has special talents and interests. Julianna is a talented gymnast, Sam a quarterback on his school's football team and a life-long Green Bay Packers fan.



**Sam  
Nelson  
Evans**



**Julianna  
Wyllie  
Rose**

# NEWS AND NOTES FROM TBT

A huge TBT welcome to our new members:

**Jules and Jeremy Weiss and their sons, Ben and Jack**

and

**Kathryn Kenzel and Jay Ben-Kiki and his sons, Chase and Cooper**

Thanks to **Gary Evans** for his devoted assembly and disassembly of the Sukkah as well as draining and shutting down the front lavatories to avoid costly freezing damage!!!

Thanks also to **Dave Forrest** for hiring contractor Brian King of King Home Improvements to repair the rotted fascia board on the driveway side as approved by your Executive Board!

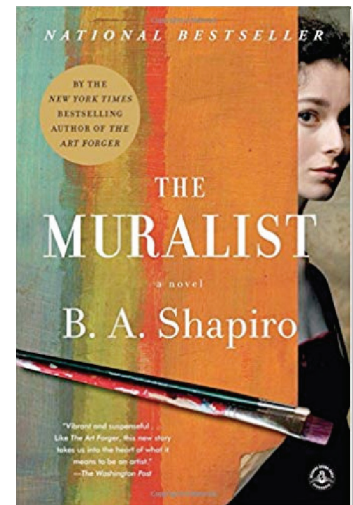
Thanks also to **Dave and Ralph and Phil** and our neighbor on the south side, **Larry Powers** for trimming and removing half of those ratty hemlocks that line the driveway and hauling them to the town yard. We'll clear out the rest of them next year.

Good Luck to **Barry and Mira Schlein** after re-migrating from Wethersfield to Manhattan to West Hartford and now taken up residence on Prospect Park West in Brooklyn, New York to be near their son and to enjoy that borough's many treasures!

**Cecile** would like the Book Club to meet to discuss "The Muralist" by B. A. Shapiro at 3:15 on January 10 in the vestry. Someone please call Ruth Brainin to notify her.

TBT's **Fiddler** on the roof (now on the terrace) participated October 6th thru November 4th in the very successful Old Wethersfield Shopkeepers 23rd Annual Scarecrows Along Main Street Event.

Also please welcome Phil's **Moses** from past scarecrow events who is now set up in the social hall as resident folk sculpture.





# Rabbi Seth's 10 Year Party a Grand Event



At our brunch on October 14 State Representative Russ Morin presented an Official Citation from the Connecticut General Assembly to Rabbi Seth honoring him for his 10 years of dedicated service to the congregation. Also present was Ken Lesser, a member of Wethersfield Town Council.

*Photos for Wethersfield Life by Mara Dresner*



Board member Sallyanne looks on as Rabbi Seth was presented with a plaque incorporating Phil's illustration of TBT handsomely prepared by Eliot Mag's old pal, Butch, proprietor of Mr. Trophy down on Ledyard Street in Hartford.



*Mmmm...cake*

# Solidarity Shabbat filled the Sanctuary

Our Community Shabbat service was held on November 2nd to mourn the eleven souls who lost their lives in Pittsburgh at the Tree of Life Congregation. As we try to imagine what we can do to move forward from the worst incident of anti-Semitic violence in our country's history, we are mindful that it is not only Jewish houses of worship but all faith communities who are vulnerable to such senseless acts.

We reached out to our neighboring congregations, to offer support for one another, find common ground and celebrate our diversity within the community we share. In that spirit of fellowship, we invited the churches of Wethersfield, as well as to our friends of the Ahmadiyya Muslim congregation to join us for Shabbat Services. In a wonderful example of synchronicity, the retired Bishop Gordon and his wife, Rebecca Scruton and their congregation from Wethersfield's Trinity Episcopal Church reached out to us first, asking if they could worship with us this week.

We had over 110 people in attendance. It was such an inspiring and moving service, affecting all who attended. In the past Cy Levine set up community inter-faith meetings and it was mentioned by several people in attendance that we do this again. - *Sallyanne*



# Sukkot Potluck a crowd pleaser







**Dear TBT Friends, Yikes! Chanukah is right around the corner.**

Make your reservations for our Annual Chanukah Party on **Sunday, December 9th from 11:00am-1:00pm**. A dairy lunch with latkes, egg salad, tuna salad and desserts will be served! Hope to see all of our TBT families there!

Wanting to have loads of latkes for one and all, **we need you to RSVP by December 1st**.  
The cost is \$7.50 per person, \$20.00 max per family.

We need to be considerate of our latke mavens and those who paid on time.  
For that reason, there will be a late fee for people who do not RSVP by December 1st.  
After December 1st, the cost will be \$12 per person, \$30 per family.

Please make checks out to TBT and send to:

**Sallyanne Scott 105 Sunmeadow Drive, East Berlin, CT 06023**

**And Please bring your menorahs and candles to the party for a special group lighting with blessings!**





## Harold “Reflects”

Looking around TBT Sanctuary one Friday evening  
I noticed all the pews had memorial plaques  
affixed to the ends...

Given by a family honoring a person,  
as a fund raiser for TBT.

Most religious items in the sanctuary  
are so noted *except one*.

A small, inexpensive, oriental scatter rug that lies in front  
of the Bimah has a history and story to be told.

It was the year 1972 and Israel was going to the Olympics.  
Palestinian terrorists broke into the barracks of  
Jewish Olympians in Munich, Germany.

Hostages were taken and killed.

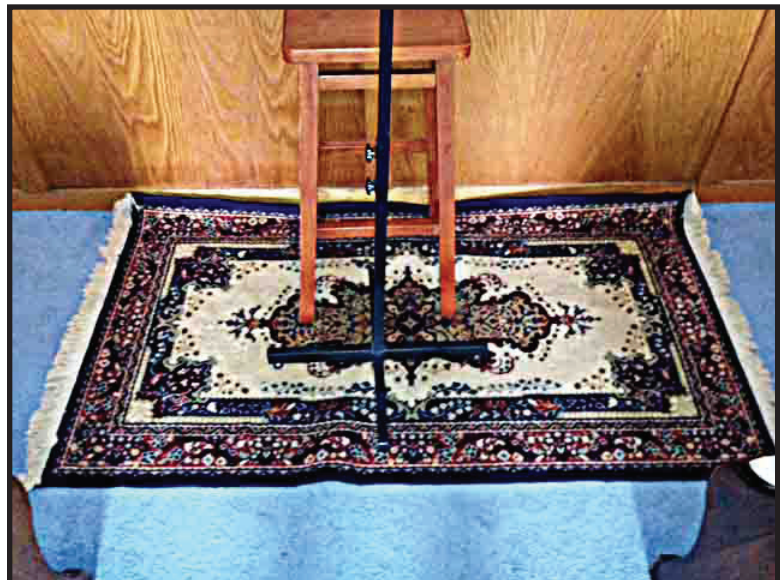
TBT was terrified that we needed better security to  
protect our temple and protect our TORAHS.

A board member suggested placing an alarm on the floor  
in front of the Ark and covering it with a rug.

Rita and I donated this rug which was alarmed  
to notify Wethersfield Police.

Today almost 50 year later it is a reminder of a time gone by.

JUST  
REFLECTING...



# KVELL KORNER

## Maureen and Ralph went to Romania for Hannah and Cristian's 3rd wedding!

The wedding and reception given by Cristi's parents was an all-day affair encompassing many Romanian traditions. The reception, attended by 350 guests, had all the bells and whistles! Lasting until 5:30 a.m., it included a 5 course dinner, entertainment by a Romanian band and singers and a dance troupe.

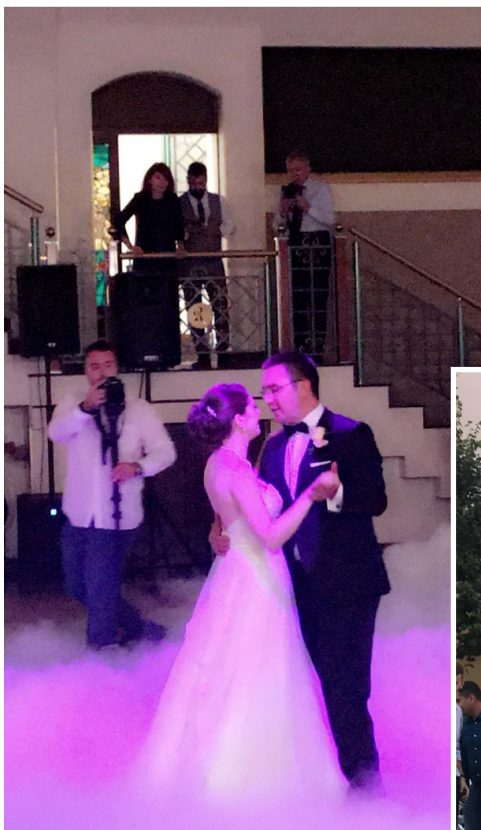


After the church ceremony Hannah, Ralph, Maureen and Cristi had photos taken at an open air museum called Muzeul Golesti.

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**Hannah before the church ceremony at Cristi's parents' home Hannah received her veil from their Godmother.**



**Their first dance at the reception held at the Castle Restaurant in Trivale, Romania.**

**The accordion player accompanied the wedding couple, family and friends leaving for the church.**

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**Church ceremony at Holy Trinity Church in Pitesti, Romania**

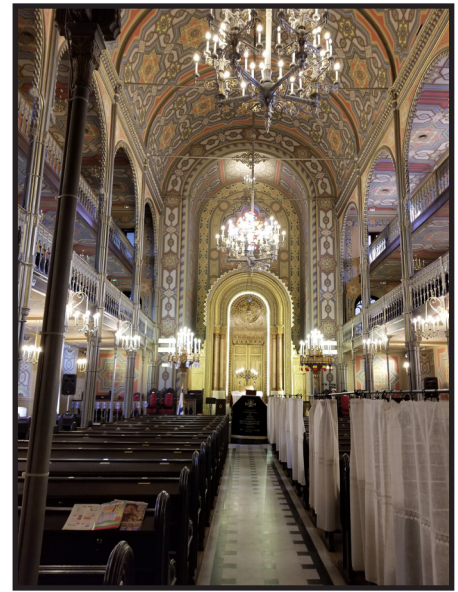


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## Saw a Super Synagogue

They did a lot of sightseeing around Romania and toured Coral Synagogue in Bucharest, about an hour and a half from Pitesti.





# A little bright side to history....

## The Japanese Man Who Saved 6,000 Jews With His Handwriting What the astonishing Chiune Sugihara teaches us about moral heroism.

Lifted from *The Times* without permission

By David Wolpe

Mr. Wolpe is the rabbi of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles and the author of “David: The Divided Heart.”  
Oct. 15, 2018

NAGOYA, Japan — “Even a hunter cannot kill a bird that flies to him for refuge.” This Samurai maxim inspired one gifted and courageous man to save thousands of people in defiance of his government and at the cost of his career. On Friday I came to Nagoya at the invitation of the Japanese government to speak in honor of his memory.

The astonishing Chiune Sugihara raises again the questions: What shapes a moral hero? And how does someone choose to save people that others turn away?

Research on those who rescued Jews during the Holocaust shows that many exhibited a streak of independence from an early age. Sugihara was unconventional in a society known for prizing conformity. His father insisted that his son, a top student, become a doctor. But Sugihara wanted to study languages and travel and immerse himself in literature. Forced to sit for the medical exam, he left the entire answer sheet blank. The same willfulness was on display when he entered the diplomatic corps and, as vice minister of the Foreign Affairs Department for Japan in Manchuria in 1934, resigned in protest of the Japanese treatment of the Chinese.

A second characteristic of such heroes and heroines, as the psychologist Philip Zimbardo writes, is “that the very same situations that inflame the hostile imagination in some people, making them villains, can also instill the heroic imagination in other people, prompting them to perform heroic deeds.” While the world around him disregarded the plight of the Jews, Sugihara was unable to ignore their desperation.

In 1939 Sugihara was sent to Lithuania, where he ran the consulate. There he was soon confronted with Jews fleeing from German-occupied Poland. Three times Sugihara cabled his embassy asking for permission to issue visas to the refugees. The cable from K. Tanaka at the foreign ministry read: “Concerning transit visas requested previously stop advise absolutely not to be issued any traveler not holding firm end visa with guaranteed departure ex japan stop no exceptions stop no further inquires expected stop.”

Sugihara talked about the refusal with his wife, Yukiko, and his children and decided that despite the inevitable damage to his career, he would defy his government.

Mr. Zimbardo calls the capacity to act differently the “heroic imagination,” a focus on one’s duty to help and protect others. This ability is exceptional, but the people who have it are often understated. Years after the war, Sugihara spoke about his actions as natural: “We had thousands of people hanging around the windows of our residence,” he said in a 1977 interview. “There was no other way.”

On Friday I spoke at Sugihara’s old high school in Nagoya, during a ceremony unveiling a bronze statue of him handing visas to a refugee family. After the ceremony, in front of some 1,200 students, I spoke with his one remaining child, his son Nobuki, who arrived from Belgium to honor his father’s memory.



Chiune Sugihara, in an undated photograph. Credit: The Asahi Shimbun, via Getty Images

He told me his father was “a very simple man. He was kind, loved reading, gardening and most of all children. He never thought what he did was notable or unusual.”

Most of the world saw throngs of desperate foreigners. Sugihara saw human beings and he knew he could save them through prosaic but essential action: “A lot of it was handwriting work,” he said.

Day and night he wrote visas. He issued as many visas in a day as would normally be issued in a month. His wife, Yukiko, massaged his hands at night, aching from the constant effort. **When Japan finally closed down the embassy in September 1940, he took the stationery with him and continued to write visas that had no legal standing but worked because of the seal of the government and his name.** At least 6,000 visas were issued for people to travel through Japan to other destinations, and in many cases entire families traveled on a single visa. It has been estimated that over 40,000 people are alive today because of this one man.

With the consulate closed, Sugihara had to leave. He gave the consulate stamp to a refugee to forge more visas, and he literally threw visas out of the train window to refugees on the platform.

After the war, Sugihara was dismissed from the foreign office. He and his wife lost a 7-year-old child and he worked at menial jobs.

It was not until 1968 when a survivor, Yehoshua Nishri, found him that his contribution was recognized. Nishri had been a teenager in Poland saved by a Sugihara visa and was now at the Israeli embassy in Tokyo.

In the intervening years Sugihara never spoke about his wartime activities. Even many close to him had no idea that he was a hero.

Sugihara died in 1986. Nine years earlier he gave an interview and was asked why he did it: “I told the Ministry of Foreign Affairs it was a matter of humanity. I did not care if I lost my job. Anyone else would have done the same thing if they were in my place.”

Of course many were in his place — and very few acted like Sugihara. Moral courage is rare and moral greatness even rarer. It requires a mysterious and potent combination of empathy, will and deep conviction that social norms cannot shake.

How would Sugihara have responded to the refugee crisis we face today, and the response of so many leaders to bolt the gates of entry? There is no simple response adequate to the enormity of the situation. But we have to keep before us the image of a single man, overtaxed, isolated and inundated, who refused to close his eyes to the chaos outside his window. He understood the obligations common to us all and heard in the pleadings of an alien tongue the universal message of pain.

On Friday, I told the students that one day in each of their lives there would be a moment when they would have to decide whether to close the door or open their hearts. When that moment arrives, I implored them, remember that they came from the same school as a great man who when the birds flew to him for refuge, did not turn them away.

*David Wolpe (@RabbiWolpe) is the rabbi of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles and the author of “David: The Divided Heart.”*



Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan at a tree planted in memory of Chiune Sugihara in the garden of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem.

Credit: Gali Tibbon/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

2018-2019 Religious School Calendar/Challah Schedule

Sept. 16, First day of school, 9:00-10:00, Open House for potential members	Challah will be provided
Sept. 23	Evans
Sept. 30	Rose
Oct. 7	No school, Columbus Day weekend
Oct. 14	Sondik
Oct. 21	Weiss
Oct. 28	Evans
Nov. 4	Rose
Nov. 11	No School, Veterans Day weekend
Nov. 18	Sondik
Nov. 25	No school, Thanksgiving weekend
Dec. 2	Weiss
Dec. 9	Evans
Dec. 16	Rose
Dec. 23, 30	No School, VACATION WEEK
Jan. 6	Sondik
Jan. 13	Weiss
Jan. 20	No school, Martin Luther King Day weekend
Jan. 27	Evans
Feb. 3	Rose
Feb. 10	Sondik
Feb. 17	No school, President's Day weekend
Feb. 24	Weiss
March 3	Evans
March 10	Rose
March 17	Sondik
March 24	Weiss
March 31	Evans
April 7	No school, spring break
April 14	No school, spring break
April 21	No school, Passover
April 28	Rose
May 5	Sondik
May 12	No school, Mother's Day
May 19	Weiss
May 26	No school, Memorial Day weekend
June 2	Evans
June 9	Last day of Religious School

# TBT OFFICERS 2019

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

Membership and Publicity: Karen Klein, Carol Gershenson  
and Helene Rosenblatt (FaceBook)

Announcements: Deb Ehrlich

Conduct Board Meetings: Kathi Mag

Board of Education and Adult Education: Cecile Bronfin

Head Instructor: Rabbi Seth Riemer

Religious Studies Instructor: Michele Cyr

Memorial Park Chair: Barry Goldberg

Building Chair: Gary Evans

Building Committee: Dave Forrest and Kathi Mag

Gardening: Kathi Mag

The Star: Phil Lohman and Micki Bellamy

Torah Study, Building Rental, Webmaster: Deb Hammer:

Ways and Means Chair: Judy Gold

Ways and Means Committee: Rhoda London and Helene Rosenblatt

Receiving phone calls: Rhoda London

High Holiday Committee:

Rabbi Seth Riemer, Barbara Checknoff, Cecile Bronfin,

Carol Gershenson, Judy Gold, Kathi and Eliot Mag, Fred London,

Susan Reuben, Sallyanne and Barry Scott

Nominating Chair: Cecile Bronfin

Building Consultants and Miscellaneous:

Phil Lohman and Ralph Horowitz



# MAUREEN HOROWITZ

ABR, GRI, SRES, REALTOR

Licensed in Connecticut since 2002



It isn't easy to find a real estate agent with Maureen's combination of skills, strengths and experience. You will want to call her whenever you or someone you know is considering buying or selling a home. Maureen is a full-time, hard-working professional real estate agent.

Maureen says, "The highest compliment you can give me is recommending me to a friend or family member. Your satisfaction is my top priority."

**860.205.9678**

**MaureenHorowitz.Agnelli@gmail.com**



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